

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

**INSPECTION OF
COLFE'S SCHOOL**

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

13th – 16th November, 2006

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Colfe's School

The Prep School was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	Colfe's School
DfES Number	203 6293
Registered Charity Number	1109650
Address	Horn Park Lane, London SE12 8AW
Telephone Number	0208 852 2283
Fax Number	0208 297 1216
Email Address	head@colfes.com
Name of Headmaster	Richard F Russell
Chairman of Governors	D R Curtis
Age Range	11 – 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	13th to 16th November, 2006

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

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

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Colfe's has its origins in the 15th century – Richard Walker's Charity – linked to Lewisham parish church. The current school dates from 1652, as a result of a benefaction from Abraham Colfe who was a governor of the school. At his death the Leathersellers' Company became trustee and has remained closely associated with the school ever since. A majority of the members of the governing body belong to the Leathersellers' Company, including the Master, and the Vicar of St Mary's Lewisham is also a governor. The school became independent in 1977, having moved to its present suburban site in the London Borough of Greenwich after the Second World War. The Prep School and the Senior School buildings are set at either end of spacious 15 acre grounds; a number of facilities on the main site are therefore shared between the two schools, as well as a nearby sports field owned by the school. Girls joined the sixth form in the 1980s and the school became fully co-educational in 2001. The present headmaster was appointed in September 2005.
- 1.2 The school aims to: “promote excellence in all areas, and to develop each pupil's abilities and character to the full; provide academic teaching and to foster learning and scholarship of the highest quality together with a wide range of cultural, sporting and extra-curricular activities; to promote a purposeful and disciplined atmosphere, in which boys and girls are encouraged to achieve their full potential, staff can find vocational fulfillment in their careers, and all can use their talents for the greater good of our community and for society as a whole; nurture an awareness of spiritual and moral values; and recognize each member of the school community as unique, with talents to develop and a contribution to make”. The school also seeks to “maintain a population of children from varied backgrounds and will admit pupils, not solely on academic ability but with a range of abilities and qualities, who can make a real contribution to the school in many different ways”.
- 1.3 The school roll remains at just over 700 but the proportion of girls has increased since the last inspection in 2000. The proportion of girls in each year is between a third and a half; 254 girls and 452 boys in all. Approximately half come on to the Senior School from the Prep School at age 11 and a small number leave after GCSEs at age 16, often to the maintained sector, while others join the school for the sixth form. At present the sixth form has 168 students, 107 boys and 61 girls. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, many being ‘first time buyers’ of independent education. Roughly a sixth are from ethnic minority backgrounds, reflecting the cultural diversity of the area. At present none have English as a second language and none have statements of special educational needs, although 95 are on the school's list of those in need of extra support and 29 pay for additional support. A large proportion of pupils receive some support with fees from scholarships or bursaries, which currently amount to just under a tenth of gross fee income.
- 1.4 Almost all pupils are in the top half of the ability range nationally, and between three-fifths and three-quarters are in the top quarter nationally. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results will be well above the average for all maintained secondary schools.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided by the school is good and is consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy of producing a broad and balanced curriculum which allows all pupils to fulfil their academic potential. The issues raised in the last inspection have been addressed.
- 2.2 A broad curriculum is offered in Years 7 and 8 with some reduction in Year 9 and a further reduction in Years 10 and 11 through option choices. The conscious decision to allow five options to be taken from groups of four subjects in Year 9 makes possible a much increased allocation of time to the subjects chosen but also means that some subjects will not be taken at all by some pupils after Year 8. Sixth formers select their options from an extensive list of subjects. The provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities further enhances the curriculum as well as offering experience of different kinds of learning and teamwork.
- 2.3 The provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE), or active citizenship, is outside the standard timetable in most years, incorporates the study skills programme, and is taught in tutor periods and in special half-day courses devoted to a particular topic. This has allowed more focused work to be done in this area and is regarded as a positive improvement by both staff and pupils.
- 2.4 Information and communications technology (ICT) is taught specifically in Year 7 and Year 10 but thereafter is the responsibility of different subjects in the curriculum. Most, but not all, of the prescribed ICT topics are taught, but the coverage of what is provided is variable.
- 2.5 Nonetheless, the education provided contributes widely and successfully to linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development, and to the acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. Greater access than at the time of the last inspection is now available to a full range of subjects for all pupils, and the majority of parents and pupils are pleased with the curriculum offered.
- 2.6 The extra-curricular opportunities available to the pupils are wide ranging and many are of a high standard. They are underpinned by the strong commitment of the staff to extra-curricular activities. Many pupils participate in several activities during the week and the great majority are enthusiastic about the opportunities available to them.
- 2.7 The support given in activities to the younger pupils in the Senior School by sixth formers, and to the Prep School pupils by Year 10 in the Sports Leaders activity, is notable and is much appreciated by the pupils concerned. There is a strong level of participation in the Combined Cadet Force and in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, with good results. Drama, music and sport are particularly well covered in the activities programme. Indeed the quality of coaching, organisation and facilities for physical education and games, and in the Sport for All programme, is very high indeed. Pupils are encouraged to participate in sport at all levels.
- 2.8 The activities programme includes clinics for pupils needing extra help, offered by a number of subject departments, including mathematics. Other clubs provide opportunities for the more able, whether in music or sport, or in debating or writing and editing magazines. A further addition to the extra-curricular opportunities is the enterprising range of trips and visits arranged in this country and abroad.

- 2.9 Preparation for the next stage of education, employment and for adult life is good. The study and life skills programmes, and thorough and well-informed careers advice all prepare pupils well for when they leave school. The support of underachieving students in Years 11 to 13, to improve their organisational and independent learning skills, helps them in their preparation for examinations. UCAS advice and guidance, which focus on the individual, are effective and are greatly appreciated by sixth formers and their parents.
- 2.10 Curriculum planning is good and is organised at different management levels by the Academic Policy Committee, heads of department meetings and the Teaching and Learning committee. Policies and documentation are helpful on teaching and learning issues and heads of department are expected to incorporate this guidance into schemes of work, which are of a uniformly high quality and ensure that all members of their department implement them.
- 2.11 Learning support for those with special educational needs is ably provided for those requiring one to one extra teaching by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) who also arranges for all pupils to be screened in Year 7. Those identified as having special needs but not requiring extra lessons are supported in the classroom by the subject teacher. While good support is provided in many subjects, some others make less use of the SENCO's expertise. The quality of help given to these pupils in class is then reduced and opportunities to provide more appropriate tasks or to use different teaching approaches are sometimes missed. The provision of extra clinics in some subjects is a positive step in helping the less strong pupils to achieve their full potential and in encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 2.12 Considerable thought has been given to recognising and providing for the most able pupils and some good opportunities for these pupils have now been introduced. Examples are the critical thinking courses in Years 10 and 12, the introduction of the IGCSE in mathematics and a number of activities outside the formal curriculum, such as the Newgate papers in politics and the mathematics challenges aimed at the more able. Most departments now recognise the particular needs of these pupils in their schemes of work and during the week some good examples of particular challenge or extension for the most able were seen in lessons. In some classes, however, a lack of sufficiently detailed lesson planning meant that pupils were not successfully challenged.
- 2.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.14 Pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skill and understanding. They learn to apply these attributes to new situations and they develop good critical and creative faculties, which were seen in action both in lessons and in written work, as well as in a number of clubs and activities. Some good examples of developing subject skills were seen in history, modern foreign languages and English. The highest levels of attainment were seen where pupils are asked to think critically and are challenged to think for themselves, for example in psychology where pupils were asked to match case studies to a number of obsessive disorders. Good examples of creative writing were noted in English, and also in French at A-level.
- 2.15 Attainment overall in relation to pupils' ability is good both in the standards observed within lessons and as measured by examination performance. Pupils' skills and attitudes to learning are good and most pupils make good progress over time. Attainment seen in lessons, in pupils' written work and in interviews with pupils was nearly always at least satisfactory and

- mostly good or better. No significant differences in relative attainment were seen across subjects and in the classroom, or overall between girls and boys.
- 2.16 The focus on improving standards of teaching and learning, together with changes in management structure, has helped to raise the levels of attainment of all pupils. This is evident both within the classroom and in recent improvements in examination performance. The school is conscious of the need to raise still further the expectations of the most able pupils, and all departments have identified ways to provide enrichment within and outside the curriculum. A number of initiatives are already in operation as the school seeks to ensure that all pupils achieve the highest standards, especially where the progress of some is not always as rapid as it might be.
- 2.17 Overall attainment at GCSE is well above, and in some subjects is far above, national averages, and good in relation to the ability of the pupils. The school achieved its best results in 2006. Results have steadily improved in recent years with a notable increase in 2006 in the percentage of higher grades. The progress in the Senior School up to GCSE, as indicated by standardised testing, has been consistently above the national average in nearly all subjects. In line with national trends, girls tend to perform slightly better than boys at this level.
- 2.18 Overall performance and attainment are also good at A level and, averaged over the three years to 2005, are above the national average for all schools, with further significant progress being achieved from GCSE levels. In 2005 and 2006 results were well above the national average and were the school's best results ever. In 2006, four-fifths of the grades achieved by the girls were either A or B.
- 2.19 Significant individual and group achievements are seen in many fields, for example in sport where success has been achieved in a number of team sports and individuals have represented the school at county or national level. Prowess in design technology (DT) has contributed to five recent successes in the Arkwright Scholarship awarded to potential university engineers, and good success has been achieved in the mathematics and biology national challenges. The high quality of much of the art work is visible for all to see in attractive displays around the school.
- 2.20 The quality of pupils' learning is good, study skills are well developed and the attitudes to learning are positive. Pupils state that they enjoy many of their lessons and are enthusiastic about their studies. They are articulate, listen effectively and write fluently. They are particularly strong orally and often respond well in class. They can present clear arguments, for example during a history debate, and in a Year 8 tutor group discussing the ethics of using animal furs. Clear well-written analysis was seen in a number of subjects.
- 2.21 Pupils can apply mathematics and mathematical concepts appropriately. Overall standards of numeracy are well developed and the confident use of mathematics is apparent in many subjects of the curriculum, for example in work on mechanics in physics and in analysing data from field work in geography.
- 2.22 Pupils use ICT well when given the opportunity, but the quality and use of ICT across the curriculum are variable and standards are not being monitored at present. Nonetheless, pupils' ICT skills are often good, for example in a simulation of the effects of damping and forced vibrations on oscillations in physics, and for plotting graphs, word processing and for research purposes.
- 2.23 Pupils' study skills develop well and the increased emphasis upon organisation of work through half-termly grading, and in the study skills programme, has been beneficial and

largely welcomed by pupils themselves. However, at sixth-form level in particular, the quality and organisation of pupils' notes varies considerably. Some are excellent but others do not provide a satisfactory basis for revision. At more junior level, some pupils fail to act on the advice they are given and take too little responsibility for their own learning.

- 2.24 Some good examples of independent learning were seen in business studies where GCSE pupils take part in a Share Club, during sixth-form activities where a group of pupils were working to produce a political paper, and in discussions in history based on pupils' wider reading. Pupils work well with each other, often helping one another to solve difficulties, rather than waiting for the teacher. A good example of this was seen in a Year 7 DT lesson. This cooperative approach was evident outside the classroom in a very effective 1st XV Rugby practice and in many activities.
- 2.25 Generally, pupils are usually quick to settle, although sometimes a minority, including some late arrivals, can prevent a crisp start to the lesson. In a few classes, some pupils were not fully engaged throughout the lesson and then became restive and inattentive. Pupils are enthusiastic and persevere in their lessons; they show a willingness to stick to the task and a determination to take it to a satisfactory conclusion.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.26 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils at Colfe's is good; pupils are confident, thoughtful and considerate. Most departments now seek to incorporate exemplary values for the best personal development of pupils in their schemes of work. An awareness of spiritual and moral values is successfully nurtured and all members of the school community are recognised as unique and as having a contribution to make.
- 2.27 Pupils' develop well spiritually. Although the school is a Christian foundation, which maintains links with two local parishes and has the vicar of Lewisham as an ex officio governor, little emphasis is placed on religious worship and beliefs, beyond one weekly assembly, a monthly meeting of the Christian Union, special services at Remembrance and Christmas and the limited programme of religious studies (RS). Rather, the spiritual development of pupils is promoted through the ethos of the school community, and in the confidence, self-belief and values of the pupils, who clearly grow and flourish as human beings in their time at the school. Pupils respect one another and are prepared to consider their place in the greater scheme of things. Particular occasions, such as an assembly on Remembrance led by the head of history, contain a strong spiritual element. Other areas which elicit a spiritual response are art and music; for example, during a rehearsal of the first act of *Les Misérables* the cast was awestruck during the singing of her ballad by the female lead, which included the line, 'filled my days with endless wonder.' Many departments can point to aspects of their subject which bring out the spiritual side of human experience. The staff, by their example and in the quality of their relationships with the pupils, underpin the ethos of mutual respect and personal worth.
- 2.28 Pupils' moral development is good. They respond strongly to the moral issues they encounter at school, in the classroom and as part of their daily experiences. They are able to distinguish right from wrong, they respect the school rules and appreciate the need for occasional detentions. Moral issues are discussed in lessons and elsewhere. For example, Year 7 debated whether or not plagiarising the work of others is acceptable, and a lively and well-prepared Year 10 assembly considered aspects of Fair Trade and the implications for them and their choices. Pupils accept each other's rights to respect and consideration and are not prepared to tolerate bullying. These attitudes are strongly reinforced during tutor periods and in the classroom, for example in a sixth-form English lesson on *Othello* where both

family values and attitudes to women were considered. The school's active citizenship programme provides strong support in this area of pupils' development.

- 2.29 The social development of the pupils is particularly good; their consideration for others is marked and they work very well together. Moreover, relationships between staff and pupils are mutually respectful and cordial. Teamwork is an impressive feature of the school, clearly seen in sport where pupils have a high regard for team participation and truly appreciate the opportunity to compete together. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibility for the well-being of others. A good example is the mentor initiative in Years 7 and 8, whose pupils greatly appreciate guidance from sixth formers; another is the scheme for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to take responsibility for coaching Prep School pupils in sport. Social development begins for the pupils with a distinctive induction programme for Year 7 pupils who are taken each year to the Lake District for a week. The active citizenship programme ensures, amongst other things, that pupils are given an awareness and understanding of public institutions and services in this country. Pupils' now have the opportunity to take part in the new School Council, which gives them a further opportunity to voice their concerns and suggestions for the benefit of the school community.
- 2.30 Pupils' good cultural awareness is inculcated in many ways, probably the single most important of which lies through the ethnic diversity of the school. Pupils of many creeds and racial backgrounds are accepted and valued in the school community. Opportunities are provided in many subjects for increasing pupil awareness of both their own culture and those of other nations. The general studies programme in the sixth form fulfils a similar purpose. The school also makes very wide provision for the broadening of pupils' cultural horizons: for example, the recent combined art and music trip to Venice, and the ambitious touring of the musical *Grease* in South Africa. A very worthwhile opportunity for cultural awareness lies in the school's project in The Gambia, where Colfe's has forged links with an Islamic school.
- 2.31 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.32 Teaching is good overall, almost always satisfactory and occasionally outstanding. The school largely succeeds in its aim to provide high-quality teaching by well-qualified staff. School policies and procedures for assessment and teaching are comprehensive and detailed. They indicate the need to set tasks and use approaches appropriate to pupils of different abilities, including the most able as well as those needing learning support, and to promote independent learning. Most parents praised the quality of the teaching and pupils endorse strongly the help given to them by teachers.
- 2.33 Teaching successfully enables all pupils to acquire knowledge, make progress, increase understanding and develop skills. Many, but not all, teachers make significant efforts to support those with special educational needs and to provide extension opportunities for the more able. Further provision is made for both these categories of pupil outside the formal timetable, for example with subject clinics for weaker pupils or those wanting extra help. Occasionally, however, particularly lower down the school and in preparation for GCSE, the pace of the lesson is slow and teaching is focused on the lower abilities in the class so that the more able do not make as rapid progress as they might.
- 2.34 Teaching is planned carefully and a variety of teaching methods is effectively used to promote learning. Role-play in history, and lively teaching activities in modern languages classes enhance learning greatly. Whilst teachers often use appropriate and interesting

- activities to reinforce learning, in some areas greater use could be made of textbooks both in class and for extension reading. Independent learning is variously encouraged, particularly in the older and higher ability groups. Those pupils who join field trips, for example, speak positively about the contribution these make to their learning and education. Most teaching, even when teacher-directed and examination driven, is effective in promoting good learning for the great majority of pupils.
- 2.35 Homework is useful and appropriate, and written work is marked and recorded efficiently, although the return of corrected work is not always effectively used to reinforce learning.
- 2.36 Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects; the school strongly encourages regular and appropriate training both to promote their own subject knowledge and to develop their teaching skills. The induction of all new teaching staff, the support given to newly qualified teachers and those on the South London Teacher Training scheme, and the emphasis upon professional development, all contribute positively to the quality of teaching. The sharing of good teaching practice and regular meetings strengthen the performance of many departments.
- 2.37 Teaching is well supported both by ancillary staff and by teaching resources. Most departments are well resourced with office and class ICT equipment, although the use of the ICT facilities in some departments is limited. Good use generally is made of whiteboards as a teaching resource and interesting displays enhance many department areas. Effective use is made of the library for research and private study, particularly by younger pupils and the sixth form. The library is well stocked and very well managed to support the current needs of each department. Some departments have useful departmental libraries and the geography department, for example, makes some notable publications available to pupils online.
- 2.38 Assessment of school and departmental results is used well to promote achievement at all levels. Teachers use baseline data and pupil profiling increasingly effectively both to identify targets, and to encourage and promote greater achievement. Use is also made of external examination results and other indicators of performance and progress to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and, increasingly, to influence curriculum discussion. The assessment and recording of pupils' work are generally sound and often good. Pupils understand the assessment system, believing it to be both fair and informative. Good use is made of assessments for judging the success of pupils in meeting their individual targets. Further analysis and development of the use of test data will increasingly add to the support for teachers in guiding pupils and in setting more specific targets both individually and amongst groups.
- 2.39 Classes are usually well ordered; the majority of pupils are respectful, contributing positively to discussion and learning. Most pupils are keen to learn and contribute with enthusiasm to opportunities to participate in shared or group research and presentations.
- 2.40 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care in the school is extremely high. The measures taken to safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety are thorough and effective. The structures, policies and procedures established to support and secure their well-being are well designed and efficiently applied. Pastoral care was judged to be a strength of the school in the last inspection and it remains so today. It meets fully the school's aims to support and develop each pupil's abilities and character to the full.
- 3.2 The well-managed pastoral provision and the commitment of all staff to pupils' welfare ensure a high level of care and well-directed guidance for all members of the school. Daily tutor periods, target setting, the regular checking of homework diaries, and good communication between tutors and parents through these diaries, all contribute to the pastoral care of pupils; the heads of year and the deputy head (pastoral) strengthen the system by monitoring and supporting the work of tutors. The training provided for all these posts helps to create a very strong team with a clear sense of purpose, whose collective work gives individual attention to the needs of all pupils. For many pupils, the tutor is often the first person to whom they turn with school-related or personal difficulties.
- 3.3 Pupils receive appropriate guidance from their tutors on setting targets for improvement in their academic work and in other areas such as study skills. For Years 12 and 13, the advice tutors give on university application is valued and appreciated by pupils. The quality of the relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is excellent. Pupils of all ages show respect for each other, and the mentoring of junior pupils by senior ones has created particularly good relationships across the year groups. The recent mixing of Years 12 and 13 in tutor groups has strengthened community spirit at the top of the school, and has allowed Year 12 pupils to benefit from an early sight of the UCAS application process at close hand.
- 3.4 The work of the school nurse, counsellor and doctor add a further dimension to the care provided, on medical and emotional issues. The level of communication between them and other pastoral staff is excellent. Channels of support are clearly defined, well understood and effective.
- 3.5 The whole area of pastoral care is underpinned by a range of highly effective policies. The work of the co-educational committee, with its plans to introduce more quiet places for pupils who seek peace or solitude and to offer rewards for good contributions to areas other than academic or sporting achievement, are examples of current action to enhance the quality of care still further. A school council has just been held for the first time, providing a forum for pupils to express their concerns and ideas. This will be particularly welcomed by those pupils who indicated in the questionnaire that they felt that their voice was not always clearly heard.
- 3.6 Good behaviour and discipline are positively promoted throughout the school. Pupils understand the rewards and sanctions that the school uses, and younger pupils in particular value the credit and distinction system. The close links that tutors maintain with parents help to promote good behaviour and self-discipline.
- 3.7 Measures to safeguard against bullying are well established and effective: the school's supportive ethos encourages pupils to report any incidences of bullying, which are dealt with swiftly and sensitively. Successful child protection procedures are in place and are followed

by all staff, who receive regular training to ensure that their awareness of issues and policies is up to date.

- 3.8 Comprehensive fire prevention measures and regular fire drills provide reminders of procedures to staff and pupils alike. Appropriate risk assessments assure the safety of pupils engaged in activities both on and off the school campus. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective and the school has due regard for health and safety obligations.
- 3.9 The school nurse and doctor provide a very satisfactory health and accident cover. The sick bay is well appointed. Sufficient numbers of staff hold first aid qualifications and procedures for emergencies are well planned. The range and quality of food is excellent, providing a variety of healthy and nutritional options for those choosing to take advantage of the school meals. Registration procedures are fully compliant. All school staff are subject to Criminal Record Bureau checks and all recommended recruitment guidelines are followed.
- 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.11 The quality of the school's links with its parents and with the community is good. The school communicates regularly and efficiently with its parents. Contact and co-operation with the local community are considerable and several enterprising links have been created with the wider community in this country and abroad.
- 3.12 The school prospectus states that great importance is attached to the forging of strong partnership between school and home, and the school works hard to achieve this. Parents receive a handbook containing information about school activities and procedures. They are quickly made aware of problems through messages in homework diaries or by telephone and email, so that issues may be resolved promptly. The readiness of tutors and year heads to contact parents about the progress of their children or about any particular concern is a very positive feature of the close links between school and home. Parents are encouraged to play a part in the Parents and Friends Association (PAFA), which organises social and fund raising events throughout the year. They can, and many do, join the Roebuck Centre and make use of the leisure facilities. In addition parents are encouraged to support the school sports programme, and welcomed to the various drama and music events throughout the school year.
- 3.13 The termly newsletter provides regular reports of key events in the school calendar. Regular parents' evenings, helpful reports and half-termly assessment grades provide information about pupils' progress. Any consequent concerns are communicated to form tutors and heads of year, often by phone or email. The school is developing its contacts by email wherever it can, and during the inspection use of email to contact parents was seen in both the modern languages and the drama departments. Annual parents' evenings provide for the discussion of pupils' progress, and other evenings are used to welcome parents of pupils in Years 7 and 12 or to offer advice and information about higher education.
- 3.14 The response to the parents' questionnaire was very largely positive, especially with regard to teaching and learning and to the extra-curricular activities available to pupils. Parents are generally pleased with the education and support provided for their children. The inspection findings do not support the small number of parents who felt that opportunities to be involved in the life of the school were too limited. A small number of other parents indicated that their concerns were not satisfactorily considered but the inspection found that the

systems to deal with complaints are well constructed and that the school is particularly keen to listen to parents and to respond to concerns they may have.

- 3.15 The school actively seeks contact with the local community and succeeds through these links to involve pupils in the world outside school and to raise their awareness of it. The school is proud of its commitment to the South London Teacher Training scheme which involves partnership with several local comprehensive schools and brings trainee teachers into the school. Colfe's Leisure Centre has 1200 local members and local clubs use other school facilities. The music department arranges concerts in cooperation with a local, girls' comprehensive school and Lewisham Choral Society. There are links with St Mary's Lewisham, and with the church of St Alphege in Greenwich where the annual Carol Service is held. The school, as a Centre of Cricket Excellence, also runs a cricket outreach programme for schools and children in the area, in association with local cricket clubs. The traditions and history of the school are maintained by the annual visit of Year 7 to the Leathersellers' Company. All pupils become members of the Old Colfeians Club on leaving school and sixth formers are encouraged to use it as a social venue. The headmaster actively seeks to support places in the school for local pupils through the bursary system and the school is now extending this support with a new venture in connection with the Damilola Taylor Trust.
- 3.16 In the wider community the school has links to France for a work experience programme and to The Gambia, where sixth formers are actively involved in the building of a new school, not only by raising funds, but in practical ways in the visits they make to Africa in the Christmas holiday. The latter enterprise is continuing with further fundraising and increasing opportunities for pupils to visit the country and help with the work, thereby broadening their horizons and encouraging contact with a very different culture.
- 3.17 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good. The Colfe's School trustees and governors have helped to set and secure appropriate aims and values for the school. They provide effective oversight and clear guidance for the school.
- 4.2 The structure of governance is clear and successfully supports the work of the Board. Working through the Finance and General Purposes Committee and its other standing committees, the Board is responsible for the school's strategic direction and for the provision of resources appropriate for the school's needs. It has a particular care for the financial well-being of the school and offers strong support to the headmaster, who is accountable to the governors for the running of the school.
- 4.3 The governors are very aware of their responsibilities and are sufficiently involved in the educational development and financial planning in the school to ensure the high quality of educational provision offered to parents. They have secured, and continue to maintain, an appropriate investment in the human and material resources needed to support the Senior School's work and to meet successfully the aims that have been set. They are currently considering plans to re-house the school's maintenance facility and, in the longer term are seeking to refurbish the accommodation for science and to enhance the accommodation in the sixth form centre.
- 4.4 The governing body has a very good insight into the working of the Senior School, both from the regular reports from the headmaster and bursar, and from their own visits to the school and direct contact with senior staff. Relationships with the headmaster, the bursar and the senior management team (SMT) are good. Governors are aware of any significant parental concerns, applaud the successes and achievements of the pupils and are familiar with the way in which the school functions.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Leadership is strong, and effective management is achieved at all levels and in most areas of the school, reflected in the good quality of education and the successful care of the pupils. The school's aims are very largely achieved and have been given increased focus by new appointments in senior management roles. The headmaster provides firm leadership. He has drawn up a list of six priorities to form the framework of a more comprehensive development plan to meet the school's core aim of "promoting excellence in all areas".
- 4.6 The detailed implementation of the new framework has been delegated to an expanded SMT, whose key objective has been to drive up academic expectations and standards whilst underpinning the strong pastoral care. The SMT- the senior deputy head, academic and pastoral deputies, head of sixth form, and bursar - gives strong support to the headmaster. It blends a deep knowledge of Colfe's with rich experience from elsewhere, and the different roles are well defined in clearly formulated job descriptions. The team has rapidly created a series of coherent policies that span the central activities of the school.
- 4.7 The monitoring of the performance of pupils and teaching staff is central to this aim to improve teaching and learning. Baseline testing of pupils supplements teachers' knowledge to provide initial targets in examination subjects. Tutors, heads of year and pupils frequently discuss any disparity between target and actual grades being achieved, and the process

provides strong motivation for pupils. As the school continues to develop the detailed use of baseline and other data, the benefits to improving pupils' performance will be even greater.

- 4.8 The deputy head (academic) conducts a biennial review of each department. The review audits teaching, learning and examination results, and includes lesson observation of all staff. In addition an annual departmental review is produced after examination results each autumn term. Both reviews influence the departmental development plan and continuing professional development. Further delegation of this very thorough process of departmental monitoring and a more clearly articulated link with whole school and department planning would further strengthen the process and its positive effect on standards.
- 4.9 Heads of department and heads of year contribute to detailed academic, pastoral and extra-curricular policy through a series of school committees. Larger departments hold regular minuted meetings; in other departments meetings are less formal. Where meetings are held, the quality of monitoring in the department is often high and good opportunities then exist to share good practice and continue to raise standards. Heads of year draw together their tutors in regular meetings, to co-ordinate action and review any concerns over pupils. The quality of middle management has improved considerably since the last inspection.
- 4.10 The excellent departmental schemes of work are informative and accessible. The emphasis on performance monitoring has given shape to the management roles of the heads of department. Although not consulted routinely on strategic issues, many now enthusiastically follow the lead being given by the SMT in further raising the standards of teaching and learning throughout the school. The perception of line management made possible by the new management arrangements aids communication. The high level of pastoral care is rooted in easy and regular communication between pupils, parents, tutors and heads of year and strong, involved leadership is provided by the deputy head (pastoral). Procedures and policies have been polished, and regular pastoral training helps staff in their work with pupils, who speak highly of the assistance they are given.
- 4.11 Links between the Senior School and the Prep School are being strengthened. Timetable constraints inevitably limit more liaison between heads of department and subject coordinators at the Prep School, but the school is determined to do more, whether through departmental links or by making it possible for teachers to observe the work being done in the other section, in order to raise the profile of each school section and to ensure that staff in each benefit from a closer relationship with the other.
- 4.12 The quality of recent staff appointments has been high, and teachers new to the school have worked closely with existing staff to give momentum to changes in the school. The attraction of teaching at Colfe's is reflected both in the long service of some and in the return of a number of staff to Colfe's after teaching elsewhere. A new, well-documented and comprehensive policy, designed to monitor and support the teaching, pastoral, extra-curricular performance of staff and to underpin their professional development has now been produced and is already being used with staff. This will begin to remedy the absence in the recent past of a formal appraisal process. The induction of new staff is thorough and supportive, and the school provides carefully for the needs of newly qualified teachers and for those on the South London Teacher Training assignments.
- 4.13 The policy of continued investment in the school is reflected in the new Beardwood arts complex and in current plans for future improvements. Buildings and grounds are well maintained and presented. Departments are generously resourced, and spending is allocated to areas that mesh with departmental objectives to improve the quality of the learning experience for pupils. The provision of resources for ICT is excellent, and is appropriate to

- the policy to give academic departments the responsibility for developing the ICT skills of pupils beyond Year 7.
- 4.14 The bursar and her team exert tight financial control and demonstrate a good sense of the priorities of an educational community. Each of the non-teaching staff provides strong and valued support to the smooth operation of the school, and the welfare of staff and pupils. The current restructuring of the bursarial staff will allow the introduction of an appraisal scheme for support staff.
- 4.15 The reception area and headmaster's office act as a central hub for an efficient administrative network that supports the smooth running of the two-week timetable. The marketing manager works closely with the senior deputy in formulating and implementing recruitment and retention strategies, benefiting from, among other factors, the well managed leisure centre which acts as a magnet for the local community.
- 4.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.17 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school is very largely successful in meeting its aims. High standards are set and achieved in very many areas of school life in its pursuit of excellence. Academic attainment is good, and good and improving results are being achieved at both GCSE and A level. Achievement is also notable in sport and in creative areas. The school is particularly successful in developing pupils' character and confidence, in the strength of its pastoral support for each pupil, and in the growing realization of his or her talents and abilities. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are excellent; a distinctive feature being the responsibility taken by older pupils for the welfare of younger ones. The school has a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits outside the school and abroad. A significant factor in all this is the collective quality and commitment of staff to the welfare and best development of the pupils. The school is given strong leadership and clear direction. The critical focus on standards of teaching and learning is now being effectively promoted at the next level by many heads of year and heads of department. However, the use of ICT by departments across the curriculum is uneven and the quality of teaching of ICT skills to pupils in the middle years in the school is not assured.
- 5.2 The school has made significant improvements in areas noted in the last inspection report and is increasingly aware of the progress it is making towards the full achievement of its aims. In particular, a great deal has been done to improve the breadth of, and access to, the curriculum, including a new daily programme to accommodate it. Much has also been done to address the needs of more able pupils. However, effective differentiation of tasks and teaching approach to suit the abilities of different groups of pupils in a class is not yet a universal feature of lessons. At present the school is engaged in the first round of staff monitoring and review in its implementation of a new staff development and appraisal programme.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has considerable strengths and no significant weaknesses; it is working at the present time to improve still further a number of areas of its work. Particularly significant are the following matters.
1. In the present focus on standards of teaching and learning:
 - departments and teachers should continue the further implementation of their policies and practice for differentiated teaching, for both able and weaker pupils, especially in the lower half of the school;
 - the quality of the teaching of ICT skills, as part of the exploitation of ICT across the curriculum, should be monitored and, where necessary, raised to the standard of the best.
 2. The recently introduced staff appraisal and development programme should be continued and completed so that all staff benefit from the support it promises.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 13th to 16th November, 2006. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Michael Higginbottom	Reporting Inspector
Mark Allbrook	Headmaster, HMC school
Felicity Chapman	Senior Teacher, HMC school
Stephen Cole	Headmaster, HMC school
David Ewart	Headmaster, HMC school
George Fisher	Headmaster, HMC school
Margaret Hardwick	Senior Mistress, HMC school
Susan Richards	Assistant Head, GSA school