



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports
For Schools with Residential Provision**

Plymouth College

January 2019



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School's Details

College	Plymouth College			
DfE number	879/6004			
Registered charity number	1105544			
Address	Plymouth College Ford Park Plymouth Devon PL4 6RN			
Telephone number	01752 505100			
Email address	mail@plymouthcollege.com			
Interim Headteacher	Mrs Jo Hayward			
Chair of governors	Mr David Woodgate			
Age range	2 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	670			
	Boys	378	Girls	292
	Day pupils	549	Boarders	121
	EYFS	45	Prep	146
	Seniors	337	Sixth form	142
Inspection dates	22 to 24 January 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Plymouth College is an independent day and boarding school for boys and girls aged between two and eighteen years. It was founded in 1877 and is a charitable trust which is administered by a board of governors. At the time of the inspection there was an interim head teacher with a permanent incumbent commencing in April 2019. Since the previous inspection, the school has reviewed their school ethos and developed a set of 'Plymouth College Principles' defining aspirations for the pupils; refurbished the boarding provision; introduced new academic tracking systems; and reviewed the provision and support for those on the high-performance sports programme. The prep school, including the EYFS, occupies a different site three miles away and has its own management structure. The pupils move to the senior school aged 11, where boarding is available, predominantly in two houses within the main school.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 The school seeks to produce happy, knowledgeable and caring pupils who gain confidence in learning and strive to reach their full potential. It endeavours to provide a caring community in which every individual is of equal importance and recognises that each person has talents that may be in or out of the academic domain.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Most pupils come from white British families with a professional background, living within a 50-mile radius of the school. The boarding community makes up one fifth of the school and includes pupils from over 35 different cultural and language backgrounds. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is above average. The school has identified 82 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia and dyscalculia, 76 of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 93 pupils, 37 of whom receive additional support. Data used by the school have identified 32 pupils as being the most able in its population, and the curriculum is modified for them and for 97 other pupils because of their special talents in performance sport.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards, including the boarding NMS, may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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 is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management, together with the NMS covering the same areas.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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 specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets almost all of the required standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015 and relevant requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements. In order to meet all the standards, the school should take immediate action to remedy the deficiencies as detailed below.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the prep school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the year 2015, performance was above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the year 2015 were in line with the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools. In 2015 pupils' performance in the International Baccalaureate examinations was higher than worldwide norms.
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.11 Arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils do not always pay due regard to current statutory guidance. The school has not always ensured that the safeguarding policy, which includes statutory guidance, has been followed in relation to day pupils who are not collected from school.
- 2.12 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety in paragraphs 8-16, the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 and NMS 2-4, 6-12, 15 and 16 are met but those in paragraph 7 (a) and (b) [safeguarding] are not met.**

Action point 1

- **the school must ensure that staff follow the guidance given in the safeguarding policy, specifically with relation to pupils who are not collected from school within the specified time.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.13 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.14 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.15 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.16 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.17 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.18 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and statement of boarding principles [NMS 1] are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.19 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.20 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.21 Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.22 The safeguarding policy was not followed as detailed in paragraph 2.11. The proprietor has not ensured that the standards are met consistently.
- 2.23 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school in NMS 13 is met but paragraph 34 is not met.**

Action point 2

- the proprietors must ensure that leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and that they actively promote the well-being of the pupils [paragraph 34(1)(a), (b) and (c)].**

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- Pupils show outstanding communication skills and a highly positive and successful emphasis on collaborative learning.
 - Pupils of all ages make strong progress in relation to their starting points and abilities, successfully achieving the school's aims.
 - Pupils achieve exceptional standards in the extra-curricular activities, particularly in sport and music.
- 3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- Pupils actively support one another, recognising individual differences and needs.
 - Pupils are highly-confident, self-assured independent learners who leave the school with a skill set that equips them for the next stage of their lives.
 - Pupils demonstrate an excellent understanding and appreciation of diversity in their community and of the individuals within it.

Recommendations

- 3.3 In the context of the excellent outcomes, the school might wish to consider the following:
- Develop opportunities to share good practice between the senior and prep schools in order to enhance co-operation and collaboration and to support pupils at transition.
 - Provide additional opportunities for pupils to use and develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum.

The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.5 Pupils exhibit excellent knowledge, skills and understanding across a balanced curriculum with exceptional literary skills, as seen in a senior school lesson looking at prejudice in an English essay on *Of Mice and Men*. Their learning develops strongly as a result of supportive teaching and effectively targeted questions with positive feedback and encouragement. Sixth form pupils, for example, showed an excellent understanding of the link between population and wealth distribution and in Year 10 history, pupils demonstrated their highly accurate recall of the League of Nations, the reason Russia didn't participate and the role Germany played in undermining it.
- 3.6 Pupils achieve strongly in both academic and extra-curricular areas of the school ensuring that the school's aim of encouraging all pupils to develop to their full potential with equal importance given to academic studies, sport, the arts and other extra-curricular activities, is met. Pupils throughout the school are proud of what they achieve and speak with great passion about their experiences both in and out of the classroom. Pupils' attainment in public examinations and standardised measures of progress show that pupils in the senior school make good progress. Those with SEND and EAL demonstrate particularly good progress in comparison to that of their peers due to the support they receive from knowledgeable specialist staff. Pupils with SEND in the prep school benefit from a seamless transition to the senior school as the management ensures that the staff in the two schools supporting those with SEND work closely together to ensure the pupils' needs are met. However, this type of close collaboration to support pupils in their transfer to the senior school is inconsistent. In the prep school, internal standardised tests show that pupils achieve well above national averages indicating good progress over time. This was confirmed by the strong progress observed in lessons and in the work scrutiny. Pupils on the high-performance sports programme also exceed the schools' predictions despite their additional commitments. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make excellent progress as all exceed or are at their expected level due to the expert teaching and staff knowledge of the early learning goals.
- 3.7 Pupils benefit from small class sizes throughout the school because teaching is sharply focused on the needs of the individuals. Pupils understand from an early age that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses due to the effectiveness at all levels of matching work to pupils' needs. Pupils have a 'can do' attitude to their school lives, encouraged by enthusiastic and diligent teaching, tutoring and care. They have a positive attitude to their learning and demonstrate a real enthusiasm for absorbing knowledge, accepting challenges and meeting the high standards that both they and their teachers set. This contributes strongly to excellent outcomes in their academic and other endeavours. Pupils are highly motivated and enjoy working both individually and collaboratively as they respond to the interesting and stimulating curriculum.
- 3.8 Pupils feel very well supported, both in class and in their extra-curricular activities, as a result of the excellent and trusting relationship between them and their teachers. This encourages pupils to have the confidence to try things, not to fear failure and to be highly resilient when faced with challenges. Pupils enjoy accepting challenges and are comfortable in praising their peers for their work. Pupils collaborate readily in their work and this is encouraged throughout the school as was seen in the EYFS where the children listened carefully and then made playdoh together by mixing flour, salt, hand cream and colourant. Pupils experience a strong sense of community within their boarding houses enhanced by the family environment where pupils support each other, often working together, guided by their house tutors and boarding staff. Pupils benefit from the opportunity to use some of the school's facilities in the evening and can often be found working together in the library or in one of the many common areas in the boarding houses.

- 3.9 Excellent role models provided by peers and alumni inspire pupils to emulate their distinctive achievements in a wide range of areas. The sporting programme produces elite sports women and men with many representing their county and country in sports ranging from shooting and sailing to modern pentathlon and fencing. Pupils' achievements in swimming and diving are outstanding with several current and former pupils representing their country and gaining medals at the Commonwealth and Olympic games in recent years. Elite swimmers have a bespoke programme of training tailored to their individual needs both on site and with the local club performance squad. Senior school pupils achieve an exceptional level in music with several gaining top grades including diploma level in external music examinations last year. Pupils perform successfully in academic enrichment programmes such as Young Enterprise, drama and mathematics challenges and science Olympiads, which they thoroughly enjoy.
- 3.10 Pupils demonstrate excellent communication skills and have the confidence to speak to large groups of peers, particularly when running assemblies, which is regularly encouraged. Younger pupils enthusiastically presented an assembly about social media, relating it to the recently created Plymouth College Principles which are becoming more integrated into life at the school. In the classroom pupils speak confidently and with passion about their learning as was seen in design and technology (DT) with Year 8 pupils speaking about the development and creation of their totem poles. Year 13 pupils spoke with great pride and eloquence about their work and were articulate in explaining the satisfaction they gained from their achievements. Pupils of all ages were able to answer targeted questions well, often expressing complex and challenging ideas clearly and persuasively, aided by the positive atmosphere created in classrooms. Pupils in the prep school demonstrate higher level communication skills and explain themselves well in class because they are given extensive opportunities in school to express their views. Pupils of all ages are able to express thoughts and feelings freely and with confidence as they feel they are in a safe, family community. Pupils' high-level vocabulary acquisition is evident in their writing and debate where it is used accurately and effectively. For example, pupils in Year 7, communicated excellent answers when considering the suffering of Shoichi Yoroï who spent 30 years in the jungle after the end of the second world war. Pupils have learned to assess the form, language, audience and purpose of the text, allowing them to develop language to effectively reflect tone and meaning.
- 3.11 Pupils of all ages and abilities develop excellent numerical skills and these are applied effectively across a wide range of subjects. Pupils' engagement in challenging mathematics lessons reflects their positive attitudes towards numeracy and its application in other areas such as DT, geography and science, particularly due to rich curriculum planning and development. Pupils develop strong financial management skills by working towards a certificate in financial studies. Children in the EYFS rapidly acquire a good working knowledge of the basic rules of number which is successfully built upon in the prep school. Pupils benefit from using ICT for some of their subject research and homework but it is not embedded uniformly across the curriculum, although some excellent ICT skills were seen in individual project work in Year 11 DT, coding at GCSE and in extra-curricular opportunities such as designing and producing the school magazine. Pupils expressed a desire to use ICT more in lessons.
- 3.12 Pupils are highly effective learners and rapidly develop a wide array of study skills. They are well organised, enjoy the challenges of working independently and are meticulous at meeting the deadlines and high expectations set by staff. Pupils can draw appropriate inferences from a wide range of sources, challenge opinion and defend their ideas with confidence. Pupils have sharply focused skills which many attribute to the influence of the elite sports cohort who demonstrate high-level organisational skills and self-discipline to cope with their rigorous training regime alongside their school commitments. The close and collaborative family feel of the school, particularly in the boarding houses, promoted by strong governance, reinforces the ethos engendered by the sportsmen and women.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.14 Pupils of all ages and abilities develop high levels of self-confidence, are self-reflective and show strong resilience in the face of academic and extra-curricular challenges. They see the elite sportsmen and women as strong role models in building self-esteem and encouraging them to take ownership of their own learning and performance. Pupils benefit from having regular periods of self-reflection with the tutors and boarding staff who help set individual goals and monitor their progress. Pupils demonstrate a strong sense of the 'have a go' culture that permeates through the school in all areas of academic and extra-curricular life, particularly with tasks outside their individual comfort zones. Pupils speak about the support and care they get where there is no fear of failure and they understand the need to reflect on their work in order to improve. They develop resilience through the challenges that they have both in the classroom and in physically demanding outdoor pursuits such as the Ten Tors challenge. They appreciate the close relationships they have with their teachers, rooted in respect, and feel they are able to turn to someone if there is a difficult decision to make.
- 3.15 A very small minority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire did not agree that they receive good advice about their subjects or career choices. Inspection evidence concluded that pupils have been provided with clear information. Sixth-form pupils are confident when making decisions about appropriate A-level and higher education courses including the sports baccalaureate and appreciate the support they are given by the school in the application process, whether applying to selective universities or for sports specialist colleges. Pupils throughout the school have a good understanding that the choices they make will impact on their success and well-being in the future. There are formal and informal opportunities in boarding and in the senior and prep schools for pupils to contribute to school life, whether it be choosing the level of difficulty for homework, the types of food on offer in the dining room or in requesting more water fountains around school.
- 3.16 Pupils are naturally respectful and tolerant of cultural differences and diversity in their school and take every opportunity to celebrate this. There are clear expectations of acceptance and inclusion and the pupils relish opportunities to share culture and language in areas such as assemblies and tutor time. In the prep school the children have a positive attitude to those who are different from them and the educational climate of the school contributes to this in a very positive way. All pupils, drawn from a mix of backgrounds and cultures, work extremely well together; cultural diversity is the norm within the school community. Pupils of all ages accept those with other faiths unequivocally, and this is promoted through the curriculum and through the celebration of other faiths and cultures at appropriate times during the year. Children at the prep school value adult members of their school community from different cultures visiting them to talk about their heritage and this deepens the pupils' understanding of the variations in approach to life. Pupils said that being different is the norm and they demonstrate open and accepting attitudes. Pupils value organising and attending the international evenings which raises awareness of each other's cultures and they enjoy sharing their experiences.
- 3.17 Pupils feel strongly that they are safe and that their healthy lifestyles are fully supported by the educational experience at school. There are regular opportunities for sport at all ages, with physical education being compulsory in the sixth form. Pupils benefit from a central dining facility in the senior school which provides healthy choices and a wide variety of carbohydrate, specifically with the elite sports pupils in mind. A small minority of boarding pupils who completed the questionnaire said that there is not a suitable choice and quantity of food at meal times. Inspection evidence shows that most pupils do not share this view and other evidence corroborates this. The extensive impact of sport in the school generates a positive ethos in relation to healthy lifestyles through regular exercise and a balanced diet. The pupil support network extends to the caterers who communicate any concerns to the pastoral team. Pupils are confident in leading assemblies for their peers focused on both emotional and physical well-being. Pupils are clear that they understand how to stay safe online and they can articulate well the need for a balance in work, rest and play. Prep pupils talk positively about

the good food and that the dining staff check what they eat and there is a ban on very sugary things, although they commented on being able to bring in a birthday cake. Children in Reception love being able to choose the snack they have, but fresh drinking water is stored in snack boxes and not immediately available in class. Pupils deeper understanding of health comes from project work in lessons, personal, social, health and economic education and assemblies, mapped throughout the curriculum. Prep pupils understand how to keep themselves safe on the school site and understand the safety messages delivered through assemblies and by their form teachers.

- 3.18 Many pupils show a mature awareness of the philosophical aspects of life. They care for one another in a positive and family way and not just during the rarer times when they need support. Pupils develop an understanding of the Christian principles that underpin the school's ethos through chapel services and the association with the church community beyond the school. Pupils actively learn about religious holidays and festivals in lessons, assemblies and tutor groups; the school's flag pole highlights the current festival being explored. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects of life and have good opportunities to reflect on them.
- 3.19 The moral development of pupils is excellent and the collective promotion of positive behaviour is evident through all age groups. In the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils said that the school shows favouritism or treats them unfairly. Inspection evidence found that staff were clear in their delivery and reasons for their actions. There are new systems in place which address behavioural issues through restorative justice to enable all the pupils to learn from their experiences and pupils spoken to corroborated this. Most parents in the questionnaire said that the school deals effectively with all types of bullying. Pupils are competitive within their vertically arranged houses with good behaviour and work, as well as competitions, receiving merit points for their house. Prefects act as excellent role models and ambassadors with the prep pupils respecting those in Year 6 who have special responsibilities in the school. Pupils are polite, courteous and respectful of one another and of the adults who care for them. Boarding plays a significant role in establishing a supportive community where pupils mutual respect and tolerance are the norm. Pupils demonstrate strong debating skills with lessons supporting collaborative learning and fostering teamwork, reinforced by the strong influence of sport and the outdoor programme. Boarding pupils speak about the established family feel of the boarding house, helping their social enrichment.
- 3.20 Pupils work together with enthusiasm, showing collaborative skills, listening to one another and proffering suggestions which are debated sensibly. A group of younger pupils said they 'loved the atmosphere' in school because everyone worked together, and that they had strong relationships particularly with the prefects who helped them in 'lots of different ways'. The excellent skills the senior pupils display have been helped by their training in leadership, safeguarding, community support and an understanding of listening. Pupils show a high level of commitment to pupil-initiated projects such as helping with a soup kitchen, sports coaching and a range of local charities. This enables vital links to be forged with the local community and contribute positively to the lives of others in the wider community. Pupils develop a sense of responsibility and see the importance of contributing to others within the school as well as beyond. Less confident pupils quickly build self-esteem through the lunchtime club run by sixth form pupils. This excellent initiative provides a supportive and collaborative environment through playing games and other activities. Pupils of all ages work well with others and understand that team work can be supportive to community goals. Some pupils work outside the local community, for example with a charity in Malawi, getting involved in renovating a school. Pupils in the prep school enjoy the leadership of the senior specialist sports pupils who share their skills and encourage them through building self-esteem. Pupils develop a deep sense of responsibility for the community that they live in.

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with 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 assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Miss Sue Duff	Reporting inspector
Dr Wendy Bowring	Deputy reporting inspector
Mrs Sally Cunliffe	Team inspector for boarding (Former senior housemistress, HMC school)
Dr Christopher Enos	Team inspector (Deputy head academic, GSA school)
Mr Giles Hopkirk	Compliance team inspector (Director of teaching and learning, HMC school)
Mr Alexander McCullough	Team inspector for EYFS (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Mrs Karen Pickles	Team inspector for boarding (Former senior housemistress, HMC school)
Mr Alun Watkins	Team inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)