



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

COLSTON'S SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Colston's School

Full Name of School	Colston's School		
DfE Number	801/6002		
Registered Charity Number	1079552		
Address	Colston's School Bell Hill Stapleton Bristol BS16 1BJ		
Telephone Number	0117 965 5207		
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Head	Mr Peter Fraser		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Karen Morgan		
Age Range	3 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	822		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (530 boys; 293 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	52	5-11: 182
	11-18:	588	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	822	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 0
Number of Boarders	Total:	2	
	Full:	2	Weekly: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Caroline Aspden		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	15 Feb 2011 to 16 Feb 2011 16 Mar 2011 to 18 Mar 2011		

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 inspections were in March 2003 for the Lower School and in April 2005 for the Upper School.

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.

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 31st 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.

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 November 2010 and can be found at 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 Colston's School was founded in 1710 by the philanthropist Edward Colston as a boys' boarding school. He entrusted the school to the Society of Merchant Venturers, which continues to this day, and still nominates many of the school's governors. The school admitted day boys in 1949 and girls into the sixth form in 1984. Full co-education was achieved in 1991 when the school merged with a nearby girls' school. The Lower School (primary age) was opened on an adjacent site in 1942 for boys only. It, too, became fully co-educational in 1991. The school has occupied its current site, the former palace of the Bishop of Bristol in Stapleton, since 1857. Colston's School is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. Its governors all hold proprietorial responsibility.
- 1.2 The Upper School (secondary age) aims to provide the opportunity for every boy and girl to develop his or her potential to the full, and achieve standards of excellence in academic, sporting, social, creative and cultural areas. It seeks to develop self-confidence, and to encourage pupils to become productive, thoughtful, articulate, and responsible citizens; to recognise the dignity, potential and worth of each individual; to encourage confidence, curiosity, creativity, openness and self-expression; and to provide opportunities to develop leadership skills and an appreciation of the importance of initiative and independence. The Lower School has similar aspirations and aims to develop the talents of all pupils by involving them in a wide-ranging educational experience. It is committed to excellence in academic, cultural and sporting pursuits, and to active partnerships between staff and pupils and between school and home.
- 1.3 The school currently educates 822 pupils, including 530 boys and 292 girls. Of these, 234 are in the Lower School, which includes 52 children between the ages of three and five in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Pupils transfer into the senior school at age eleven. The school maintains a small boarding provision for two boy boarders, which is due to cease in summer 2011. Pupils are drawn from a broad range of backgrounds, including professional and business families in the Bristol area.
- 1.4 Pupils take standardised aptitude and ability tests in Years 6, 7, 10 and 12. These show that the ability profile is above the national average at each stage, but with a broader spread of ability in the sixth form. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but the school has identified 88 pupils requiring varying degrees of learning support for learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), mainly dyslexia. Of these, 49 receive additional help with their learning. Twenty-seven pupils come from homes, mainly of Indian and Pakistani origin, where English is not the principal language spoken and, of these, one receives support for English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Colston's School successfully meets the principal aims of its Lower School and Upper School. The pupils' achievement is good in both schools, and they have well-developed subject knowledge and understanding for their age. Their attainment in national tests and public examinations is good, and above the relevant maintained school averages. The pupils show enthusiastic and hard-working attitudes to their work, and display good learning habits. These standards are supported by the broad curriculum, and the wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities, and enhanced by effective teaching, a significant amount of which is excellent. The assessment and marking of the pupils' work is inconsistent in quality, however, and pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent, and they show strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They grow and develop well throughout their time in the two schools, and show pronounced maturity and integrity. The quality of pastoral care is excellent, with the Lower School form system and Upper School house-based tutors at its heart, and it makes a strong contribution to the pupils' personal development. Pupils' relationships are excellent. Arrangements to promote the pupils' welfare are good, and relevant policies are implemented effectively. These enhance the pupils' sense of well-being. The school makes good provision for the two boarders remaining in the school, and they benefit greatly from the experience.
- 2.3 Governors provide strong support for the two schools, and ensure that they are well informed about financial and educational matters. However, their grasp and monitoring of regulatory matters have not been rigorous enough to ensure compliance. Leadership and management structures within the Upper School and Lower School are good and enable them to sustain further development in the directions defined by them. Separate procedures within each school are well matched to the particular needs of each age group. However, systems to monitor and evaluate academic and pastoral provision are not always efficient enough to achieve consistent practice. The two schools have formed good partnerships with parents. Both schools have responded appropriately to the recommendations made at their previous inspections. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of the education provided by the school. A small minority of Lower School parents felt that they were not encouraged strongly enough to be involved in the life of the school. Inspection evidence did not support 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 did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it was required to:

- ensure that both the Upper School and the Lower School admission registers include the names and addresses of pupils' previous schools [Part 3, paragraph 17., under Welfare, health and safety];
- carry out any necessary List 99/ISA barred list checks, checks of identity and qualifications, checks of medical fitness and right to work in the UK for all staff requiring them; and ensure that these checks are made before the person starts work, and appropriately recorded in the single central register of appointments [Part 4, paragraphs 19.(2)(a) and (b), 19.(3), 22.(3)(a) to (c) and (f), and 22.(4), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety];
- require any employment supply agencies to declare whether Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) disclosures contain relevant information, and ensure that the supply agency complies with this request and supplies the relevant CRB certificate if it discloses information [Part 4, paragraphs 20.(2)(a)(i)(cc), 20.(2)(a)(ii) and 20.(2)(d), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors];
- carry out its own checks of identity on all persons recruited from a supply agency, and ensure that all checks on such staff are recorded in the single central register of appointments [Part 4, paragraph 20.(2)(c) and 22.(5)(c), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors];
- ensure that checks through the CRB are carried out on all proprietors, together with all necessary checks of identity, List 99/ISA barred list checks, and checks of a person's right to work in the UK, and ensure that these checks are recorded in the single central register of appointments [Part 4, paragraph 21.(6)(a), 21.(6)(b)(i) and (ii), 22.(6) and 22.(7)(a), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors];
- ensure that parents of current and prospective pupils are made aware of the information available to them and how they can access it [Part 6, paragraph 24.(1)(b), under Provision of information];
- ensure that Upper School parents and parents of prospective pupils are provided with the name and contact address of the new chair of governors [Part 6, paragraph 24.(2)(c), under Provision of information];
- ensure that all required items of information are made available to parents of current and prospective pupils [Part 6, paragraph 24.(3)(b), (e), (f) and (g), under Provision of information];
- ensure that the complaints procedure for parents includes all required elements [Part 7, paragraph 25.(i)(ii), under Complaints].

2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report, as far as it is possible to do so.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Raise the quality of teachers' marking to the standard of the best, so that pupils are given clear guidance to help improve their work.
2. Sharpen monitoring by governors and senior managers to maintain regulatory compliance and check the effectiveness of houses and subject departments.
3. Develop EYFS planning documents further to ensure that next steps in learning are always evaluated.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 In the Upper School and the Lower School, the pupils' achievements are good and are sometimes excellent. This successfully fulfils the schools' aims to develop pupils' talents and potential, and achieve high standards in all that they do. The pupils achieve good standards in a broad range of extra-curricular activities and competitions. Throughout the school, they respond well in reaching the high standards that are expected of them. Pupils in the Lower School gain appropriate knowledge and good study habits to succeed well in the Upper School.
- 3.2 The pupils have a good understanding of the subjects they study. For example, pupils in the Lower School use mental strategies well in mathematics and those in the Upper School engage in enthusiastic discussion of general topics and show understanding of significant factors in science. Throughout the school, the pupils' standards of literacy are particularly good in relation to their ability, and they express themselves fluently both in their speaking and in their written work. The standard of presentation of work is frequently excellent. Pupils are competent in mathematics and are able to use their skills to help their learning in subjects such as geography, science and business studies. The improved facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) are well used by the pupils, predominantly in the Upper School, in a range of different subjects.
- 3.3 The following analysis of test and examination attainment uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009, the most recent three-year period for comparative statistics. Attainment in national tests at the age of 7 has been far above the national average for maintained primary schools. In national tests at the age of 11, results have been above the national average. Attainment at GCSE and A level has been above the national average for maintained secondary schools, and similar to the average for maintained selective schools. In 2010, half the grades achieved at GCSE were at least A grades. At A level, over four out of ten grades achieved were at A* or A. These results, taken in conjunction with other inspection evidence and a consideration of pupils' backgrounds and circumstances, and their achievements and successes in other areas, indicate that both girls and boys make particularly good long-term progress relative to other pupils of similar ability. This is supported by standardised measures of progress to GCSE and in the sixth form.
- 3.4 In their physical activities, the pupils are engaged and purposeful; good, well-structured coaching has ensured high standards both individually and in teams, especially at regional and national levels. The pupils are significantly successful in a range of other graded examinations and events: for example, in music, drama, dance, poetry, public speaking and science; and members of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) have achieved success in a range of new skills and arduous pursuits.
- 3.5 The quality of pupils' learning is good, and often excellent, particularly when the teaching allows them to think freely and creatively. The pupils' good progress is enhanced by their excellent attitudes to learning, their co-operative behaviour, and their willingness to work hard. They are keen to succeed and be actively involved in lessons. In the Upper School, they ask perceptive and imaginative questions. When given the chance to do so, they enjoy working in pairs and small groups, learning effectively from each other.

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

- 3.6 Curricular provision across both schools makes a good contribution to the standards achieved by the pupils, and the provision of extra-curricular activities and opportunities is excellent. A broad curriculum is in place for all ages, which includes all the required areas of learning. This supports the schools' aims to enable pupils to benefit from a wide range of educational opportunities. Good consultation between the two schools ensures effective continuity of learning on transfer to the Upper School.
- 3.7 The Lower School has a strong focus on numeracy and literacy, but without neglecting the humanities and creative subjects. By the time pupils reach Year 10, a good range of optional subjects provides appropriate choice for pupils, with the recent addition of a broader range of design and technology options, business and communication, and ICT. Most pupils are able to take separate sciences. The twenty examination subjects available in the sixth form include philosophy, psychology, three modern foreign languages, and the recently introduced BTEC qualification in sports science.
- 3.8 The well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, taught in tutor groups and Lower School forms, is felt by pupils to be interesting and useful. In the sixth form, a good general studies and enrichment programme includes practical issues such as money management and healthy eating, as well as more erudite ethical and political topics. External speakers provide additional variety and expertise.
- 3.9 The curriculum meets the needs of the pupils very well. Provision for more able pupils is monitored by Upper School subject departments and enhanced through good extension activities and opportunities. Top set pupils take GCSE mathematics a year early and then follow an advanced course. Keen junior pupils are entered for a national science challenge. Pupils in the Upper School reading group discuss their responses to some demanding contemporary literature. Pupils requiring help with LDD are well catered for through specific support in the Lower School, and some individual sessions in the Upper School, depending on need. Subject teachers offer extensive support in and out of lesson time. The libraries in both schools have been improved recently, and are well managed and used effectively to support the pupils' learning. The Upper School library, in particular, has increased and updated its resources significantly over the last year. Opportunities to use ICT facilities have been considerably improved since the previous inspection in both the Lower School and the Upper School and its use is more effectively included across the curriculum in a number of subjects, primarily in the Upper School. Careers and higher education advice and support in the Upper School are excellent.
- 3.10 The extra-curricular programme is also excellent and rated highly by pupils and parents. There are numerous sporting and non-sporting activities on offer across the age ranges, with the CCF providing valuable experience in all three service sections. Provision for drama and music is strong, and there is keen participation and support for events, particularly the popular and keenly contested inter-house music competitions in both schools. A number of worthwhile and valuable links with the local community enable pupils to work in local schools. An extensive programme of educational visits includes geography and science field trips, the art trip to Paris, and language trips to Berlin and Barcelona.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The quality of teaching across both schools is good and a significant proportion is excellent. Good teaching makes a strong contribution to the achievement of pupils in all year groups and their enjoyment of learning. It supports the aims of both schools to provide the opportunity for all pupils to develop their full potential through a wide range of learning experiences. Good teaching has been sustained in both schools since they were last inspected.
- 3.12 Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent and are a strong feature of the learning ethos in classes and around the school. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which helps to engage pupils and encourages them to do the best they can. A wide range of teaching methods helps pupils to make good progress because they find lessons interesting. In the best teaching, well-planned tasks provide good challenge for groups of different ability. This was apparent in Lower School work on the theme of transport which inspired the pupils to make good progress in improving their writing skills. Lessons are usually well-paced, and a good volume of work is taught and understood. For example, Upper School pupils considered a wide range of information about the Black Death and its impact on mediaeval society. Visual information from a painting of the period, and links with geography and biology, stimulated a high level of learning.
- 3.13 Good progress has been made in meeting a main recommendation from the previous inspection report concerning ICT. Pupils' learning is now more effectively supported by teachers' use of appropriate technology. For example, in Upper School music, pupils made excellent use of ICT to produce and rehearse a graphic score in which musical sounds were matched to visual images. Teachers' good knowledge of pupils and their learning needs is used well to plan lessons which engage their interest, and enable them to monitor their progress with care. Good questioning by teachers stimulates lively discussions to extend learning at the same time as allowing teachers to assess pupils' understanding. Where teaching is less successful, the pace of learning is slower because lessons are too dominated by the teacher. In a few lessons, pupils were not provided with a sufficient range of learning tasks to encourage them to make the best progress possible and there were insufficient opportunities for independent learning.
- 3.14 Pupils with particular learning needs or EAL are accurately assessed and their needs are quickly identified. The limited specialist teaching available in both schools is of good quality. Specialist staff also provide guidance for class teachers and all pupils with identified learning needs receive effective support in class, so that they make the same progress as their peers. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly and thoroughly. The best quality provides a balance between recognition of strengths and clear, evaluative comments to identify how work could be improved. Pupils benefit from the developmental points given to them by teachers, including the verbal feedback they receive in class, on homework and essays. However, not all marking is carried out in this way, and some does not always guide pupils on how a piece of work can be improved.

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 pupils' personal development is excellent and a considerable strength of both schools. They show high levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, and the highly supportive ethos within the school community allows them to grow and flourish into self-assured young people of integrity who have a strong sense of who they are and what they believe in. All pupils are encouraged to develop their own personality and to respect the values and beliefs of others in line with the school's aim to recognise the dignity, potential and worth of each individual.
- 4.2 The pupils' well-developed spiritual awareness is enhanced by the multi-faith environment of the school. Lower School daily assemblies enable pupils to understand and celebrate the beliefs and festivals of Christian and other faiths. Upper School pupils reflect on a range of issues in chapel and assemblies, from the Holocaust to contemporary events, and the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves. The pupils' awareness and respect for others are enhanced by considering themes relating to values such as forgiveness. The religious studies department plays a prominent role in fostering pupils' spiritual development, and pupils consider the beliefs of prominent sportsmen, the concept of evil and the meaning of love.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral development is excellent. The school aims to foster high moral standards and honesty, and pupils achieve this very well. The parents' questionnaire responses showed strong approval of the positive attitudes and values that the school promotes in their children. Pupils throughout the whole school show a clear understanding of the importance of good conduct, and behaviour observed throughout the inspection was exemplary. Pupils have a strong sense of fair play and equality, and are clear that inappropriate behaviour is not tolerated. They have a natural sense of right and wrong. Pupils' moral values are enhanced through the very good PSHE programme and circle time. Pupils in the Upper School have a clear understanding of the importance of making sensible decisions about their own lives, and are mature in their discussion of issues such as relationships and addiction.
- 4.4 The social development of the pupils of all ages is outstanding. A feeling of friendship throughout the school is easily detected; pupils show a strong sense of respect for each other and they co-operate well. In Year 6, the pupils act responsibly in their roles as librarians or members of the school council in the Lower School. Initiative and leadership are fostered strongly through the CCF, the work of the prefects and those managing the school council in the Upper School. Links between year groups are maintained and encouraged by those sixth-form pupils who support and mentor groups of younger pupils. Their concern for those less fortunate than themselves is evident in the outstanding charity work done by pupils throughout both schools.
- 4.5 The multi-cultural environment within and around the school influences the work and attitudes of the pupils, and their appreciation of diversity and their empathy with other cultures are excellent. The pupils show great tolerance and respect for the beliefs and opinions of others. Their sensitivity towards contemporary world events was strongly evident in Lower School geography, and in Upper School discussion of

issues such as the concept of arranged marriages. The pupils celebrated Chinese New Year with enthusiasm in the Lower School.

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

- 4.6 Arrangements to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety throughout the whole school are good in most respects. The standard of pastoral care and support for pupils is excellent. These contributions to the pupils' well-being meet the schools' aims to develop confidence and self-respect within a secure and caring community. Since the previous inspection, the creation of the posts of assistant heads of house in the Upper School has allowed the responsibility for pastoral care to be shared more efficiently within the houses.
- 4.7 At the heart of the pastoral provision is the highly effective tutorial system. Based on class groups in the Lower School, and house-based year groups in the Upper School, tutors know their tutees very well, and work hard to give them excellent support in all areas of their school lives, both pastoral and academic. The excellent pastoral care relies successfully on frequent information sharing between tutors, house staff and senior leaders. Pupils feel a strong sense of positive affiliation with their house, and many house events and competitions reinforce this sense of belonging. Pastoral care benefits from the regular meetings and good communication between staff, and efficient systems ensure that pastoral concerns are identified quickly by teachers and tutors, and resolved effectively. Tutoring arrangements in the sixth form are rather more informal than lower down the school, but sixth-form pupils receive support from within other areas of school life.
- 4.8 Relationships between pupils, and with their teachers, are excellent, and a clear atmosphere of mutual respect and trust prevails. The pupils are supportive of one another: they look out for each other and feel at liberty to approach staff on another pupil's behalf. The responses to the pupils' questionnaire indicate that they feel strongly that there are many caring, qualified and responsible adults to whom they can turn in moments of difficulty or crisis. The policy of having a sixth-form prefect as a senior member of younger tutor groups helps to encourage good relationships between older and younger pupils.
- 4.9 Effective and compliant policies safeguard pupils' welfare, promote good behaviour, prevent bullying and include the required training for staff. They are currently well implemented, since past failures to carry out some recruitment checks on staff and governors have been rectified, and a thorough system is now in operation. Efficient procedures are followed to ensure the pupils' health and safety, including minimising risks from fire, and are well documented. Provision for sick pupils is good. Pupils have a good choice of food at lunch time, and are encouraged to eat healthily and be aware of nutritional requirements. The pupils have many opportunities to take physical exercise during breaks and in lunchtime clubs, sports teams and after-school activities. However, the changing rooms for boys in the Upper School are in poor condition.
- 4.10 The school has an effective plan for improving educational access for pupils with particular learning needs or disabilities. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and stored.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.11 The school makes good provision for the two Year 13 boarders remaining. Relationships are good, and the boarding environment enhances the boarders' education and personal development significantly. They very much appreciate the support of the house staff, who give them an entirely appropriate blend of support and guidance with independence and freedom. The two boarders benefit from extensive accommodation in the boarding house, and share exclusive access to spacious recreational space and facilities. Both have large private study bedrooms in the centre of the school. Weekend activities include sport, trips to the cinema, and access to Bristol, as well as plenty of opportunity to catch up with work and to relax.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good in most respects, and members of the governing body provide strong support for the work of both schools. Their oversight and commitment to the school's success ensure that its core purpose and mission are kept at the forefront of the school's life and work. However, systems to ensure that the school achieves and maintains compliance with regulations have not been sharp or efficient enough.
- 5.2 Governors provide very good support and guidance through the work of their committees, and draw on their extensive professional expertise and experience to sustain the school's success in a challenging environment. They are well informed about its work, through various reports and presentations, and sometimes shadowing pupils for a day. Their grasp of financial planning and priorities is strong, and they ensure that human and material resources are carefully deployed to maximum effect. Priorities and targets are identified to move the schools forward, and challenging and vigorous debate ensures that the management of both schools is properly held to account.
- 5.3 Governors are aware of their responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of the pupils. They are fully committed to meeting the regulations on the safe and proper use of premises. However, they have not been sufficiently aware of their other statutory responsibilities. Although they have reviewed the effectiveness of child protection arrangements, they have not had an efficient system for maintaining compliance, especially in the area of checks for the recruitment of staff and proprietors.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is good in many ways, with some strong features and developments. However, systems to ensure and maintain regulatory compliance have not been sufficiently effective, and evaluation of academic and pastoral practices in the Upper School is not always fully consistent. The two schools largely run and organise themselves separately, but co-ordination and good communication ensure continuity of education for children transferring between the two schools. Effective structures and procedures make a strong contribution to meeting the respective school aims. Both schools have fulfilled the recommendations of their previous reports, including those relating to management.
- 5.5 The senior leadership of each school has identified and promoted a clear vision for the future, and staff at all levels are committed to providing a high standard of education for the pupils. A clearer sense of educational purpose has recently become evident, and this has enabled the pupils to achieve good standards and demonstrate excellent personal development. At the Upper School, good progress has been made in redefining roles, and clarifying sharper responsibilities and greater accountability among the senior staff.
- 5.6 Heads of department and heads of houses in the Upper School undertake a comprehensive annual review of their academic and pastoral teams, enabling identification of targets and priorities for development. However, systems to monitor

the consistency of practices across the whole school are not yet fully efficient. Monitoring of practice in the Lower School relies significantly on 'learning walks' by which staff evaluate the learning experience from the pupils' point of view. Both the Lower School and the Upper School have specified areas for development and improvement. The plans drawn up by the Lower School provide a sharper focus on effective implementation than those of the Upper School.

- 5.7 Both schools have, as a high priority, effective processes to review the professional performance of staff, and ascertain training needs. Staff across both schools have received appropriate training in safe working practices and child protection. By the time of the team visit, the school had made good progress in improving the effectiveness of its staff recruitment process. All missing checks have been rectified, where it is possible to do so, and recent appointments show the recruitment process to be fully robust.

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

- 5.8 Both schools maintain a good partnership with parents, meeting their commitment to effective links between school and home. Many features of the relationship with parents are excellent and the provision of information has improved recently.
- 5.9 The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of the education provided by the school. They particularly approved of the range of subjects and activities offered, the high standard of behaviour, and the attitudes and values promoted by the school. Parents valued the ease with which they could communicate with the school, and the timely responses received. A small minority of Lower School parents felt that they were not encouraged strongly enough to be involved in the life of the school. Inspection evidence did not support this view.
- 5.10 Parents in both schools support matches, concerts, plays and other events. They attend social events organised by houses, and meetings concerning specific topics, such as cyber-bullying. In the Lower School parents help with reading and the library. The thriving parents' society makes a valuable contribution to the life of the school through charity work, raising funds to purchase additional equipment, supporting tours, assisting the head on induction events, and bringing new parents together at social events. Parents of past and present pupils are also invited to open mornings to help promote the school. Parents have good opportunities to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children through induction and curriculum evenings in the Upper School, and parents' evenings and 'open classrooms' in the Lower School. Information evenings are held in the autumn term for Year 6 pupils approaching the transition to the Upper School.
- 5.11 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with good information about the school on the comprehensive website and in numerous information booklets and handbooks. Regular letters from the Upper School head keep parents abreast of current changes and developments, and informative weekly newsletters in the Lower School are available on the website. Parents receive other useful communications through email and electronic alerts. The school now makes available to parents of current and prospective pupils all the required pieces of information, thus rectifying earlier regulatory failures. The school keeps parents well informed about their children's progress informally and through detailed reports which are sent home twice each year. The reports provide clear feedback and often specific targets to promote pupils' further progress.

- 5.12 The school handles the complaints and concerns of parents promptly and with care. In the Upper School, specific concerns are dealt with through an efficient system of parental communication forms which are sent to teachers or heads of house, and then passed on if necessary to the head. In the Lower School, concerns are dealt with sensitively through the head of Lower School.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.1 This is a good setting, meeting the needs of the children well by providing a secure, happy and stimulating environment in which each child is valued as an individual. Small classes and high ratios of adults to children ensure that children are well supported. Strong partnerships with parents enable children to feel secure so that they make good progress. Frequent reviews of policies and procedures to effect improvement ensure that the high standards of the last inspection have been maintained. The setting has responded appropriately to the recommendations of the last inspection by improving teachers' planning.

6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.2 The quality of leadership and management is good. Practitioners are highly committed to welfare. Regular risk assessments and training in first aid, child protection and fire precautions promote children's safety. The procedures for carrying out recruitment checks have not always been completed as required, but these omissions have been subsequently rectified. Staff work well together as a team; they value the expertise and advice of outside agencies, with which they have strong relationships. The questionnaire and conversations with parents indicate that they are very supportive of the setting. They particularly like the small classes and the way children are helped to settle in the Nursery, and inspectors agreed with this view. Staff have a clear vision for the future and through regular evaluation have identified priorities for bringing about improvement. In keeping with its admissions policy, the setting promotes inclusion by ensuring that children with additional needs are well supported. Adults are suitably qualified and are effectively deployed. A wide range of good quality resources enhances learning.

6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.3 The quality of provision is good, with some outstanding features. Highly skilled practitioners promote learning and development by including children's interests in detailed planning, matched to individual needs, though next steps in learning are not always fully evaluated. The artificial grass in Nursery enables the wide range of good quality equipment to be used throughout the year. The new covered outdoor area in Reception enhances the provision, providing a valuable extension to the classrooms. Concerns about children's welfare are shared amongst the staff, who are particularly vigilant in ensuring their safety by carrying out checks on equipment. Staff reinforce hygiene routines daily, and warm relationships enable children to feel safe and secure.

6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are good, providing them with a firm foundation for the future. They enjoy their learning and are well motivated. By the end of the EYFS children have made good progress across all six curriculum areas, and some have made rapid progress. Their skills are particularly strong in literacy, numeracy and knowledge and understanding of the world. By the end of the EYFS, children have good speaking skills and write correctly formed letters. They count accurately up to ten, and perform simple additions up to five. Nursery children talked confidently about the animals they placed on the three-dimensional puzzle, and Reception children showed outstanding knowledge about sea creatures such as sharks and dolphins. Children's personal development is excellent. They are self-reliant, proud of their achievements, and enjoy making a positive contribution as helpers. They are well behaved and show respect for each other by listening carefully and waiting patiently for their turn to speak. Children behave in ways that are safe when moving around the school and when using equipment. They understand how to stay healthy.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding accommodation 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 Timothy Holgate	Reporting Inspector
Dr Caroline Archer	Director of Teaching, IAPS school
Mr Magnus Bashaarat	Deputy Head, HMC school
Mr Howard Bourne	Former Senior Master, IAPS school
Mrs Jenny Dwyer	Head, GSA school
Mr James Fowler	Head, HMC school
Mrs Diana Lobban-Small	Deputy Head, HMC school
Miss Rosemary Walker	Director of Studies, IAPS school
Mrs Valerie Goode	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector