



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ABINGDON SCHOOL**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Abingdon School

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

Full Name of School	<b>Abingdon School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>931/6095</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>1071298</b>		
Address	<b>Abingdon School Park Road Abingdon Oxfordshire OX14 1DE</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01235 521 563</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01235 849 079</b>		
Email Address	<b>heads.pa@abingdon.org.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Miss Felicity Lusk</b>		
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr David Lillycrop</b>		
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>863</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys</b>		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>753</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding: <b>0</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>110</b>	
	Full:	<b>78</b>	Weekly: <b>32</b>
Inspection dates	<b>12 Jan 2011 to 13 Jan 2011</b>		
	<b>07 Feb 2011 to 09 Feb 2011</b>		

## PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in April 2008 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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

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

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Abingdon School is a day and boarding school for boys in the town of Abingdon in Oxfordshire. Founded in the thirteenth century, the school has been on its present site since 1870. It has strong links with the Mercers' Company. The total pupil population is 863, aged 11 to 18, of whom 300 are in the sixth form. One hundred and ten pupils are boarders. The head was appointed in September 2010. The school is governed by the Abingdon Foundation governing body.
- 1.2 Since its inspection in 2005, capital investment has included a sports centre and two new information and communication technology (ICT) suites; the school has also installed data projection systems in most classrooms. The design and technology building, the boarding accommodation and the dining facilities have all been refurbished. The school has increased its academic and social links with the school of St Helen and St Katharine. Abingdon Preparatory School has been formally brought into the Abingdon Foundation. The Abingdon4Education group has been created, linking Abingdon School, Abingdon Preparatory School, the Manor Preparatory School and the school of St Helen and St Katharine.
- 1.3 The ability profile of the school is above the national average. One hundred and fifty-nine pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), ninety-eight of whom receive specialist learning support from the school. Pupils come from a wide range of social backgrounds. The vast majority of pupils are British. One hundred and two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.4 The school aims to ensure that each boy thrives at Abingdon, and through challenge and opportunity, achieves the most from his potential. High academic achievement is encouraged, complemented by extensive extra-curricular opportunities, enabling pupils to try something new, to develop existing talents and 'give something back'. The school eschews manufacturing a child, aiming instead to encourage initiative, individuality and creativity whilst reinforcing the importance of respect and endeavour. The Christian foundation is an important element in the school ethos; equally the school welcomes pupils of all faiths and social backgrounds.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following 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 Abingdon is a school where boys can be themselves and know their talents will be developed in an encouraging and intellectually stimulating environment. Pupils' attainment in public examinations and the progress they make are excellent, and this is matched by outstanding achievement in extra-curricular activities. Pupils have exceptionally committed attitudes to learning. In their learning they combine a desire for success with a genuine curiosity and develop independent and collaborative academic skills which prepare them for adult life. Pupils' excellent standards of achievement are fostered by a high quality of teaching which, at its best, involves pupils in all aspects of their learning and challenges their intellects. The assessment of pupils' work contributes significantly to their awareness of how to reach the highest standards, but, in a few academic areas, the quality of marking serves the pupils less well.
- 2.2 The school's aim to ensure that each boy thrives at Abingdon is borne out in the high quality of pupils' personal development. Pupils are an interesting combination of grounded yet ambitious individuals. They are unfailingly courteous, very relaxed in their own company and the company of their teachers and are engaging conversationalists. Pupils have a strong spiritual and moral sense as well as appreciating the challenge and delights of cultural differences. Senior pupils are not only good models in their leadership roles, but give support to younger pupils in the whole gamut of school activities. In interviews and in their responses to the questionnaire, pupils voiced how much they enjoyed their life at Abingdon and valued the opportunities offered by the school.
- 2.3 The school aims to eschew manufacturing a child, aiming instead to encourage initiative, individuality and creativity whilst reinforcing the importance of respect and endeavour. The governors and leaders of the school ensure that this aim is met. In response to the three recommendations of the last report, appropriate time has been allocated to practical and creative subjects in Years 7 and 8, a new sports centre has been built and the appraisal system has been strengthened to include lesson observation. The monitoring of regulatory requirements, including those for safeguarding, is robust and clearly recorded. Parents are highly supportive of the school, particularly extolling the school's promotion of positive attitudes and its commitment to holistic education including high academic success. A few parents felt that they were not encouraged to be involved in the life and work of the school, but inspection evidence did not uphold this view.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

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

### **(ii) Recommendation for further improvement**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Extend across all academic areas the high standards of marking prevalent in many departments of the school.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 Throughout the school the pupils' achievement is outstanding. They are extremely well educated in accordance with the school's aim of developing talents through challenge and opportunity to achieve the most from pupils' potential.
- 3.2 The pupils demonstrate excellent levels of understanding, knowledge and skills across the full range of the curriculum. Pupils have excellent speaking and listening skills; they are articulate and they listen well in lessons. Pupils' written work is well organised and fluent; they employ specialist subject vocabulary accurately. They show unmistakable evidence of logic and reasoning skills and a good level of independent learning. Pupils have strong research skills, using both the library and the internet. Pupils eagerly engage in debate, both inside and outside the classroom; for example, a philosophical discussion on King Alfred took place over the lunch table. Displays of pupils' work indicate strong creative skills, also evident in their writing as in the pupil magazine 'Words and That'. Pupils are adept in critical and creative thinking. They use information and communication technology (ICT) as a tool skilfully and their numeracy skills were apparent in many areas, including in physical education (PE) analysing heart rates on graphs. Pupils apply themselves positively to physical activity; they enjoy this contrast to the classroom, many developing high skill levels in a range of team and individual sports.
- 3.3 Pupils consistently reach excellent levels of achievement in a wide range of extra-curricular areas, known as 'The Other Half', including gaining Duke of Edinburgh's Gold Awards and Arkwright scholarships. Pupils have achieved county and national honours in hockey, rugby, cricket and cross country and international success in rowing and fencing. These sporting successes are matched by equally high levels of performance in music and drama. Members of the film unit have had notable success in winning prestigious awards and musicians are selected for national youth ensembles.
- 3.4 The following analysis is based on national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. In GCSE and A-level examinations, results have been excellent in relation to the national average for pupils in all maintained schools. When compared with the average for maintained selective schools, results at A level have been excellent and good at GCSE. In GCSE, more than three-quarters of the grades were A\* or A, and at A level well over four-fifths of the grades were A or B. In 2010 over a fifth of the grades at A level were at the new A\* level. Results in IGCSE mathematics and chemistry have been higher than international and UK norms.
- 3.5 Pupils' progress is above the average for pupils of similar ability, as confirmed by the analysis of standardised measures. Pupils with LDD make excellent progress due to the structured programme of support in mainstream lessons and individual tuition. Excellent progress is also made by pupils with EAL.
- 3.6 Pupils in all years have a very positive attitude to their learning. They participate readily in lessons and listen to others. A key factor is that they enjoy their work and activities. They take it upon themselves to look for help when needed and grasp opportunities to study their subjects beyond the confines of the syllabus. They support each other very well. Pupils take notes efficiently and study and organise



their work independently. They enjoy challenging themselves and are keen to learn new ideas. The conduct of the pupils is exemplary.

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

- 3.7 The academic curriculum and the extra-curricular programme are excellent. The wide range of subjects, complemented by the extensive co-curricular and extra-curricular programme, ensures that the school's aim is met to provide a curriculum that is characterised by breadth and flexibility.
- 3.8 The curriculum gives pupils of all abilities challenging experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative fields. Four modern foreign languages, including Mandarin, are curriculum subjects, as are Latin and Greek. The sixth-form curriculum includes politics, economics and ancient history, and all sixth-formers follow a stimulating general studies course. This curriculum provision helps the pupils to develop enquiring minds, acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and develop personal and moral values. Academic activities outside the classroom offer enrichment and challenge; for example, the biology club lectures and visiting speakers such as Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali. The curriculum is well planned to ensure continuity of progress for all pupils and is regularly monitored by the academic committee. The school responded positively to the recommendation in the last report and appropriate time has been allocated for practical and creative subjects in Years 7 and 8.
- 3.9 The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme, together with the religious studies and biology syllabi, supports the personal and moral development of the pupils. Pupils question values and assumptions, discuss moral choices and explore their own emotions and those of others. Preparation for the next steps in pupils' education is well guided by the careers department and through advice from tutors and the university admissions panel. The school supports pupils in Year 11 and 12 in work experience opportunities, and the annual series of professional mentoring dinners enables sixth formers to meet former pupils and parents to discuss career paths with current practitioners.
- 3.10 Provision for pupils with LDD and EAL is outstanding. The learning support department identifies need and provides an exemplary programme for these pupils. Relevant information is available to all teachers, and in lessons, diligent attention is paid to pupils who need additional help. The extension programme for academic scholars and other gifted pupils is well structured, and provides appropriate enrichment and challenge. It includes stimulating lectures from speakers such as Philip Pullman.
- 3.11 In its rich and varied array of activities the extensive extra-curricular and co-curricular programme, 'The Other Half', meets the school's aim of providing a balanced and demanding timetable. Sport, which forms a substantial part of this provision, and other activities such as music and drama, ensure that the pupils are able to develop skills beyond the academic curriculum. Pupils report that 'The Other Half' is one of the reasons they so enjoy their lives at Abingdon. Activities such as the combined cadet force (CCF), the chess club and the big band, for example, encourage pupils to aim for high achievement levels and enable them to take on new challenges.

- 3.12 Pupils in Year 9 are fully engaged with community service projects both inside and outside the school, and this programme sows the seeds for future community service. An extensive range of activities provides opportunities to learn life skills and give back to the community. Pupils' awareness of those less fortunate than themselves is articulated through their commitment to charitable causes. The school's Moldova project, which enables boys to meet and engage with young people in a former Soviet state, is a particular example of how extra-curricular activities enhance pupils' development.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.13 The quality of teaching is excellent and fulfils the school's aim to achieve first-rate academic standards and to encourage boys to demand the best from themselves. In more than half of the lessons observed during the inspection the teaching was judged to be excellent and in nearly all the others it was good.
- 3.14 Pupils benefit from teachers in all disciplines who have thorough subject knowledge and display a keen enthusiasm for their subject. They plan lessons very well and tailor them to the particular needs of their pupils, enabling boys of varying ability to make good progress, and where appropriate, teachers make specific provision for boys with particular language or learning difficulties. Most lessons are suitably challenging and, at times, tasks demand high levels of sophistication. In a Year 12 discussion of Hamlet as a tragic hero, boys engaged in detailed and subtle analysis of character and genre. Much teaching encourages boys to work independently, at least for part of the time, and they respond well to these opportunities. Classroom management is of a high standard.
- 3.15 Pupils' learning is enhanced by the variety of approaches employed by teachers who utilise a range of challenging activities appropriately to achieve lesson aims. The relationship between boys and teachers is a strength, and a respectful, friendly and co-operative atmosphere in class characterises lessons and provides a secure environment for learning. Teachers use ICT confidently and competently to enhance learning. Other resources are equally well used to support pupils' learning such as the drama facilities where pupils develop dramatic skills in the context of a real theatre. Teachers actively encourage pupils to use the library for research and wider reading, which enhances pupils' individual investigative work. Teachers make the learning environment dynamic by displays of pupils' work, such as Year 9 boys' excellent investigative work in mathematics; classroom display also promotes school publications or society meetings and these, too, contribute positively to the learning environment.
- 3.16 The pupils are challenged by the high expectations of their teachers which ensure that they achieve a high volume of work. This is equally true of homework, although some pupils find the extent of homework hard to manage when, at times, teachers depart from the set timetable. Supported by careful and regular assessment, teachers understand the needs of the pupils well. The quality of marking is predominantly good and thorough with clear assessment accompanied by helpful advice for improvement. However, on occasions, marking is cursory and falls below the normally high standard.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of the boys' personal development is excellent. This is a helpful, caring community where the pupils are articulate, polite and sensitive to others. They are confident in their approach to work, and in conversation, happy to express their opinion whilst being appreciative of the views of others.
- 4.2 Pupils' sense of spiritual matters is outstanding. Their appreciation of the scope of spirituality is strongly enhanced by the fact that, although the school is a Christian foundation, the chaplain's assistants are of the Baha'i, Buddhist and Christian faiths. Pupils respond positively to the chapel services and articulate that the topics of chapel talks trigger contemplation in those of any faith or of no faith at all. Boys respond appreciatively to the art and architecture of the campus, and enjoy discussing and debating philosophical issues such as the motives of the artist. Whilst pupils are confident, their total lack of arrogance stems from strong individual self-understanding.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils' moral values are strengthened by the daily life of the school with its emphasis on mutual respect between staff and pupils and pupils and pupils. The friendship topic in the Year 7 PSHCE programme fosters this from the beginning of pupils' school careers. Boys respect the rules, are polite and develop a clear sense of right and wrong. They recognise their moral responsibility for others and they enthusiastically enter into fund-raising activities. Every two years a whole school walk, in which all pupils and staff participate, raises significant sums for charity. The boys' quiet support of a number of community projects is indicative of their awareness of the needs of those who are not as fortunate as themselves.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is excellent. They grow into confident, poised and articulate young adults. Boys relate very well across ages, cultures and religions and are supported in this by being members of a house where social interaction is encouraged. Pupils' leadership skills are well developed. House prefects care for the younger pupils and school prefects are good role models. A particular feature of pupils' development is the structured programme for Year 11 which enables them to support and mentor younger pupils. Pupils have a developing understanding of public institutions and citizenship; this stems from the PSHCE programme and the boys' active interest in topical issues.
- 4.5 Pupils have excellent cultural awareness. They develop a good understanding of the world in which they live, appreciate its diversity, and recognise the need for tolerance and harmony. This is engendered by positive relationships between the different nationalities in the school. Pupils display their cultural development in their responsiveness in academic subjects; for instance, the awareness of media manipulation in a theatre studies devised performance on the cult of celebrity. Pupils are enabled to appreciate and experience other cultures through a wide range of visits, expeditions and tours. Boys understand the realities of other cultures through foreign language exchanges, visits to Europe and beyond by many departments such as geography in Iceland or biology in Sweden, sports tours to South Africa and music tours as far afield as North America.

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

- 4.6 The schools' arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent and meets the aims and of ensuring that every boy thrives through challenge and opportunity. Pastoral care is outstanding; tutors and housemasters know their pupils very well and ensure that pupils are at the centre of their professional lives
- 4.7 Pupils are very supportive of each other, and the pastoral structure of the school, with horizontal tutor groupings as well as vertical groups in the houses, ensures that friendship is promoted together with a sense of well-being and happiness. The anti-bullying policy is clear with incidents of bullying being rare. Pupils stated that any disputes are dealt with promptly, effectively and sensitively. The house day rooms give pupils social space in which they can relax and develop friendships. Housemasters and tutors work closely with each other to respond to individual pupils' needs and concerns, and all members of staff play an active part in providing effective support and guidance for pupils. Praise and encouragement is a feature of this support, exemplified by the Head's Praise which pupils receive for all kinds of success and effort. Pupils' self-esteem is greatly enhanced by the public reporting of this praise on the school's website. The relationship between staff and pupils, and amongst pupils themselves, is one of mutual respect, where opinions can be expressed and are appreciated.
- 4.8 Pupils in the sixth form appreciate the assistance they receive with regard to their university applications. Additional pupil support is provided by the medical centre and the chaplaincy as well as peer support by the pupils themselves, either as prefects or the lower school assistants. Pupils can make appointments with the school counsellor directly by email, and this anonymity is welcomed by them. Staff have a very good knowledge of pupils' backgrounds and information is discussed and disseminated as appropriate. The pastoral committee meets twice a term to monitor pastoral issues and ensure pastoral structures are effective. Pupils are proud of their school, and say that they are well cared for and that they have adults or senior pupils to turn to if they have a problem with which they need help. In questionnaire responses, boys confirmed their enjoyment of the school and how well they were supported in all aspects of their school lives. Parents' responses were highly supportive of the pastoral care their children receive.
- 4.9 The school's procedures and practice in safeguarding its pupils are robust. The comprehensive child protection policy is complemented by the requisite training for all staff and senior pupils. Records confirm that training is up to date. Comprehensive documentation underpins the secure system for safely recruiting staff and governors. Health and safety policies and procedures, including those for fire safety, are thorough and regularly reviewed. The access plan for those with learning or physical challenges is suitable and up to date. The range of choice at meals is good and supports healthy eating. A well staffed medical centre gives pupils a good quality of medical and pastoral care. The pupils' physical fitness is strongly promoted through the extensive range of sports and activities available, and pupils confirmed how much they value the new sports centre in this regard. Admission and attendance registers are maintained and stored correctly.

#### **4.(c) The quality of boarding education**

- 4.10 Boarders at Abingdon enjoy a good boarding experience. Boarders' academic outcomes and personal development are well supported by their boarding life, which meets the aim that the boarders form a co-operative, tolerant and purposeful community in which every member can feel comfortable and accepted, and to which all are encouraged to contribute.
- 4.11 The three boarding houses also welcome day pupils as members of the house. This development in recent years has enhanced the integration of day and boarding pupils. Boarders' bedrooms are off limits to day pupils, which ensures that boarders enjoy their own personal space. The school has responded well to a recommendation of the last Ofsted boarding welfare inspection in 2008 for improvement to the boarding houses. The rolling programme for their refurbishment and redecoration is well established. Social spaces and boarders' bedrooms are comfortable and well resourced. The pupils personalise their bedrooms. Boarders are able to access the internet for communicating with home and for academic research, but this is limited to the ICT rooms in each house for health and safety reasons. As recommended by Ofsted, an appropriate fire risk assessment is now in place.
- 4.12 Boarders enjoy good relationships with each other, not just with their own age group but across the years. A significant percentage of boarders is from overseas. They said that integration with day pupils and British boarders was generally good. They are aware that the school has positive strategies to encourage this and pupils understand that this requires commitment on both sides. Boarders have high praise for the level of support they receive from the boarding staff. In their responses to the questionnaire, boarders and their parents indicated that they appreciate the individual care and support provided by the housemasters, tutors and matrons. In addition, boarders value the good quality of medical care. In response to an Ofsted recommendation the school has improved the counselling services. Boarders also see house prefects as empathetic listeners and in this role senior boarders are able to develop leadership skills.
- 4.13 The school's response to the Ofsted recommendation to review the effectiveness of the forums for consultation has been met by the establishment of a boarders' council. During the inspection a meeting of this council was observed. The members are representative of different age groups and backgrounds from all the houses. This committee is just one of the ways in which boarders' personal development is enhanced as they are able to contribute to the development of their lives as boarders.
- 4.14 Boarders enjoy a good range of activities in the evenings and at weekends. They have access to the library and the sports centre, enjoy house and inter-house activities and competitions and value the opportunities the school provides for outings and expeditions. All boarders attend their own chapel service once a week but were quick to point out that the school supports those of all beliefs in the practice of their faith, for example, by special dietary provision during a period of fasting. Boarders enjoy well-balanced, nutritious meals as well being able to make snacks in their houses.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The governing body's support of the management and development of the school is excellent and enables the school to meet its aims. The increased academic success and the investment in staff, buildings and resources for learning since the last inspection indicate the governors' effectiveness in guiding the school in recent years. Moreover, the governors have a strong focus on the priorities for the next ten years, developing the governance strategies and structures needed to turn vision into reality. Governor induction and training have been strengthened and the annual governor performance appraisal has led to improved practices in governors' meetings, and to specific skills being sought in the appointment of new governors. Governors' committees are effective in ensuring that the governing body is kept abreast of all aspects of the school. The education committee receives written reports and verbal presentations from heads of departments and questions examination performance as well as curriculum provision. In responses to the questionnaire, parents showed strong support for the governance of the school.
- 5.2 Governors have good insight into the life of the school. As well as the comprehensive reports from the head and senior managers, governors sample the life of the community through observing lessons and activities. The minutes of governors' meetings confirm the governors' grasp of the detail of school life. Governors' attendance at school events gives them the opportunity of discussion with pupils, staff and parents. The debate around the new structure of the school week and the revised lesson length is an example of governors' involvement in the detail of development planning.
- 5.3 The governing body is diligent in discharging its responsibilities. All policies are reviewed by the full governing body in the course of a year and the effectiveness of health and safety procedures is regularly checked. Pupils' welfare is carefully monitored. A nominated governor oversees the safeguarding of pupils, and all governors are involved in the annual review of the policies and procedures for child protection. Scrutiny by the governing body of the appointment procedures for all staff, governors and volunteers is sound. Governors strongly support the ethos of the school, giving effective support, but also challenge to senior management.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the school are outstanding and fully support the school's aims. Excellent standards in public examinations, the pupils' personal development and their extra-curricular performance are guided by a committed and unified senior team.
- 5.5 The senior leadership team gives the school highly focused educational direction. The school responded swiftly and successfully to the recommendation in the 2005 report concerning the curriculum. Its response to the recommendation that the school accommodation and sports facilities should be improved has been very positive and the new sports centre is much appreciated by the pupils. Since the appointment of the new head, senior leaders have worked closely with the governing body and consulted widely on the shape of the school week and the length of lessons. The process whereby decisions have been reached indicates strong management, particularly in relation to seeking the views of the whole school

community. Well-handled change management is a hallmark of the senior team and the development plan indicates that improvements, in the best interests of pupils' education, are informed by senior managers who listen as well as act.

- 5.6 In response to the recommendation in the last report concerning appraisal, the school has implemented an effective programme. This ensures a regular appraisal of teachers' classroom skills through lesson observation, and also reflects a teacher's total contribution to the life of the school. The improved appraisal system is matched by a supportive induction process.
- 5.7 Management of academic departments is strong. Heads of departments contribute significantly to academic innovation as well as being committed to supporting and motivating their staff teams. Departmental heads are fully involved in the annual audit of departments, which includes lesson observation and analysis of training needs. Pastoral management is excellent. Systems for supporting and tracking pupils' personal development have been effectively refined, and the oversight of the pastoral committee gives particular focus to this work. Both academic and pastoral middle managers confirmed that they were well supported by senior management and were also very encouraged to be instrumental in strategic development.
- 5.8 Senior leaders ensure that policies are effectively implemented and that health and safety practices are carefully monitored. Senior leaders ensure that the safeguarding of pupils is at high priority. This is reflected in the strong culture of child protection throughout the school supported by the good quality of staff training in safeguarding, health and safety. Staff recruitment is managed efficiently, and the procedures for checking all school staff and governors are thorough and well documented in a single central register.

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

- 5.9 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent and supports the school's aim to ensure that there is a harmonious relationship between parents and the school in the best interest of the pupils. The very good links which were in place at the last inspection have been strengthened, particularly by embracing modern methods of communication.
- 5.10 Extremely high levels of satisfaction were expressed in the response to the parental questionnaire. Parents praised all aspects of the school, including the school's promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views, the range of extra-curricular activities provided and the availability of information about the school and its policies. A small minority of parents felt that the school did not encourage them to be involved in its work. The inspection judgement is that a plethora of opportunities are provided for parents to be involved through very well attended social events, parents' evenings and pastoral evenings dealing with issues such as bullying and internet safety. The parents' association is very active, organising social events, running second-hand uniform sales and raising large sums of money for projects which are consistent with the school's development plan. These include bursaries and the new chapel windows reflecting the school's values, work and ethos and contributing to its spirituality. Specialist parents' interest groups for rowing, music and rugby contribute further to the life of the school by taking an active role in extra-curricular events and raising funds for tours.
- 5.11 The school uses a wide variety of media to communicate with parents, further fostering the positive relationship the school has with its parental body. The website

is vibrant and easy to navigate. The parents' handbook, regular newsletters and the weekly emailing are informative and parents are appreciative of the speed of response and helpfulness they generally receive to their queries.

- 5.12 Reports are frequent, detailed and comprehensive. They are well understood by parents and pupils, and good advice is given to pupils on what they need to do to improve. The importance attached to 'The Other Half' is reflected in reports as pupils' achievement in their extra-curricular activities is equally well reported. Parents' evenings are well attended and pupils' attendance at these events in Years 11 to 13 further strengthens the tripartite partnership between the school, pupils and parents. The school's formal complaints policy, available to all parents and published on the school website, conforms to regulations. The excellent pastoral structures and regular communication between staff and parents ensure that parental concerns are duly and swiftly addressed.

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



## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, chapel services 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 Adrian Underwood	Reporting Inspector
Dr Helen Brooke	Vice Principal, HMC school
Mr Paul Fisher	Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Andrew Gist	Director of IB, HMC school
Mr Geoff Lavery	Senior Deputy Head, HMC school
Mr Alasdair McBay	Senior Tutor, HMC school