



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ABINGDON SCHOOL

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Abingdon School

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

Full Name of School	Abingdon School
DfE Number	931/6095
Registered Charity Number	1071298
Address	Abingdon School Park Road Abingdon Oxfordshire OX14 1DE
Telephone Number	01235 521563
Fax Number	01235 849079
Email Address	david.dawswell@abingdon.org.uk
Head	Miss Felicity Lusk
Chair of Governors	Mr Adrian Burn
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	963
Gender of Pupils	Boys
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 831
Number of Boarders	Total: 132
	Full: 105 Weekly: 27
Inspection Dates	10 Nov 2015 to 13 Nov 2015

PREFACE

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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations 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.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI standard inspection was in January 2011 and the previous ISI boarding intermediate inspection was in May 2012.

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

This inspection contains 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, personal development and welfare.

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.

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

Mr Tony Halliwell	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Cleary	Team Inspector (Director of Music, HMC school)
Mr Marcus Cliff Hodges	Team Inspector (Deputy Warden, HMC school)
Mrs Ellen Douglas	Team Inspector (Head of Department, ISA school)
Mr Anthony Duffield	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Stephen Holliday	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Richard Knott	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr William Norton	Team Inspector (Director of Sport, HMC school)
Mr Andrew Williams	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Dr Nicholas England	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Abingdon School is a day and boarding school for boys aged between 11 and 18, located in the town of Abingdon in Oxfordshire. Founded in the 13th century, the school has been located on its present site since 1870. It has strong links with the Mercers' Company. The total number of pupils is 963, of whom 323 are in the sixth form. There are 132 boarders in total: 105 full and 27 weekly. The school is a charitable trust overseen by the Abingdon Foundation governing body; it merged with its preparatory school in September 1998 to form one company.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a first-class education, in a distinctive single-sex day and boarding school environment. It sets out to educate boys and young men of talent and potential to the highest level, where each pupil can develop and fulfil his potential, thus helping to build self-confidence and inculcate a desire to contribute to the wider community. The school seeks to place particular emphasis on the development of thinking skills, questioning and independence, on the encouragement of initiative, individuality and creativity, and on promoting respect and endeavour. It aims for pupils to explore a spiritual dimension within a Christian context, for which the chapel provides the main focus and an opportunity for inter-denominational worship. It strives to encourage high academic achievement, complemented by extensive extra-curricular opportunities, enabling pupils to develop their existing talents and gain new skills.
- 1.3 The school continues to develop its facilities and in September 2014 it took over the management of a nearby sports complex, including a floodlit sports track and artificial pitches for both hockey and football. In October 2015 a new science centre was opened. Since the previous inspection the school has appointed a senior member of staff with responsibility for the oversight of teaching and learning. It has strong links with a neighbouring independent girls' school, with which it shares some teaching at A level.
- 1.4 The ability profile of pupils on entry in Year 7 is well above the national average. Two-thirds of pupils are of well above average ability, with none having ability that is less than above average. The school has identified 115 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), none of whom has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan; 75 receive specialist learning support. In total, 105 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 30 require language support. Most pupils come from professional and business families, and are of predominantly white British ethnicity. Boarders have a variety of international and British backgrounds; many of their families live in the surrounding area.

- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
First Year	Year 7
Second Year	Year 8
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The pupils' achievements and learning are excellent, as a consequence of the excellent curricular and extra-curricular provision and teaching. The school is highly successful in achieving its stated aims in educating boys and young men of talent and potential to a high level. In public examinations, the attainment of pupils is usually well above the national average for pupils of similar ability. Pupils are prepared well for life after school. The extensive 'Other Half' programme of extra-curricular activities is a strength of the school and is highly valued by both the pupils and their parents. Teachers know their pupils well and encourage them to perform at the highest level. The school has addressed the recommendation from the previous inspection to ensure that marking is consistent across all departments. In a few lessons, the most able pupils are not suitably challenged.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. They show a strong moral and social awareness and sense of British values. The pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care. There is a caring atmosphere throughout the school, and most noticeably the senior pupils enjoy their leadership role in looking after the younger pupils. The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent, with carefully managed and regularly reviewed risk assessment procedures. The school now takes all the required steps to check and record the suitability of staff. The quality of boarding is excellent and parents are highly appreciative of the outcomes for boarders, the provision and care, and the leadership of boarding. The quality of food at weekends has improved, in line with the recommendation of the previous boarding welfare inspection.
- 2.3 The successful fulfilment of the school's aims is a direct result of the excellent governance, leadership and management of the school. Senior leaders and members of the governing board are active in monitoring the school's success, as well as identifying areas for future development. All policies are subject to review by members of the governing board, and the school is rigorous in ensuring that the required child protection training has been undertaken for all employees. Highly efficient management systems ensure the effective operation of the school, and the strong leadership team ensures that teaching, learning and pastoral care are given the highest priority. There are strong links with parents, and excellent partnerships have been established with local schools. The pupils are proud of their school and there is a true sense of belonging. Almost all the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that school staff treat their children as an individual, and a very large majority would recommend the school to another parent.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Ensure that the challenge offered to the more able pupils in the best lessons is consistently applied 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 The pupils are very well educated in line with the school's aims to provide a first-class education. Pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding across a wide range of subjects are excellent, and they are able to communicate clearly and with confidence. Pupils of all ages apply their literacy and numeracy skills effectively throughout the curriculum. They can discuss challenging concepts eloquently and ask perceptive questions, as observed in a science lesson for younger pupils on atomic structure. They reason logically, and their investigative and presentation skills are strong.
- 3.3 Pupils compete in a range of academic competitions, including those in mathematics, science and linguistic Olympiads, and have gained national and international awards. A small number of pupils have achieved Arkwright Scholarships in engineering. Pupils are confident with information and communication technology (ICT), for example using digital media for peer performance analysis in physical education (PE). Their skills in design and art are very well developed; many examples of excellent work can be seen in displays around the school.
- 3.4 As pupils progress through the school, they gain increasing levels of success and achievement in sport, with regional and national recognition. Pupils receive many awards in athletics, canoeing, cross country and fencing. In rowing, individual success was achieved with an international silver medal in junior world championships.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparable statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE are above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. Results in International GCSE subjects are higher than worldwide norms. A-level results are above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. Results in 2012 were exceptional, with over 90% of grades at A* to B. In 2015, almost 90% of subject passes at GCSE were graded A* or A. At A level, over 60% of passes were at A* to A. A majority of sixth-form pupils gain places at the university of their choice, many with challenging entry requirements. Other pupils opt for a more direct route into the world of business, embark on a military career or take a challenging GAP year.
- 3.6 These levels of attainment show that pupils of all abilities make good progress overall, relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. Those with SEND or EAL receive appropriate support and therefore achieve at levels similar to their peers. The most able pupils generally make good progress, but this is not always as consistent, as they are not sufficiently challenged in a few areas of their learning.
- 3.7 The pupils' achievement is strongly supported by their highly positive attitudes to learning, their excellent behaviour and the relationships they develop with many of their teachers. Their presentation of work is excellent, and they are well organised. Pupils readily accept responsibility for their own learning and support each other well, both in and out of the classroom. Overall, they are fully engaged, lively, hard-

working and self-aware, responding enthusiastically to the academic and non-academic challenges available to them.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The curriculum contributes significantly to pupils' achievements by effectively supporting all the required areas of learning. In this respect, the school is highly successful in meeting its aims. The curriculum is broad and well balanced, and caters for the interests, needs and aptitudes of the individual pupil. Departments plan efficiently for the needs of pupils with SEND or EAL. Most, but not all, planning identifies challenging extension activities for the most able pupils. All the required aspects of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) are addressed. Since the previous inspection, changes to the timetable have resulted in more time being available for extra-curricular activities.
- 3.10 In Years 7 to 9 pupils study a wide range of subjects, including Latin, two modern foreign languages, and biological and physical science. Pupils choose ten subjects for GCSE, which include all three sciences and at least one modern foreign language. Pupils choose four subjects for study in Year 12 and study three or four A levels in Year 13. The Extended Project Qualification is currently being trialled with Year 13. Academic provision in the sixth form is enriched and broadened by general studies, tutorials and a wide variety of non-examined courses for those pupils who drop a subject at the end of Year 12. The successful promotion of British social values is evident in many aspects of the curriculum; these were clearly seen in the Remembrance service and Combined Cadet Force (CCF) parade. There is a balanced coverage of opposing political views in all relevant curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 3.11 Pupils receive comprehensive guidance on subject choices for GCSE and A level. Careers and university guidance is both realistic and detailed. Most pupils in Year 11 undertake a career profile review, which includes feedback from professional career advisors. Pupils benefit from an excellent programme of events, ranging from assemblies on the university admission process to a careers convention.
- 3.12 The centrally situated school library, with its virtual learning resources, significantly supports pupils' learning. It is extensively used for private study and research, and offers the added benefit of allowing pupils to access numerous resources using their own digital devices.
- 3.13 The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide-ranging programme beyond the classroom. The school attracts a number of notable speakers. Service opportunities are numerous and include volunteering to help local primary schools and charitable organisations. Pupils have many well-planned educational visits, including sports, language and history tours. In addition, a number of pupils undertake voluntary work, for example through projects in Honduras and Moldova. Music and drama are strengths of the school, and the cultural life of the pupils is significantly enriched by an extensive programme of workshops and performances. Pupils regularly perform in competitions and take part in national and international tours.
- 3.14 The programme of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and is an integral part of the overall curriculum. Pupils view the 'Other Half' as a strength of the school that effectively complements the academic curriculum. An excellent selection of sports,

service activities, the CCF, clubs and societies is offered and greatly appreciated by pupils and their parents. Tutors and housemasters ensure that a pupil's involvement maintains a careful balance between sporting and non-sporting activities.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.16 The excellent quality of teaching fulfils the aim of the school to provide a first-class education and is successful in promoting pupils' excellent achievements. The recent changes to the leadership and monitoring of teaching have had a positive impact, and teachers are increasingly seeking to improve their practice and enhance learning opportunities for pupils. In response to the questionnaire, the vast majority of pupils felt that their teachers help them to learn and that they are encouraged to do things for themselves and to work independently.
- 3.17 In the majority of lessons, teaching makes an excellent contribution to pupils' progress. Assessment data is used skilfully and sensitively by staff to track pupil progress and ensure continuous improvement. Most marking is of a high standard, in response to the previous inspection recommendation. A recent initiative to formalise assessment procedures throughout the school is proving to be increasingly effective in monitoring progress. Members of the leadership team monitor the quality of marking and improve practice where it is needed.
- 3.18 In many lessons pupils are encouraged to take charge of own their learning, be creative and develop subject-specific skills. For example, in a sixth-form art lesson pupils were helped to develop advanced practical skills in both two- and three-dimensional work. Teachers have high expectations of their pupils and display a strong subject knowledge, which they use to inspire and guide the pupils. A wide variety of teaching techniques, involving the use of excellent resources, caters well for different learning styles. Teachers make excellent use of ICT, incorporating virtual learning resources into lessons to enhance and extend learning opportunities.
- 3.19 Lessons are generally planned well and the vast majority are conducted at a brisk pace, thus effectively engaging the pupils. Pupils are given frequent opportunities to develop collaborative skills through pair or group work. Skilful use of questions and answers to develop understanding is a strong feature of many lessons. Opportunities for independent learning are used skilfully and sensitively to track pupil progress.
- 3.20 Teaching supports pupils with SEND or EAL effectively. Support outside lessons for these pupils is excellent, and pupils offer high praise for the work of these departments. However, in a few lessons, extension work for more able pupils is not consistently available. A very small minority of pupils felt that teachers do not make sure that they have the right amount of work to do, including the setting of homework. Inspection evidence indicated that the amount is appropriate considering the challenging curriculum and anticipated outcomes for pupils.
- 3.21 The excellent rapport between staff and pupils creates a relaxed and purposeful atmosphere in classrooms, where pupils enjoy learning and are encouraged to contribute and develop their ideas. Teachers ensure good behaviour in class and, as a result, pupils listen to and respect each other's opinions, whilst feeling confident to challenge and question appropriately. Teachers take care to promote tolerance and respect, and are non-partisan in the coverage of political issues.

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 This supports the school's aims to inculcate a desire in the pupils to contribute to the wider community and to encourage a sense of mutual respect. Pupils have a strong sense of spiritual awareness. The chapel allows pupils the opportunity to explore spiritual aspects of life, and they show respect and understanding of their own and different faiths. Pupils' spiritual development is much in evidence through artwork on display throughout the school and through their involvement in music, either in the chapel choir or in one of the many orchestras and musical ensembles.
- 4.3 Pupils develop a strong moral awareness and a sense of honesty, fairness, and right and wrong. This is reflected in their excellent behaviour, both in class and as they make their way around the school. The PSHCE programme allows them to explore a wide range of issues such as drug abuse, e-safety, bullying and human rights. They have a well-developed sense of individual liberty and have respect for the civil and criminal law of England. Pupils on the Young Enterprise scheme demonstrate a knowledge of business ethics and social responsibility, and the sixth-form PSHCE course promotes positive gender roles in a contemporary social context. Older pupils explore significant issues that shape their judgements and inform decision making, for example in a recent presentation from a well-known feminist writer.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate excellent social awareness and mutual respect. They are creditable ambassadors for their school. Pupils express their views effectively and confidently in a variety of school councils and pupil forum meetings. Senior pupils conduct themselves with maturity and are excellent role models. The sixth-form prefect mentoring system contributes significantly to the excellent pastoral welfare system and pupils of all ages mix well. Pupils appreciate the opportunities for leadership and to take on responsibility, and they enjoy taking an active role in the school community. They appreciate the opportunities for joint productions in music and drama with the neighbouring girls' school and the local community.
- 4.5 Pupils' good cultural development is marked by the strong relationships and interaction of pupils within its diverse community. Through the school's strength in the expressive arts, overseas visits, and living and learning alongside boarders from other countries, pupils have a good understanding of both their own cultural heritage and that of others.
- 4.6 Pupils learn about public institutions and develop a respect for democracy and wider society by taking part in mock elections and by engaging in Model United Nations debates. The CCF helps to promote core British values and in the wider context, pupils show a good understanding of public institutions and services in England. Through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, community service and the charity committee programmes, pupils volunteer and contribute to a wide range of local community activities. They demonstrate an awareness of those less fortunate and undertake fund raising for local and topical charitable causes, such as the current refugee crisis.
- 4.7 The ability to be self-reflective and ambitious is a constant for pupils throughout their time at the school, as they aspire to develop skills of integrity, compassion and resilience. By the time they leave the school, pupils are articulate and confident.

They have a purposeful sense of what they want to do next and are ready to meet the challenges of adult life.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The school's pastoral systems offer highly effective support and guidance for pupils of all ages. Staff are given appropriate training, and careful record keeping and appropriate sharing of information ensure that pastoral care is given a high priority. As a result, every pupil is known as an individual.
- 4.10 Excellent relationships between pupils and staff, and amongst pupils themselves, are central to the strong pastoral care. Pupils say that there is always a member of staff to confide in; they are appreciative of the outstanding support they are given from tutors, teaching staff, the chaplain and the counselling services. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing healthy eating habits and taking regular exercise. The emphasis placed on physical fitness and topical PSHCE and PE lessons successfully promote healthy living.
- 4.11 The school is particularly effective in promoting high standards of behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying, dealing promptly and constructively with any unacceptable behaviour, a view supported by pupils, who feel that such incidents are rare. Its procedures allow for issues of cyber-bullying to be reviewed regularly and include a pupil whistle-blowing facility. In response to the questionnaire, a very small minority of pupils questioned the fairness of the school's use of rewards and sanctions. However, discussions with pupils showed that they have a clear understanding of the system and feel that they are fairly applied.
- 4.12 In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt that the school does not ask for their opinions or respond to them. Inspection evidence did not support this view. Pupils make their views known through regular surveys, the school and house councils, or student-led publications. Pupils can point to actions that have been taken as a result of their requests, for example increased access to the internet in the boarding houses.
- 4.13 The school has an appropriate plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 Safeguarding arrangements are highly effective, and safeguarding is seen by senior managers and the governors as a key priority. Appropriate child protection training is provided on a regular basis to all staff, who are fully aware their responsibilities in this area. The designated senior staff are clearly identified and they maintain strong links with local safeguarding services. Referrals are made promptly to the appropriate external agency if necessary and senior managers have ensured that staff have received training to prevent radicalisation. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires showed that pupils feel safe in the school environment, a view shared by parents.
- 4.16 All necessary measures are taken to minimise the risks from fire and other hazards. Detailed records of fire drills are maintained, including evening drills in boarding houses. Call points, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and electrical equipment are regularly tested and maintained by qualified personnel. Risks connected with the premises, school trips and activities are carefully assessed and monitored. The health and safety committee comprises members from all appropriate areas of the school, as well as a nominated governor. Health and safety measures are reviewed regularly and are regarded as a high priority.
- 4.17 Pupils' medical needs are fully met by the well-equipped health centre. An appropriate number of staff have first-aid training, including several at a higher level. Details of accidents are kept efficiently, with any trends identified and monitored. Defibrillators are now in place on site and pitch-side medical care is available.
- 4.18 The admission and attendances registers for pupils are appropriately maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years. The school has responded to the regulatory failure from the previous boarding welfare inspection by ensuring that all teaching and non-teaching staff now undergo the required checks before appointment, and that all these checks are accurately recorded on the single central register.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.20 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The boarding experience makes a strong contribution to the pupils' personal development. They are well mannered and considerate, and confidently engage in conversation with adults. The boarders say that they learn to co-operate with each other, develop the resilience to cope with setbacks and acquire the habit of hard work.
- 4.21 Boarders are able to contribute to the running of the boarding house through the boarding council. They report that this is an effective channel of communication which has produced ideas for change and improvement, for example in suggesting menu improvements. Relationships between staff and boarders, and amongst boarders themselves, are warm and friendly. The pupils enjoy the challenge of leadership roles within houses, and respect and celebrate the cultural diversity of their many different nationalities. They embrace a fit and healthy lifestyle, and take part in a wide variety of sporting activities. The behaviour in the boarding houses is excellent and boarders thrive in an atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance.

- 4.22 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. The individual needs of boarders are met well at all stages. The school provides new boarders with much useful information. New boarders join the school two days before term starts, during which time a well-structured induction programme enables them to settle in and to understand how the school operates. Boarders indicate that they have many people to whom they can easily turn for support at any time, including their tutor, housemaster or matron. All house notice boards display comprehensive information and contact details for the independent listener and outside agencies. The school has clear and effective policies regarding medical care of boarders, including the administration, recording and storage of medicines, which are meticulously applied. The health centre provides comfortable accommodation for pupils that are unwell. It is run efficiently by suitably qualified staff. A nurse is on call overnight and a doctor attends weekly. All medication is correctly stored and dispensed, with appropriate parental consent in place. The confidentiality and rights of boarders are respected, and records are fully in order and up to date. Boarders may also make appointments to see other medical professionals outside the school, as needed. They appreciate the high quality of care they receive.
- 4.23 The houses are secure, and boarders' rooms are private and not accessed by day pupils. Houses are warm, homely, brightly lit and well maintained. All have a kitchen and ample recreational space. Washing and showering facilities are of a good quality, afford suitable privacy and are sufficient in number. Pupils have adequate bed space and room to study, and they are able to store their possessions tidily. Boarders' possessions are secure; they have a lockable cupboard and a small safe, while rooms, and where necessary, the houses, are protected by door entry keypads. The laundry arrangements for the houses are highly efficient, providing a 24-hour service. Boarders can easily buy personal items in the town nearby. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a minority of boarders expressed some dissatisfaction with the food. Inspection evidence showed that the large majority of boarders are pleased with meals and snacks. Breakfast is widely recognised to be excellent. However, the evening meal does not always match the high standards of the other meals and snacks. Nevertheless, inspectors found the food to be of good quality, plentiful, healthy and nutritious, and this has addressed the recommendation raised at the previous boarding welfare inspection. The caterers are fully aware of any special dietary requirements, and meet these as needed.
- 4.24 The boarders benefit from the school's outstanding extra-curricular programme. They enjoy a very wide range of cultural, creative and sporting activities. At the weekends there are additional activities and excursions on offer, and pupils also take part in school matches. In questionnaire responses, a few boarders indicated that they were not happy with the balance of free time and activities. During the inspection, the opposite view was strongly expressed by boarders, in line with other inspection evidence. Communication between home and school is excellent. Parents say that it is easy to contact the school, and boarders can contact their parents and carers as often as they wish, usually using the internet or their mobile telephones.
- 4.25 The arrangements for the welfare of boarders' health and safety are excellent. Boarders feel safe and valued. The school's clear and comprehensive safeguarding policy applies to all staff, visitors and contractors. A governor with responsibility for welfare, health and safety and boarding makes regular visits to oversee the boarding houses. All staff are trained in safeguarding and understand their responsibilities and reporting arrangements. Boarders report that there are effective procedures to

prevent bullying and to promote good behaviour. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions, and almost all boarders say that staff treat them fairly. Suitable procedures are in place for restraint and for the searching of boarders and their possessions, if required. An excellent system for registering boarders and for signing in and out of houses enables staff to be aware of boarders' whereabouts at all times. The clear missing pupil policy is understood by staff. Thorough and detailed risk assessments are in place. Fire practices are carried out each half term at both day and night time, which are appropriately recorded and monitored.

- 4.26 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent and this is reflected in the positive atmosphere in the houses. The National Minimum Standards are fully met and regularly reviewed. The written policies which reflect these regulations are clear, thorough and acted on, in order to fully support the boarders' welfare. New members of staff have a period of induction, and there is a robust system of appraisal and many opportunities for training and development. All senior managers, housemasters, tutors and matrons are highly dedicated and provide outstanding care for boarders. Each house reviews its performance annually and produces a development plan for further improvement. The team of housemasters strive for consistency across their houses, evident during the inspection.
- 4.27 The overall excellence of the boarding provision is reflected in the responses to the questionnaire, where the overwhelming majority of parents responding said that their children enjoy boarding and that this experience supports their progress and development. Inspection evidence supports this view; boarders leave the school very well prepared for the next stage of their lives, with strong moral values, excellent inter-personal skills and the ambition to contribute positively to society.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 High quality governance strongly supports the school's aims and the excellent personal development and achievement of pupils. The governing board has a wide range of committees, which are committed to continuous school improvement. The governing body includes an excellent range of expertise and experience, and carries out a skills audit when selecting new governors. All governors benefit from appropriate induction and child protection training, and have access to further training opportunities that are run jointly with local schools.
- 5.3 Governors carefully monitor educational standards, pastoral care, accommodation and resources. They invite teaching staff to make presentations and attend relevant committees. Governors make regular monitoring visits to the school, observing lessons, sport and activities, and offering both support and challenge to staff. Careful and resourceful financial management has enabled the school to complete a number of major capital projects.
- 5.4 An increased focus on jointly governing both the senior school and the preparatory school as a single foundation has provided governors with a greater awareness of the needs of both schools and is seen as a key element in future planning. Senior leaders from both schools are encouraged to plan strategically and meet with the governors on a regular basis. Governors provide strong oversight where they have legal responsibilities; they review welfare, staff recruitment, and health and safety arrangements, and approve all school policies, most of which cover both schools in the foundation. Governors regard safeguarding as a high priority, and an annual review of safeguarding arrangements by all governors is carried out.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 The school is highly successful in fulfilling its aims to provide a first-class education, in a distinctive single-sex day and boarding school environment. The leadership team works to ensure that each pupil can develop and fulfil his potential. Matters of policy implementation and safeguarding and their monitoring are seen as key priorities. Managers at all levels, including house staff, heads of department and tutors, work together to ensure an excellent level of personal development for pupils. As a result, the pupils are articulate, mature and self-aware individuals who are ambitious and hard working, and who possess an intellectual curiosity, setting them in good stead for life beyond the school.
- 5.7 School development is a significant aspect in this, and necessities are clearly identified in the comprehensive five-year development plan, which encompasses all aspects of school life and is subject to annual review and update. Self-evaluation and the setting of priorities are a crucial element in the successful management and leadership of the school. The leadership team produces annual key performance indicators that allow governors to analyse patterns and trends, in order to be well

placed to make informed decisions about the future direction of the school. Planning for capital projects is ambitious and informed by educational priorities. This can be seen in the outstanding provision of the new science and sports centres.

- 5.8 Since the previous inspection, progress has been made in teaching and learning, including the creation of a new management position with direct responsibility for these areas. The school has recognised a need to embed the principle of sharing best practice and inculcate a culture of reflective educational approaches in order to maintain consistently high standards in both classroom delivery and ongoing assessment.
- 5.9 Strong links have been established with local primary and secondary schools. One such initiative has been established to share good practice, exchange ideas on teaching styles and methodologies, and motivate staff to become outstanding practitioners. Partnerships are further strengthened through the science department's delivery of the British Science Association awards to local primary schools and GCSE master classes at secondary level. In both cases, a member of staff has been allocated the responsibility of developing partnerships to share resources with the wider community.
- 5.10 The procedures to ensure that staff, volunteers and governors are suitable to work with children are secure, and the recording of all related recruitment checks on the single central register is accurate and compliant with current regulatory requirements. This addresses the regulatory failing from the previous boarding welfare inspection. The previous inspection recommendations with regard to extending the high standards of marking across all departments and ensuring that the standard of food for boarders over the weekend is consistently high have also been met.
- 5.11 The production and review of school policies are given a high priority and the leadership team has been meticulous in its attention to detail in this regard. Governors have full oversight of all school policies and each is subject to approval before implementation. Reports to governors are comprehensive and they apply a thorough and appropriate level of scrutiny to the leadership team to ensure that regulatory compliance and high standards are maintained.
- 5.12 School leaders at all levels have clearly defined responsibilities and accurate job descriptions, demonstrating a thoughtfully structured and distributed leadership team. The school appoints high calibre staff into both teaching and non-teaching posts. Administrative, catering, maintenance, medical and other non-teaching staff work efficiently and effectively to assist in the day-to-day operation of the school and help to underpin its excellent educational provision.
- 5.13 All staff are suitably trained in their roles of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. New staff have a formal induction process, and all staff involved in boarding are provided with a detailed handbook outlining their roles and responsibilities. A biennial appraisal system reflects on strengths and sets mutually agreed targets for future development. Appraisal is linked closely with staff professional development, and the leadership team encourages all staff to avail themselves of relevant training opportunities. An annual review of the school's needs results in a comprehensive list of additional career development opportunities available to staff, which are carefully monitored by the leadership team and carry clear job descriptions and responsibilities.

- 5.14 The school has established strong links with parents, carers and guardians. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the questionnaire felt that staff treat their children as an individual and are appreciative of the quality and level of information they receive from the school. Parents were highly supportive of the school and its role in the educational and social development of their children.
- 5.15 The school has a suitable complaints policy. A very small minority of parents raised issues over the manner in which complaints are handled. Evidence showed that parents' concerns are dealt with efficiently and sympathetically, and are recorded appropriately, leading to mutually agreed resolutions in the vast majority of cases.
- 5.16 Reporting to parents is frequent and informative, covering academic, pastoral and 'Other Half' activities. Each pupil receives a full written report three times a year, interspersed with two additional grading sessions and an annual parents' consultation evening. These identify targets for improvement, as well as reporting on current progress and achievement.
- 5.17 Parents receive a highly informative weekly newsletter, detailing forthcoming events. Contact with tutors and housemasters by email, or during fixtures and other school events, is welcomed. The parents' association is very active in organising social events and fund raising, holding barn dances and Christmas parties, and hosting 'Bring and Share' meals to help the parents of new pupils settle into the school at the same time as their children. Parents' groups such as the 'Touchliners', a rugby interest group, a rowing club and a music society encourage parents to feel involved and part of the school community.

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