



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HYMERS COLLEGE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Hymers College

Full Name of College	Hymers College
DfE Number	810/6001
Registered Charity Number	529820
Address	Hymers College Hymers Avenue Hull East Yorkshire HU3 1LW
Telephone Number	01482 343555
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Email Address	enquiries@hymers.org
Headmaster	Mr David Elstone
Chair of Governors	Mr Michael Roberts
Age Range	8 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	986
Numbers by Age	8-11: 224 11-18: 762
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (497 boys; 489 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	986
Inspection dates	12 Mar 2013 to 15 Mar 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State 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, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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 the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors 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.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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 a governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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	Reporting Inspector
Miss Victoria Barrett	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Sue Clarke	Team Inspector (Sixth Form Head, HMC school)
Mrs Janet Cooper	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Dr Stephen Coyne	Team Inspector (Former Head, HMC school)
Mr David Fotheringham	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Susan Jones	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Jonathan Meadmore	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Sharon Pratt	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Hymers College was founded in 1893 as a school for boys 'across the town and port of Hull', irrespective of social rank. Almost a hundred years later in 1989 the college became fully co-educational. The college is a registered charity overseen by a governing body of 23 co-optative members.
- 1.2 The college aims to maintain its founder's goal to provide for pupils irrespective of social or financial background and to create a happy, ordered and caring community where every pupil may achieve his or her full potential academically, socially and spiritually.
- 1.3 The college, consisting of junior and senior schools, occupies a substantial urban site, surrounded by extensive playing fields and open space. Since the previous inspection in February 2008 the college has reformed the membership and structures of its governance, introduced new arrangements to stimulate the pupils' individual learning and formulated precise and extensive development plans.
- 1.4 The junior school has 224 pupils between the age of 8 and 11. The senior school, for pupils aged 11 to 18, has 762 pupils of whom 209 are in Years 12 and 13. Pupils come from a variety of ethnic and social backgrounds and from across a large area, mainly from professional and business families of Humberside and East Yorkshire.
- 1.5 Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of pupils entering both the junior and senior schools is above the national average. In the senior school around a quarter of pupils are of well above average ability and in the junior school around a fifth. Very few pupils are of below average ability.
- 1.6 The college identifies 43 pupils as having a special educational need and/or disability (SEND). The college provides guidance to these pupils and reference to outside agencies that may provide direct and individual support. None has a statement of special educational need. Two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL); neither receives additional support within the school.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning is excellent. Pupils of all abilities and in all parts of the college are keen to learn, and they enjoy their studies. They respond eagerly to the college's wide curriculum and to exciting teaching and coaching. The quality of teaching overall is good. The excellent standard of much teaching is not yet consistent across all years and all subjects. Pupils throughout the college demonstrate high skills of literacy and numeracy. The pupils' sporting, musical and dramatic achievement is excellent. Choral singing in the junior school is exceptional and marked by national success. The curriculum throughout the college, including in the sixth form, is excellent and activities are plentiful. The college's resources and the pupils' use of them are excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils respond eagerly to the outstanding and comprehensive support given to them. Their courtesy and keenness to receive and assist visitors is evident throughout the college. Relationships with staff, and among the pupils themselves, are excellent. Pupils take on responsibility readily, for example sixth formers assisting and listening to younger pupils in the junior school. They distinguish clearly right from wrong and have a firm aversion to all forms of bullying. Outreach to the community is strong. Excellent standards of welfare, health and safety ensure the well-being of all pupils. The personal attitudes of the pupils are an outstanding quality of the college.
- 2.3 The effectiveness of governance and of leadership and management is good. The composition of the college's governance has been revised since the previous inspection. Governors provide careful oversight of the college and effective provision for its needs. They ensure the clear safety of the college members, that all regulatory requirements are met and that appropriate policies are put in place, applied carefully and reviewed regularly. The college's grounds are maintained to high standards. The college's leaders and managers provide firm direction in all areas. They are distinguished by their commitment and care so that all pupils are treated as unique individuals. Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. The school has taken important steps, and succeeded significantly, to meet all recommendations made at the time of the previous inspection. It has developed strongly its resources for independent learning and ICT skills, revised its senior management structures and put in place a clear system for professional monitoring and development.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The college meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The college is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure, through sustained and consistent action by academic middle management, that the excellent standards evident in much teaching and assessment are reflected across all subject areas.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are very well educated in line with the college's aims to develop their abilities to the full and to pursue excellence. Throughout the college pupils display high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in the subjects they study and in the activities they pursue. Pupils are articulate and confident learners who write and speak fluently and accurately. They are particularly adept at applying previously learnt information to new situations. They are highly numerate and skilled in the use of information and communication technology (ICT), which they use across the full range of subjects. They show also high skills and imagination in aesthetic and creative subjects, and they develop well their physical aptitudes through an extensive sports programme. Achievement is significantly higher than that at the time of the previous inspection.
- 3.3 Pupils have achieved much significant success at regional and national levels in mathematics, chemistry, debating and choral competitions. Sporting distinctions include fencing, ice-hockey and show jumping as well as rugby, cricket, hockey and athletics. Choral singing in the junior school is to the highest standard with success in competitive national festivals.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Pupils' achievement at GCSE is excellent in relation to the national average for all maintained schools and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2009 results were above the national average for maintained selective schools. IGCSE mathematics results are above world-wide and United Kingdom averages. A-level results were good in relation to the national average for maintained schools in 2009 and 2011 and well above the national average in 2010. Boys' results are consistently well above the national average for boys in all maintained schools. Overall, results have also been above the national average for maintained selective schools. Almost all Year 13 leavers gain places at the universities and institutions of higher education of their choice.
- 3.5 The attainment of pupils in the junior school cannot be measured against average performance in national tests but on the evidence available it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectation. Pupils learn keenly and apply their acquired knowledge eagerly and accurately. Pupils at all levels, including the sixth form and those identified as having EAL or SEND or as gifted and talented, achieve well. Individual learning plans are formulated so that particular challenge is given frequently and appropriately. These results, confirmed by nationally standardised measures of progress and together with evidence from the inspection, indicate that throughout the college pupils make good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities.
- 3.6 The pupils' achievement is strongly supported by their positive attitudes to learning, their excellent behaviour and the committed encouragement they receive from their teachers. Pupils respond particularly well to stimulating and challenging teaching. They also accept responsibility for their own learning and they are keen to support each other both in and out of the classroom. At all stages of the college pupils use resources extremely well. Whenever given the opportunity, they work keenly in pairs

or in groups. They show initiative and careful organisation. Overall, they enjoy their studies and they participate enthusiastically.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.7 The contribution of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The college's curricular and extra-curricular programmes at all levels are broad and strong. They fulfil well its aim that pupils as individuals may achieve their full academic potential, participate in worthwhile physical, cultural and aesthetic activities and develop responsible attitudes to the welfare of others.
- 3.9 The academic curriculum is wide. It covers all the requisite areas of learning and at the same time offers a generous range of options and possible combinations for these. The quality of careers advice and guidance is excellent. They include an annual careers convention and arrangements for appropriate work experience. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is comprehensive and carefully designed to include critical thinking. Learning skills are carefully fostered and individual learning plans are arranged for those in need. These are communicated carefully to classroom and subject teachers.
- 3.10 The curriculum is well-planned. It is suitable for all ages, abilities and needs within the school, including the gifted and talented and those with SEND or EAL. Junior school pupils are consulted about their own needs and interests and these are met as far as they can be. Independent learning is encouraged at all levels. Extended projects and a sixth form lecture programme of high quality introduce pupils to the latest thinking and most recent achievement across a wide range of topics. Learning resources are matched by the teaching of research skills and an extensive use of current technology.
- 3.11 Pupils benefit from an exceptionally wide range of extra-curricular activities. Sport for both boys and girls, for individuals and for teams, is strong throughout the college. So too is music with a host of public concerts supported throughout the year. Drama has been successfully re-established as a prominent element of school life. Pupils engage keenly in a wide programme of activities with national success in debating in the senior school and national choral success in the junior school. Engagement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and in the combined cadet force is keen and successful.
- 3.12 Links with the community are excellent. Pupils support a local church in its outreach to those in need and in its provision of care. They also share their learning by helping each lunch-time in local primary schools, in both mathematics and English, and they develop their skills of communication well. The Leadership for Life Award reaches out to disadvantaged young people in the city, making pupils keenly aware of local need. The college acts as a regional cricket centre and has hosted the disability games for the last two years. Pupils engage generously in sharing the college's facilities with a wider community.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.14 Teaching throughout the college is good. Overall, it strongly supports pupils' learning and it enables success. Much teaching is excellent. The teachers' subject knowledge is high and their skills are well-developed so that teaching enables pupils

of all abilities and at all stages throughout the college, in both senior and junior schools, to make good progress. This includes pupils with SEND or EAL who receive good support through the implementation of individual learning plans. Lessons are well prepared and pupils feel strongly encouraged by the teaching they receive. In the most successful teaching a range of creative and imaginative strategies is employed. Such teaching communicates high expectations of the pupils' learning and knowledge and exhibits a brisk and challenging pace. It results in a keen classroom atmosphere and challenging direction for pupils to which they respond well as enthusiastic learners.

- 3.15 The overall standard of teaching is significantly improved on that at the time of the previous inspection but some lessons remain too confined to tasks that are mundane and unnecessarily repetitive for generally able pupils, offering only limited challenge. The sharing of best practice remains incomplete. Overall, pupils express high confidence in the teaching they receive and they enjoy their lessons.
- 3.16 Pupils produce written work readily and its assessment by teachers is good. The best marking is detailed and formative and directed to the particular work of the pupil. Some examples of superficial and routine marking persist, mainly in the senior school.
- 3.17 The college's provision of ICT resources has expanded significantly since the previous inspection and it is often used expertly to support learning. Applications arouse interest and excite advanced understanding.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The college fulfils clearly and keenly its aim to foster moral and spiritual growth in all its pupils. The overall standard of pupils' development is higher than that at the time of the previous inspection. By the time they leave the college, pupils' personal development is strong. They are confident and caring young people. Pupils of all faiths engage keenly in school assemblies and lectures. They appreciate opportunities to understand beliefs and practices in different cultures and faiths. They work well also with local clergy to reach out to those in need, delivering food parcels, undertaking repair work and celebrating occasions of prayer.
- 4.3 The excellence of the pupils' moral development is demonstrated in their strong sense of right and wrong, fostered by regular discussions in lessons, by their response to the school's requirement of good and considerate behaviour and in their participation in outreach to the wider community. The college's PSHCE programme encourages individual responsibility well and consequently considerate behaviour to all. Pupils respect each other and recognise bullying of any form as wrong. Engagement in the wider community includes sponsored charity activities.
- 4.4 The pupils' social development is excellent. They feel at ease with each other when expressing their feelings and they show appreciation readily of others' achievements. They are courteous and helpful towards each other and to visitors and they recognise the needs of fellow pupils. They develop well a strong sense of social responsibility, through the DofE award and the combined cadet force and through the Leadership for Life Award. Here they work fruitfully alongside other local school pupils engaged in youth projects. Pupils readily accept responsibility as prefects, by acting as buddies to younger pupils in the junior school and by engaging in ecological projects. Participation in the school council too brings consideration of the needs of others.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. They have a keen awareness of varied cultures and traditions, from their lessons in history, modern foreign languages, art and music, and they respect each of them. They understand their responsibilities as citizens and a need for respect and tolerance. Pupils from the junior school to the senior participate in a host of musical and artistic activities, performing in orchestras and singing in choirs. The musical tradition of the school is strong and performance is frequent and to a high standard.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care is excellent in its pursuit of the college's aim to promote a caring and disciplined environment. Pupils acknowledge readily that they benefit from the support, guidance and care afforded them by teachers and support staff. They value strongly their access to counselling, arranged formally since the previous inspection and they use these services readily. Time allocated by the college to pastoral matters has increased and the sharing of good practice is strong. The vast majority of parents responding to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire

indicated their belief that their child was happy and safe at school and well looked after.

- 4.8 Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding throughout the college. The pupils feel valued and cared for. They readily identified a member of staff whom they would approach in time of need. Similarly relationships between the pupils themselves are excellent, friendly and considerate. A system of 'buddies' extends this formally through pupils who have attended an appropriate training course.
- 4.9 Pupils develop healthy eating habits, which are monitored by the school. Generally pupils appreciated the quality of food available at the college and its variety. Pupils undertake regular exercise through a wide programme of sports and other extra-curricular activities. The college has a suitable accessibility plan to develop provision around the site and school buildings for those with particular needs.
- 4.10 Pupils readily express their views and concerns at school councils and acknowledge that they receive a positive response, for example in changing the girls' sports kit. They feel a considered part of the college and they are willing to promote generously the interests of each other.
- 4.11 Pupils responding to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire showed high levels of appreciation for the college's range of activities. They identified strongly their progress in learning and the interesting character of their study. Some sought more opportunity to take on responsibility or to give their opinions more readily. In discussions with inspectors, pupils showed appreciation of opportunities that already existed. Some parents, in response to pre-inspection questionnaires, showed clear concerns over bullying but pupils, in their discussions with inspectors, indicated that bullying was rare and, if it did occur, it was dealt with properly. Pupils were confident that they could approach a teacher, and that teachers would respond promptly and effectively. Advice about cyber bullying is clear and known well. The college's clear policy to promote good behaviour is operated consistently.

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

- 4.12 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.13 Measures to ensure the pupils' welfare and their health and safety are strong throughout the college. All necessary safeguarding measures are securely in place and all staff receive appropriate training in child protection. Relationships with external agencies are close.
- 4.14 The college's admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored. Tutors and class teachers recognise their responsibility and discharge this carefully. Medical facilities are new and modern with nurses on duty throughout the day in a clean and comfortable medical centre. Provision is much improved since the previous inspection. Qualified first-aiders also readily provide assistance whenever it is needed.
- 4.15 All necessary measures are in place throughout the school to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards, for example in laboratories and sports centres. Fire drills are held regularly and equipment is checked frequently. Assessment of risk around the site is careful and comprehensive. Access is monitored carefully. It is also improved regularly, particularly to meet the needs of the disabled.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Since the previous inspection governance has been entrusted wholly to the trustees of the school charity. Governors have made secure the several committees of the board, such as academic, property and management, finance, strategy and health and safety. By their visits and by receiving detailed reports, the governors gain clear oversight of all sections of the college. They successfully monitor high educational standards, and provide prudent financial planning and successful investment in staff, accommodation and resources. They support and review the activities of the college and ensure its successful development. They have produced a keen sense of change and advance that augurs strongly for closer monitoring and further success, particularly of the school's bold teaching and the pupils' adventurous learning. Governors have clear regard for the distinctive character and role of the college. They ensure also that resources are available for its success.
- 5.3 Governors discharge thoroughly and carefully their responsibilities for child protection and for the welfare, health and safety of all members. They review these policies and their application each year so that the level of pastoral care is excellent in all parts of the college. They also monitor academic performance so that high standards are maintained and a wide curriculum provided. Grounds and buildings are maintained to high levels. Governors ensure that the college is safe for all its members and successful. They also plan eagerly for the future.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is good, including links with parents, carers and guardians.
- 5.5 Senior leadership is excellent, strong and successful in discharging its overall direction for the college and in its management of change. It has made significant new appointments successfully and it has a clear vision for the future. Development plans are securely in place and they are pursued well. Management structures are clear and links between the senior and junior schools are strong. The aims of the college to give pupils an environment where they can develop their abilities and individual gifts to the full are met well.
- 5.6 Pastoral leaders have secured the highest standards of care for their pupils. Teachers discharge their responsibilities well and support staff are in place to ensure the welfare of all. Policies are clear and they are implemented well. All staff are appropriately trained, including in their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Pastoral care is comprehensive and it is highly effective.
- 5.7 Academic leadership is carefully structured and in place. A biennial appraisal system is linked to self-review and formal lesson observations. Professional development is supported within the school and outside of it, and the sharing of best practice is encouraged. Practice, however, remains varied within teaching departments so that, whilst much teaching is outstanding, some continues in need of closer direction and greater support from academic middle managers.

- 5.8 The school is successful in attracting and developing a high quality staff. All required checks on governors, staff and volunteers are carried out and suitable records are maintained.
- 5.9 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. Communication is regular and frequent, usually by electronic mail. Full reports are provided each year and grade reports more frequently. Consultation evenings are held so that particular difficulties may be discussed. Although a few parents, in response to questionnaires were not satisfied with the responses they receive from managers to their concerns, most comment that concerns are generally dealt with well. Inspection evidence supports this view. The school's appropriate complaints system operates effectively.
- 5.10 Activities and events such as a summer fete, a sports barbecue and a music evening are held regularly. Parents support the college strongly, demonstrated recently by support for the junior school choir in its successful participation in a national competition. Parents also take an active role in such events as careers evenings and in providing interview practice for intending university students.
- 5.11 Parents responding to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire showed strong support for the school across the full range of its activity. They praised the curriculum and the progress made by their children. They agreed that their child was happy and felt safe at school. They appreciated the wide range of extra-curricular activities and information received from the college, including regular electronic communications. They believe that the college achieves high standards of behaviour.

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