



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BROCKHURST AND MARLSTON HOUSE SCHOOLS

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools
DfE Number	869/6003
Registered Charity Number	N/A
Address	Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools Marlston House Hermitage Thatcham Berkshire RG18 9UL
Telephone Number	01635 200293
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Email Address	info@brockmarl.org.uk
Heads	Mr David Fleming; Mrs Caroline Riley
Proprietor	Mr David Fleming
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	320
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (159 boys; 161 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 192 3-5 (EYFS): 50 11-13: 78
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 229
Number of Boarders	Total: 91 Full: 11 Weekly: 80
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Head of Early Years	Mrs Caroline Simm
Inspection dates	23 May 2012 to 25 May 2012

PREFACE

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

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: www.legislation.gov.uk. Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

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

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and/or disabilities).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning 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.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. 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 previous ISI inspection of boarding was part of the last whole school inspection in October 2008.

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.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI**

descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade. Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietor, 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

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Mrs Sue Bennett

Mr Richard Evans

Mrs Jane Grubb

Mr Ross Settles

Mrs Jane Chesterfield

Reporting Inspector

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

Team Inspector, Head of IAPS school

Team Inspector, Head of IAPS school

Team Inspector, Director of Studies, IAPS school

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools provide a single sex and co-educational day and boarding education for pupils aged from three to thirteen years. The schools aim to provide a first-class all-round education with a broad curriculum in a happy, disciplined environment. They aim to offer a traditional education allied to highly innovative opportunities for pupils to become self-confident and determined to persevere. Boys and girls are educated together in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Year 1, and then separately until they again come together for their final, Common Entrance years. However, extra-curricular activities are co-educational throughout. The schools are proprietorial, being owned by a family trust, of which two members, together with the schools' senior management team, form the governors.
- 1.2 Brockhurst and Marlston House Schools are both located in a Victorian house, with modern additions, within spacious grounds in rural Berkshire. Brockhurst, the boys' school, was founded in Shropshire in 1884 and moved to its present site in 1945. Marlston House, the girls' school, was established in 1995. The EYFS and Year 1 are housed in Ridge House, a building specifically developed for the three to six year age group. The schools offer full, weekly and flexible boarding to pupils from Year 5 onwards. Since the last inspection, the schools have built a new classroom block and a Learning Development Centre (LDC).
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection the schools had 320 pupils, being 159 boys and 161 girls. Of these, 50 were in the EYFS, 192 in Years 1 to 6, and 78 in Years 7 and 8. Eleven pupils are full boarders, and about 80 make use of flexible boarding. The schools do not select by ability, although the ability profile of the schools, measured by standardised tests, is above the national average overall, with a fairly wide ability range. Pupils are mainly from business and professional backgrounds, drawn from both a wide local area and from London. The large majority of pupils are from English speaking backgrounds and very few are from ethnic minorities.
- 1.4 The schools have identified thirty pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mainly dyslexia. Eleven pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL). Neither school has a pupil with a statement of special educational need.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the schools. The year group nomenclature used by the schools and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception
Form 8	Year 1
Form 7	Year 2
Form 6	Year 3
Form 5	Year 4
Form 4	Year 5
Form 3	Year 6
Form 2	Year 7
Form 1	Year 8

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Throughout the schools the quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good. Pupils generally make progress that is above the average for their ability, and children in the EYFS make good progress from their different starting points. Pupils with special needs and those with English as an additional language, achieve, in relation to their ability, at least as well as other pupils. They are supported in this by the excellent work of the LDC, which enables them to make rapid progress. Provision for the more able pupils is good in Year 8, but is inconsistent lower down the schools. Outcomes in the Early Years are good. Throughout the schools both boarders and day pupils have excellent attitudes to learning, enabling them to achieve good levels of success, with a very good record of scholarships gained. Achievement in physical education (PE) and games is also very good. Teaching is generally good or better, though some lessons lacked very clear aims. The curriculum is broad and generally balanced, though lacking regular review within and across subjects.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent. Spiritual development is strong, and was observed in a wide range of assemblies, house meetings and church services. Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They are proud of their schools and value the excellent relations they have with one another and staff. Children in the EYFS develop good levels of confidence. Throughout the schools pupils are socially and culturally aware, taking a keen interest in charities both locally and abroad. The quality of the boarding provision is excellent. Boarders greatly enjoy their boarding experiences. A strong sense of community contributes to children feeling safe and very well supported.
- 2.3 Governance is good and leadership and management are sound. The governors exercise their responsibilities well, and provide good support for the schools. The structure of the schools' management has been somewhat clarified since the previous inspection, though there remain a lack of job descriptions and of comprehensive and regular appraisal linked to professional development. Members of the senior management team set an excellent example in dedication to the pupils' well-being. The parents' questionnaire indicated that parents were pleased with many aspects of the schools, and particularly with the curricular and extra-curricular provision. Inspectors agreed with these findings. Parents expressed concern at the support provided for pupils with SEND, and inspectors agreed with them regarding classroom support, although they considered the LDC and EYFS gave outstanding help to these pupils. Since the previous inspection the schools have worked on all the recommendations made and have advanced considerably, though in some areas this work is still in progress.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

2.4 The schools meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

2.5 The schools meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Strengthen the schools' main management systems, including appraisal, curriculum review and the use of assessment for future planning.
2. Clarify the responsibilities of senior staff and ensure that all staff have clear job descriptions outlining their specific duties, which are regularly reviewed.
3. Develop inter-departmental planning to ensure effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) in all appropriate areas of the curriculum.
4. In the Early Years ensure that assessment procedures are used consistently across the EYFS in order to plan for the next steps in children's learning.
5. Make better use of the EYFS outside area for outdoor learning rather than supervised play, in order to increase the range of learning opportunities for children.

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 good.
- 3.2 The schools meet well their aims of providing a first-class all-round education with a broad curriculum in a happy, disciplined environment. They offer a traditional education to enable pupils to become self-confident and determined to persevere, with a broad and mainly balanced curriculum that gives priority to literacy, numeracy and science.
- 3.3 Throughout the curriculum, pupils show a good range and depth of knowledge and understanding for their ages. They are able to make cross-curricular links, and quickly recall previous learning. Their literacy and numeracy skills are strong. They read intelligently and write fluently for a variety of purposes and audiences. The pupils' speaking and listening skills are of a high quality for their ages. Pupils are extremely articulate, expressing themselves clearly and fluently in both oral and written work, and with a wide vocabulary. Pupils are able to write at length, for example in English, history and geography. They apply their speaking and listening skills confidently in French and German, and use effectively their mathematical knowledge in science and geography fieldwork, and in history. They co-operate well in groups to solve investigations in science and mathematics. Pupils make use of ICT for a range of tasks in some areas, although its use across the curriculum is not yet fully developed. Reception children are able to add numbers to ten and beyond, to sort shapes and to make patterns. Nursery children are able to answer sensibly and ask pertinent questions about stories they have heard. Both Nursery and Reception children are eager to work independently and find things out for themselves, showing concentration and perseverance.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in nationally standardised tests but on the evidence available it is judged to be well above the national age-related expectations. Most pupils attain high standards in all curriculum areas and across the year groups indicating that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. SEND and EAL pupils, benefiting from the work and close support being provided for them by the LDC, make rapid progress, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Children in the EYFS make good progress to reach levels of skills which are generally above expectations for their age. Their achievement is relatively weaker in writing than in other aspects.
- 3.5 Pupils of both genders achieve equally well throughout the schools across a range of academic and non-academic activities. Year 8 pupils perform very successfully in Common Entrance examinations, as do those Year 6 pupils who take the 11+. The levels of attainment achieved indicate that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. The more able pupils have many opportunities to develop through a range of activities. For the last few years, all pupils have gained places at their first choice of senior school. Many achieve scholarships in a range of fields including academic, music, drama, sport, art and design, and all-rounder awards. At the time of inspection, pupils this year had won six major academic scholarships, four for music, three for art, two for sport, one all-rounder, and one drama scholarship.
- 3.6 The schools celebrate a large number of achievements in sports. These include championships and medals in national competitions. Pupils achieve places in

county sports teams and elite squads. A large number of pupils have been highly successful in ballet and graded music examinations and pupils frequently win awards in verse and prose speaking examinations. School music ensembles perform regularly in public and at music events. SEND and EAL pupils make good progress in extra-curricular activities, as a result of the close, specialist support they receive.

- 3.7 Pupils' success in academic work and other areas of the curriculum owes much to their excellent, positive and highly enthusiastic attitude to their schoolwork. Pupils show themselves to be very capable of working co-operatively with others, and of working independently when given the opportunity.

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

- 3.8 The schools' curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.9 This provision supports well the schools' aims of providing a traditional education allied to highly innovative opportunities for pupils to become self-confident and determined to persevere.
- 3.10 The curriculum covers all the requisite areas of learning, and offers in addition modern and classical languages, and creative and sporting subjects. It continues to contribute successfully to pupils' linguistic, mathematical and scientific development. Pupils learn to use ICT, but its use is not yet fully developed across the curriculum. All pupils are able to learn French from Year 1. Older pupils have the opportunity to visit the schools' French chateau to develop their language skills, and Latin is studied from Year 5. In addition, some scholars learn Greek. German is offered as an additional modern foreign language, but only in Year 7. There are no timetabled lessons of ICT after Year 6, nor design and technology lessons below Year 4 or in Year 8.
- 3.11 The curriculum is broad, varied and generally balanced, and planning takes account of a variety of links across a range of subjects. The curriculum is appropriate to the age and needs of all pupils. The LDC supports pupils with a range of different needs, producing detailed individual educational plans and summaries. In the EYFS, despite changes in staffing, adults know children well and meet their needs effectively. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning, and a good range of activities across the areas of learning, both indoors and outside. However, not enough use is made of the extensive EYFS outdoor area for outdoor learning as opposed to supervised play.
- 3.12 Personal, social, and health education (PSHE) is taught across the curriculum and in form tutor time, and older pupils have a scheduled opportunity to discuss current affairs. Pupils are prepared well for transfer between the different sections of the schools as well as for the move to senior school. Links between the EYFS and Year 1 are good, as is the move from Year 2 to Year 3. Both girls and boys are well supported as they move from the single-sex grouping in Year 6 to a co-educational setting in Year 7. Pupils in Year 8 are placed in ability groups which include a scholarship set. Pupils are thoroughly prepared for entry examinations to senior school. Curriculum planning gives coherence and continuity to pupils' learning across the schools. However, there is currently no system in place for regular curriculum review both within and across subjects. The schools are aware of the recommendation for curriculum review made in the previous inspection report, and has already instituted review of the timetable coverage of the curriculum.

- 3.13 The academic curriculum is well supported by an excellent and extensive extra-curricular programme, and is enhanced by the schools' spacious grounds. Pupils enjoy a very wide range of creative, general interest and sporting activities. Opportunities for music and the performing arts add significantly to the pupils' personal development.
- 3.14 The schools offer strong links with the local community, in particular through visits to local farms, art galleries and businesses, and by inviting other local schools to use the excellent facilities (including the LDC). Visiting authors and musicians also perform within the schools. Many educational trips in this country and abroad, as well as support of charities locally and internationally, further broaden the pupils' social and spiritual awareness.
- 3.15 Pupils are also encouraged to feel part of the international community through the schools' links with South Africa, and the presence of foreign pupils within the schools. Pupils are able to empathise with children from a very different background and to appreciate the value of the many outstanding opportunities available to them.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The overall quality of the teaching is good.
- 3.17 The teaching observed was mostly good or better, the remainder being mainly sound. The teaching is supported by extensive resources that are used particularly well in music and PE but less effectively in some other subject areas. ICT is not used broadly to enrich the learning experience across the whole curriculum. A few subjects make good and regular use of the ICT suite, but lack of classroom-based facilities significantly limits ICT use for some subjects, notably modern foreign languages.
- 3.18 Teachers know their pupils well and praise and encouragement are given consistently. Excellent rapport and strong, positive relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that pupils feel supported and able to seek advice. Teachers show good subject knowledge, and generally make good use of lesson time to ensure effective progress. In some lessons, insufficient care is taken to provide appropriate tasks for pupils' differing abilities, so that the most and least able may sometimes be restricted in their learning. Planning does not always show activities for pupils of differing abilities, as recommended in the previous inspection, although in some lessons the most able pupils are challenged by stimulating opportunities to extend their learning. In the EYFS staff support children's learning skilfully indoors through careful questioning, development of vocabulary and reinforcing of ideas.
- 3.19 In their responses to the inspection questionnaire the majority of pupils felt that they were making good progress and said that they found the work in lessons interesting. The aims of some lessons are not always clear, leading to some lessons where pupil engagement wanes. Assessment in some subject areas is not regularly used to support future planning. In the middle part of the schools, in non-core subject areas, the over-use of worksheets does not provide challenge or extension for the most able.
- 3.20 Teaching is supported by a range of on-going assessments and nationally recognised tests and assessments. Data indicating the progress of all pupils is being electronically collated but the system is not yet in full use. In the EYFS there are good systems for planning and assessment. The 'Learning Journey' books are very popular with parents and children, partly owing to the extensive use of

photographs. However, assessment is not always used consistently by staff to record and plan for the next steps in children's development, particularly as the books are organised chronologically rather than by areas of learning.

- 3.21 Excellent provision is made in the LDC to support individual and group learning needs. Individual targets are set and regularly reviewed and pupils spoke positively about the support they have and the progress they feel they have made. However, class teachers are over-dependent on this specialist provision and, as a consequence, do not always take sufficiently into account the individual needs and abilities of pupils within their lessons. Pupils with EAL were seen to participate well in class discussions and were confident asking for help.
- 3.22 All departments have produced clear schemes of work to guide the teaching and learning, and most have detailed minutes of subject meetings. However, these minutes are largely administrative. Insufficient use is made of the existing peer observation and review of lessons to develop and share best practice.
- 3.23 Some marking, though positive, lacks constructive comment or target setting, and fails to adhere to the schools' marking policy. Most marking, however, is encouraging and supportive, with the best identifying clear steps for improvement alongside pupil self-evaluation.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT.

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The spiritual element in a wide range of assemblies, house meetings and church services enables pupils to reflect on their lives, on their roles and responsibilities, and on their sense of identity. Pupils appreciate non-material aspects of life such as friendships and helping others and are emotionally mature for their age. They enjoy, and make good use of, the beautifully kept grounds, and appreciate the peace and tranquillity which make a sharp contrast to their busy daily lives. Many pupils perform music to a high standard, and give great pleasure to themselves and others in quiet moments before assembly, or while playing in music lessons in the Great Hall throughout the day. Pupils show confidence in performing and enjoy sharing their music with others, which thus forms an important element in their spiritual development.
- 4.3 Pupils have a strong sense of right and wrong. They are proud of their school and value the excellent relationships they have with one another and their teachers. Pupils are keen to support the schools' aims and contribute; older pupils enjoy being given responsibilities within their school. By helping younger pupils in lessons, performing house duties, and reading and supporting in assemblies and church services, senior pupils develop a maturity seen throughout the senior classes. All pupils share in the successes of others, applauding vigorously in assemblies when certificates for various achievements are distributed. Pupils are quick to acknowledge the skills and achievements of others, recognising their responsibility for supporting others and their school.
- 4.4 Pupils regard charitable fund raising as an important part of school life and they consequently devote much thought and energy to it. Pupils show a keen interest in accepting moral and social obligations to contribute to charities and the wider world both locally and beyond. In the EYFS children play their part in the class community, and are pleased to do things for other people. In Reception, for example, children help to prepare drinks and snacks for the rest of the class. The pupils run a charity board which enables them to publicise and keep themselves informed of the latest charity initiatives. They are currently collecting PE kit and library items for a school in Malawi, and organising pupil-led sponsored football tournament events, cake bakes and other initiatives to raise money for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils show an enthusiasm and enjoyment in contributing to these events and a joy in giving.
- 4.5 Children from other countries and faiths are made welcome and pupils show an enthusiasm for learning about other cultures and religions. In moral, spiritual and cultural discussions in many areas of the curriculum pupils develop a depth of understanding and feeling for others which contributes greatly to their personal development. In the senior years pupils gain a wide range of valuable cultural experiences from exchanges to South Africa and trips to other countries.

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

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 The sensitive nature of support provided by all staff enables the schools to fulfil their aim of providing a first-class all-round education within a happy, disciplined and safe environment. Well-established pastoral care procedures are supported by clear policies and are implemented very successfully. The pupil questionnaire responses and interviews both show that pupils understand these procedures, and are confident that they can ask an adult for help or advice if they have a problem; they feel safe and secure. This high quality support facilitates a caring, family atmosphere throughout the schools. The form teachers are initially responsible for monitoring academic progress and pastoral well-being. This care is extremely well supported both by the established house system and by regular staff meetings where there is the opportunity to discuss the progress of every pupil in the schools. These arrangements, together with the warm and trusting relationships between adults and pupils are highly effective in supporting each pupil. EYFS children show that they feel safe and secure in the setting. They are eager to choose their activities when they arrive each day, and they readily turn to trusted adults if they have a problem.
- 4.8 The schools' procedures for promoting good discipline and behaviour are highly effective. Staff in the EYFS encourage good behaviour and consideration for others' needs, and older pupils understand the system of rewards and sanctions which promotes excellent behaviour throughout the schools. They understand the procedures in place to guard against bullying, and are confident that, if there were any concerns, they would be dealt with quickly and appropriately. The extensive games and extra-curricular activities programme provides numerous opportunities for exercise and healthy living. Healthy eating is actively encouraged and is reinforced by a salad bar at lunchtime. In the EYFS staff are caring and attentive to children's needs, so that they develop confidence, independence and healthy habits. The schools have appropriate plans in place for educational access for SEND pupils.
- 4.9 A very strong sense of community permeates the schools. Regular opportunities exist through the established school council for pupils to contribute ideas towards further developing the school community. Pupils commented very favourably about a number of suggested initiatives which have subsequently been implemented by the schools.

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

- 4.10 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.11 The schools take great care over the policies and procedures to safeguard pupils. They have reviewed all areas, and recommendations made in the previous inspection have now been fully implemented. A team of trained members of staff now ensures that all staff recruitment procedures are correctly followed and every member of the school staff is now systematically trained in child protection and safeguarding procedures. The designated senior member of staff regularly updates her own training and closely monitors all safeguarding aspects of the schools.
- 4.12 Health and safety policies and procedures are good, and following an external audit, very effective measures have been taken to reduce the risk of fires and other hazards. Risk assessments are in place and regularly undertaken as a matter of

course. The schools are pro-active in this important area, and now have an on-going professional audit of its health and safety policies and provision. It has met every recommendation made at the last inspection. In the EYFS staff are fully aware of all safeguarding requirements and by the end of the inspection all regulatory requirements were met. Thus arrangements are in place to promote effectively the welfare of the children.

- 4.13 Arrangements for sick or injured pupils are good, and the qualified senior matron provides a high quality of care. Medical records and incident books are kept up-to-date. As part of a regular cycle, all staff undertake appropriate first-aid training.
- 4.14 The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored.

4.(d) The quality of boarding education

- 4.15 The quality of boarding education is excellent.
- 4.16 Boarders enjoy outstanding boarding experiences and enthusiastically discuss the provision when showing visitors around. They are confident, self-reliant and show high standards of integrity. Older boarders strongly embrace roles of responsibility such as those of house prefects and school council representatives. They understand their roles well and provide impressive support for new and younger boarders. Boarders develop an extremely good understanding of world events through watching the evening news. There is an overwhelmingly strong sense of community within both boarding houses and highly positive relationships exist between boarders. They feel safe and very well supported by staff who care for them. Boarders know to whom they can turn for personal guidance and help, including nominated adults outside school, such as the independent listener. Systems of behaviour management are very well understood by boarders, who also stress that instances of bullying are extremely rare. They know that any such occurrence would be quickly and fairly dealt with. Boarders have a wealth of opportunities to contribute their views on the boarding provision through family group 'pow-wows', and regular house and council meetings. They know that senior staff value their thoughts and opinions highly.
- 4.17 The quality of provision and care is good. Boarding staff support individual needs consistently well, ensuring that boarders are fit and healthy. Strong links exist between the academic life of the schools and the boarding community. Teaching-staff lead study preps and undertake boarding duties. Boarders' academic needs are supported extremely well by form tutors. High quality induction procedures are in place for new boarders. Pupil handbooks and peer guides provide valuable support for those new to boarding. Effective policies and procedures are now in place for medical provision. Comprehensive records, including medical history and appropriate permissions for emergency treatment, are kept for each boarder. A qualified senior matron oversees boarders' health and well-being. A local doctor visits weekly; boarders also have access to specialist services such as dentist or optometrist. Arrangements for boarders who are unwell during the night are robust. Staff strongly encourage healthy eating. Meals are nutritional, varied and generally enjoyed by boarders. Individual dietary needs, such as gluten allergies, are well provided for. Boarders benefit from an exciting range of organised evening and weekend activities such as archery, lacrosse, camping trips and mountain-biking. A good balance of study and free time gives boarders many opportunities to relax and enjoy the schools' extensive grounds. The quality of the boarding accommodation

is, however, variable, particularly in dormitories, as the schools continue to meet recommendations from the last inspection regarding refurbishment and the impact of flexi-boarding upon space. Bathroom areas are adequate and generally clean. Storage space for boarders' personal belongings is limited. Lockable provision for valuables is available and boarders can personalise their own areas with photographs and posters. The common room is comfortable, with a homely feeling; additional resources such as the games room and internet café are greatly valued by boarders. Provision for boarders' laundry needs is adequate. Good provision is made for replenishing their personal and stationery items. Boarders have excellent opportunities to contact their families, and house parents regularly communicate with parents, particularly those of full boarders. Parents are warmly welcomed into school and regularly attend sports matches and other seasonal events.

- 4.18 Arrangements for the welfare and safeguarding of boarders are now excellent, and compliant with the Boarding National Minimum Standards. Effective policies, procedures and training updates ensure that staff have a thorough understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. Additionally, designated adults and the local authority's safeguarding board support them very well. Recruitment and vetting checks for new staff are rigorous. All boarding staff are suitably qualified and experienced and most have detailed job descriptions for their respective roles. Since the last inspection, the recommendation regarding health and safety training for the designated person has been addressed. Good levels of staff supervision and robust registration systems ensure that staff know boarders' whereabouts at all times. Issues related to boarders' safety identified during the inspection have been appropriately rectified. Detailed risk assessments are undertaken for both on-site and out-of-school activities. Fire practices take place regularly and boarders have a clear understanding of emergency evacuation procedures. House staff conscientiously promote the schools' behaviour and anti-bullying procedures and there are no recorded incidents of serious misbehaviour or sanctions.
- 4.19 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent, successfully achieving the boarding aims, as illustrated by the happiness of boarders, the smooth running of both houses and the community atmosphere throughout. Boarding is considered an important element within both schools. Staff are exceptionally dedicated in providing the best care for boarders and they work extremely well as a team. Since the previous inspection, senior boarding staff have gained professional practice qualifications in boarding. Highly reflective processes of self-evaluation ensure that future boarding needs are identified and inform development planning. The schools value the views of parents through regular face-to-face contact and periodic surveys. Responses to pupil and parental questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the boarding provision. Parents commented on the excellent support that boarders receive, aiding their personal development. A few raised concerns over the quality of boarding accommodation and food. However, the schools are aware of these issues and have implemented action. Pupils commented on their enjoyment of boarding and particularly, the variety of activities, which they feel prepare them with life skills for the future. Inspectors concur with these views.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the schools is good.
- 5.2 The schools are jointly governed by two trust governors who meet frequently to oversee the long term direction of the schools. The senior management team constitutes the main governing body, and this group has weekly meetings. Governance is thus immediate, and closely in touch with all school affairs. The schools are constantly seeking to improve their provision, and have detailed schemes in their development plan for further facilities and equipment. The commitment to the schools of those who govern it is outstanding; high levels of both financial and time investment are very evident.
- 5.3 The governors of the schools show a keen awareness of responsibility in relation to maintaining the ethos of the schools, providing a high quality of education for all pupils, and achieving the schools' aims to provide a friendly, family environment in which pupils may prosper. The provision of a central database to check regulatory compliance, parent and pupil details, and pupil progress in both curricular and extra-curricular areas is a step in ensuring systematic monitoring of all aspects of the schools. The governance of the schools ensures that the schools are up-to-date and fully compliant with current regulatory requirements, and is effective in discharging its responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety.

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

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the schools are sound.
- 5.5 The schools' leadership is characterised by great devotion to the schools, extensive commitment of both time and energy in the pupils' interests, and great dedication to furthering the aim of the schools to provide an all-round education with a broad curriculum in a happy, family environment. The previous report recommended that the schools improve the management structures to ensure greater efficiency in academic direction, in oversight of departments and in curriculum development and review, and also that the schools should develop a system of appraisal of staff, coupled with opportunities for continued professional development. It also recommended greater diversity in teaching strategies. The management has made some progress in each of these recommendations, although work continues to achieve greater efficiency throughout.
- 5.6 Leadership and management in the EYFS are good. Senior staff have good oversight of the provision and clear priorities for improvement, for example in the outdoor area, which is not always used to best advantage for the children. Team work is good, and all staff are keen to improve the provision and do their best for the children. Relationships with parents are excellent and they are very satisfied with the provision and particularly with the fact that the children feel happy and safe at school.
- 5.7 The schools have responded to the recommendations of the previous report by undertaking a review of their administrative functions, so that they now have two deputy heads, one academic and one pastoral, and a director of studies. However,

the areas to be covered by these three posts have not been formalised in written job descriptions and the responsibilities of the three posts have sufficient unresolved overlap that it is not clear at all times how these roles operate. These roles do not include a full appraisal process of the academic staff who come within their remits.

- 5.8 The schools have now appointed heads of department, who have produced schemes of work in all subjects. These provide good guidance, with some being particularly detailed and helpful, especially for new members of staff. A system exists to review the written work of pupils, but the review occurs only once a year for each pupil, and seems largely concerned with spelling, handwriting and general presentation of work. Although serving a useful purpose, it is not a substitute for the detailed and on-going monitoring of the work of departments, to ensure high standards of assessment used to assist future planning, appropriate levels of work for both SEND pupils and those who are especially able, and the employment of a variety of teaching strategies. These features all exist in various sections of the schools, but not systematically across the whole establishment. The introduction of a central data system, mentioned in the previous report as in the process of being developed, is still a work in progress; it will clearly assist in monitoring pupils' performance when staff have received appropriate training to maximise its use. The schools successfully recruit and retain suitable staff and carry out the appropriate checks and training to ensure safeguarding and child protection. The management is supported by a very dedicated secretariat, and efficient catering and cleaning staff. The groundsmen maintain the grounds with skill and devotion.
- 5.9 Communication within the schools is generally good; staff have daily briefings, and exchange of information regarding pupils' welfare is a constant feature of the schools. All necessary information is supplied to current and prospective parents. Reports to parents are appropriately regular, informative and useful. Communication with parents makes use of email, the schools' website and the fortnightly newsletter. In their questionnaire responses, parents were generally pleased with the information made available to them, the timely response to their queries and the ease with which they could contact staff. They were less happy about the help received by pupils with special educational needs, both in the main schools and in the EYFS. Inspectors thought the help provided by the LDC was often outstanding, but agreed with parents that not all these pupils were well catered for in mainstream lessons, apart from in the EYFS, where they were well supported. Parents particularly liked the range of curricular and extra-curricular provision, and strongly supported the view that their children feel safe and happy. Parents have access to a good complaints policy, though it has not been invoked in the last year. They also have a flourishing Parents' Association, through which they have another channel of communication with the schools.

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