



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ELLESMERE COLLEGE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Ellesmere College

Full Name of School	Ellesmere College
DfE Number	893/6001
Registered Charity Number	1103049
Address	Ellesmere College Ellesmere Shropshire SY12 9AB
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Email Address	hmsecretary@ellesmere.com
Head	Mr Brendan Wignall
Custos of Governors	Mrs Philippa Claire Griffiths
Age Range	7 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	584
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (385 boys; 199 girls)
Numbers by Age	7-11: 49 11-19: 535
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 340
Number of Boarders	Total: 244 Full: 135 Weekly: 110
Inspection dates	13 Mar 2012 to 16 Mar 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 November 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.

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 disability).
- (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.

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 (NMS). 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. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in November 2008 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, 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 a governors' representative, 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

Mrs Maureen Bradley	Reporting Inspector
Miss Katherine Haynes	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr William Ibbetson-Price	Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)
Miss Elizabeth Knibb	Team Inspector (Assistant Head, HMC school)
Mr Roger Leake	Team Inspector (Headmaster, ISA/IAPS school)
Mrs Susan Nebesnuick	Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, SHMIS school)
Mrs Suzanne Thomas-Webb	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Myra Rodgers	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr William Yates	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Ellesmere College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from 7 to 19 years. The school is situated in a rural setting on the outskirts of Ellesmere in Shropshire. Founded in 1848 by Canon Nathaniel Woodard, the school is part of the Woodard group of Anglican schools that all share the founder's vision of a Christian education coupled with a belief in nurturing and enriching each individual. The school aims to educate young people to enable them to achieve their full academic potential and to prepare them to live adult life successfully, considerately and with a sense of personal fulfilment. The Woodard Corporation oversees the strategy and ethos of the group but Ellesmere College has its own board of governors. Since the previous inspection in November 2008 the school has refurbished and extended a number of buildings.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection there were 584 pupils on roll in the school, of whom 385 were boys and 199 were girls. There were 340 day pupils and 244 boarders, of whom 110 were weekly boarders. The school is divided into the Lower School, comprising 167 pupils from the ages of 7 to 13, and the Upper School, with 417 pupils from the ages of 13 to 18, of whom 170 are in the sixth form. The school is a Church of England foundation. It welcomes pupils of all faiths and nationalities. Day pupils travel from across Shropshire and Cheshire, and boarders from across the UK and around the world. The majority of international pupils are from Germany. The school has 6 pupils with a statement of special educational needs, with 10 on 'action plus.' A further 141 are on the special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) register, with 119 of these receiving specialist support lessons in either English or mathematics. There are 55 pupils who receive support for English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.3 The ability profile of the school is slightly above the national average with a fairly wide spread of abilities represented, although most pupils have an ability that is average or above average.
- 1.4 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 Ellesmere College is very successful in meeting its aims to provide an all-round education for pupils in a happy and caring environment. The good broad curriculum is enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and the sporting programme is particularly strong, with very high levels of success. The provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is more limited. The good results in public examinations and the excellent achievement in extra-curricular activities are outcomes of the good teaching by dedicated staff and the commitment they give to a wide range of activities. The good progress of the pupils at all ages is helped by excellent relationships between teachers and pupils and by individual classroom and specialist support. Pupils with SEND and those with EAL make good and often excellent progress. Although good progress has been made in meeting the needs of more able pupils since the previous inspection, the recommendation to improve this provision has only been partly addressed.
- 2.2 The personal development of the pupils is excellent. They are confident and thoughtful young people who show respect and tolerance for all. Behaviour is excellent throughout the school as pupils respond to the clear guidelines and expectations. The boarders and day pupils all enjoy the social facilities of the school together and mix freely across all ages and cultures. Pupils from overseas are particularly welcomed for their cultural diversity and are integrated quickly into school life. The excellent pastoral care provided for pupils makes a significant contribution to their personal development. The pre-inspection questionnaires completed by both parents and pupils indicated their appreciation of the high quality care and support provided. A small number of pupils reported a concern about the provision of food. Inspectors could find no evidence to support these views.
- 2.3 The quality of governance, and leadership and management of the school is good and all work closely together to successfully support the school's aims. Governors provide effective financial oversight and plan accordingly for the future. The senior management team has a clear and strong vision for the school and this is communicated successfully. The team has conducted effective self-evaluation to inform its strategic development planning and involves staff at all levels through its transparent and collegiate approach to management. The quality of middle management is inconsistent, particularly in terms of self-evaluation and the implementation of whole-school policies and plans. The school maintains excellent links with its parents. Policy making is clear and due attention is given to child protection procedures. However, the governors and senior management have not always been sufficiently rigorous in ensuring the completion of all recruitment checks before staff appointments have been taken up. This has now been rectified. The school has fulfilled the recommendations of the previous inspection report in providing more opportunity for independent work and strengthening the guidance given to improve work.

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 school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that all staff appointment checks are completed and fully recorded before a person is allowed to start work, and that the safeguarding policy is always fully implemented [Part 4, paragraphs 19.(2)(a) and 22.(3)(b), under Suitability of staff and proprietors, and NMS 11 and 14.1, under Child protection, and Staff recruitment and checks on other adults, and Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), and 8.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].

2.5 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, as described above.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Embed provision to challenge the more able and talented pupils more consistently in classroom teaching.
2. Ensure that all middle managers play a full part in evaluating the work of their areas, and implement school policies consistently well.
3. Improve the continuity and consistency of provision of PSHE in the curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 A priority for the school is to enable pupils to achieve their full academic potential and they are effective in meeting this aim across the ability range in both the Lower School and Upper School. Good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill are demonstrated by pupils across all ages, subjects and activities. Pupils are confident and articulate, and they express themselves clearly in debates and class discussions. They reason accurately and are capable of thinking for themselves in a logical and very effective manner. Good skills in literacy and reading are evident from a young age and pupils are competent in applying sound numeracy skills across a range of subjects. Imaginative and creative work in drama, music and art is evident through the many displays and productions, and presentation skills across all areas of learning are good. Pupils of all ages are capable of working both independently and co-operatively, and they make good use of their knowledge and skill in information and communication technology (ICT) to produce individual projects and extended pieces of work.
- 3.3 Attainment in extra-curricular activities is excellent and is a particular strength of the school. Pupils exhibit their art in public galleries and gain considerable success in local music festivals. All pupils normally achieve The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) at bronze level and many achieve the gold standard. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) has been selected to represent all CCF contingents in the country to parade at the cenotaph on Remembrance Day. The school won the most recent Model United Nations (MUN) debating competition and the winners travelled to New York. In sport, pupils have achieved outstanding success in many fields. A small number of pupils shoot at international level, members of the girls' tennis team are under-16 national champions and considerable numbers of pupils are selected to play for their county in a wide variety of other sports. The school has won a national rugby sevens tournament three times in recent years.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Pupils demonstrate good standards of attainment. Results in GCSE examinations have been above the national average for maintained schools. Just over 85 per cent of all grades achieved were A* to C, with girls outperforming boys in the top grades. In 2010 the boys' performance was similar to that of the girls. Results in English as a second language International GCSE examinations overall have been higher on average than worldwide norms. Results at A level have been similar to the national average for maintained schools. Almost all grades achieved were A* to E in the years 2008 to 2010. In 2010 just over 40 per cent of grades were A* to B. Results in the International Baccalaureate (IB) examinations have been similar to the average for schools worldwide. Nationally standardised progress data that is

available, together with the public examination results, indicates that pupils make good progress. This is also reflected in inspection evidence from work examined, lessons observed and discussions with the pupils. As a result of the support that they receive, those pupils with EAL or SEND, including those with a statement of special educational needs, often make excellent progress and achieve well in examinations according to their ability. The majority of pupils are successful in application to the universities of their first choice.

- 3.5 Pupils of all ages have excellent attitudes to learning. They show enjoyment in their lessons and enthusiastically seek out information. They demonstrate excellent levels of concentration and co-operate fully with their teachers. Many are ambitious to learn and always try to do their best.

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

- 3.6 The quality of the curriculum is good.
- 3.7 The school is successful in its aim to provide a curriculum for pupils to gain experience in all the areas of learning appropriate for their ages and aptitudes. From the youngest in the Lower School to those in the sixth form, pupils study a broad range of subjects and have the opportunity to extend their learning and interests in an excellent extra-curricular programme.
- 3.8 In the Lower School, curriculum planning is thorough and ensures continuity of education as it progresses through Years 7 and 8 to link smoothly with the Upper School in Year 9. The strong emphasis on core subjects of the National Curriculum in the Lower School provides a strong academic foundation and ample opportunities for creative and physical development. The addition of Latin and examinations in English as a second language offer increased language study from Year 7. The curriculum provides a suitable choice of subjects at GCSE, whilst a broad, challenging and stimulating programme of study is offered at IB and A level in preparation for university and beyond. Help and guidance from staff to assist with university choices and careers advice are considerable and are offered through a well-structured programme of individual meetings, visiting speakers, regular briefings and university visits. The emphasis placed on sport and physical exercise throughout the school is a particular strength of the curriculum. An extensive amount of time is allocated daily to physical exercise, promoting a healthy lifestyle and a general feeling of well-being amongst the pupils.
- 3.9 Good provision is in place to support pupils with a statement of special educational needs, or with SEND or EAL. Specialist support is generous in provision and good individual help is offered in the classroom. The school's strategic focus on gifted and talented pupils is particularly noticeable in its wide-ranging extra-curricular programme, but is not consistent across all subjects. Pupils reported in interviews that they do not always have sufficient time to study aspects of PSHE such as alcohol awareness, sex education or citizenship. There is a lack of consistency and

continuity in the delivery of PSHE across the whole school because the programme is delivered in one whole-day session each term.

- 3.10 The curriculum is supported by an extensive extra-curricular programme that is a significant strength of the school and benefits pupils of all abilities. The sporting programme offers a wide variety of physical pursuits, and opportunities to promote leadership skills are available through the Sports Leaders Award scheme. Pupils' personal development benefits considerably from the well-established and highly successful MUN, CCF and DofE programmes. They provide the pupils with valuable life skills such as in communication, first-aid training and opportunities for independent personal development through a variety of challenges. Participation in the Arts Award Scheme helps to raise and develop self-esteem through music, art, drama and media pursuits. Pupils speak positively about the opportunities to extend their interests and talents by participating in the school drama productions and numerous musical ensembles, orchestras and choirs. The school's links with the local community are strong and help to promote a culture of support and giving. Pupils are involved in a variety of community projects such as hosting a major arts festival with professional artists' work on display, and organising charity events. The pupils benefit from long-standing links with a school in Tanzania, which provides an insight into the lives of young people in a country very different from their own.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The overall quality of teaching is good.
- 3.12 The good teaching seen in the majority of lessons promotes pupils' progress and achievements, and supports the aim of the school to enable pupils to achieve their full potential. Teachers know their pupils well and are aware of their individual needs. The small class sizes, the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils and the provision of appropriate specialist support for those pupils with SEND or EAL combine to produce an environment where individual pupils develop the skills and confidence to enjoy and engage in their learning. Teachers give generously of their time and the lunchtime and after-school clinics enable pupils to catch up with work or receive additional support.
- 3.13 The best examples of teaching demonstrate good subject knowledge, detailed lesson planning and effective teaching strategies that employ a variety of tasks, provide clear presentation and instruction, and use appropriate resources. These result in pupils maintaining focus and concentration, enabling them to develop their knowledge and understanding in all subjects. Teaching fosters interest and enjoyment and actively engages pupils in learning, as seen in a Year 5 lesson where pupils were composing the words and music of protest songs, and in a Year 13 music lesson on Prokofiev. Relevant homework tasks are used to extend and reinforce learning. In the least effective lessons, the management of time is poor and expectations are not sufficiently high. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a programme of enrichment activities for those pupils identified as

gifted and talented, but provision for the more able is not yet embedded in all classroom teaching.

- 3.14 Most teaching develops independent research and presents good opportunities for paired and group work. Resources are used effectively and imaginative use of the interactive whiteboard in some subject areas was observed. Overall the use of ICT across the curriculum is inconsistent, with many subjects limiting its use to homework assignments. When ICT is incorporated into lessons, as seen in humanities subjects and music, it allows pupils to engage more enthusiastically with the subject. The school has a virtual learning environment available to pupils and when used effectively it is a valuable resource for interaction between the teacher and the pupil, and enables pupils to take greater responsibility for their own learning. However, its potential as a teaching aid has not been developed in many subjects.
- 3.15 Marking is regular but lacks rigour and consistency within departments. Effective marking provides written comments that acknowledge achievement and encourage pupils to improve the quality of their work, often through the setting of specific targets. Less effective marking offers little advice on how to improve although many teachers provide constructive oral feedback on pupils' work, and considerable individual support is given in the classroom. In some departments, performance data is also used well to guide planning but this is not consistently used by all teachers to help raise attainment. Teaching ensures that those pupils with SEND or EAL receive good and often excellent support that enables them to achieve greater confidence and independence in learning. Specialist support teachers regularly monitor progress and make any necessary adjustments to the level and nature of support for individual pupils. The school fully meets the needs of those pupils with statements of special educational needs.
- 3.16 The recommendations of the previous report have largely been fulfilled. Developing and embedding into the curriculum provision to challenge the more able and talented pupils have been implemented in part.

4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 Personal development is promoted by the exceptional quality of relationships within the supportive school community and the high level of care shown by dedicated staff. In accordance with the aims of the school, individuals are highly valued.
- 4.3 A calm, purposeful atmosphere pervades the school, which contributes considerably to the excellent spiritual development of the pupils. Spiritual awareness is raised by frequent attendance in the chapel that lies at the heart of the school and provides inclusive space for worship and quiet contemplation. Pupils have a strong sense of self-worth and are not afraid to be themselves. They appreciate the education on offer to them, are proud to be at the school and respect the abundant talent that surrounds them. The beauty of the campus and the high quality artwork on display, together with the music making and drama in the arts centre, promote aesthetic appreciation. Pupils are thoughtful and insightful young people who are comfortable in discussions on topics such as resurrection and reincarnation. A Year 7 discussion of good and evil arose spontaneously and was allowed to develop during a religious studies lesson on Jesus.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is excellent. A set of core values underpins the school. Behaviour and discipline are exceptional and pupils wear their uniform with pride. As a result of strong role models and the clear guidance and structures in place, they are equipped to make informed decisions and judgements. A small number of pupils indicated in the questionnaires that they do not perceive teachers to be fair in the administration of rewards and sanctions. No evidence was found to support this. All pupils interviewed understand and support the procedures. The expectation for all members of the school to show courtesy and consideration towards others at all times is emphasised and widely upheld. An atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance prevails.
- 4.5 The social development of pupils is a strength of the school. Pupils of all ages are confident and engage readily in open and unpretentious conversation with their peers and with adults. They enjoy excellent relationships with each other and with staff, and they are proud of the success of others. Inspectors found no evidence to support the view expressed in some questionnaires that pupils are not given the chance to assume responsibility. There are many opportunities to lead and to serve: as school prefects, class monitors, sports captains, or representatives on the school council or the food committee. All pupils take part in community service as part of the bronze DofE and the Green Team works on ecological projects in the local area.
- 4.6 Throughout the school, harmonious relationships exist between pupils of different beliefs and ethnic backgrounds, enabling good cultural awareness to develop. Knowledge of other faiths and customs is promoted through the curriculum. The

boarding community shares in the festivals of the many European and Asian countries represented by pupils in the houses. Day trips to the theatre or places of interest in the UK, and a wide range of overseas trips, such as for language study, history and music, further extend cultural awareness. Chinese members of the sixth form are working on a project to take English pupils to work in a Chinese orphanage and live with a local family.

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

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 A major strength of the school is the high quality of pastoral care provided for the pupils, and the aim to provide a nurturing environment is met very successfully. The policies and procedures to provide care are clear and thorough. There is good overlap between those responsible to ensure that all pupils' individual needs are met. The house system contributes very well to this end. All staff provide individual support and guidance to pupils and monitor their well-being, which is reinforced by the work of the form tutors, house parents, middle and senior managers, the chaplain and staff members of the medical centre. Almost all parents, in the pre-inspection questionnaire, stated that their children are happy and feel safe at school. Pupils are polite, friendly and helpful, and are supportive of each other.
- 4.9 Measures to promote good behaviour are efficient and effective. Codes of conduct and expectations of behaviour are well known to pupils and staff, and are respected throughout the school. Any unacceptable behaviour is dealt with appropriately, in accordance with the clear sanctions procedure. Rewards such as house points, commendations and credits are used effectively to motivate the pupils to achieve and behave well. The anti-bullying policy ensures that incidents are dealt with swiftly, although pupils consider that such incidents are extremely rare. The procedures for pastoral care ensure that all pupils requiring support for SEND or EAL are well cared for.
- 4.10 The school listens closely and responds well to the views of pupils. Teachers, tutors and boarding staff know their pupils extremely well, and pupils feel that their teachers are approachable and available to talk to at any time. Pupils report that the school council and the food committee provide them with opportunities to voice concerns and opinions, and they feel that their views are valued and listened to. Some responses to the pupils' questionnaire indicated the view that school food is not always of good quality. Inspectors found no evidence of this. An effective healthy living programme is promoted through the curriculum. The school provides a wide range of healthy and nutritious food options and well-balanced meals. Pupils have good access to grounds and facilities for sporting activities and many opportunities each week for exercise and physical fitness, and this all helps pupils to develop healthy lifestyles.

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

- 4.11 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.12 Throughout the school all members of the community work hard to provide a safe and supportive environment in which pupils can thrive. There are good policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the pupils, including a detailed anti-bullying policy, and one to promote good behaviour, both of which are implemented thoroughly. Clear and effective child protection policies and procedures are in place but the school has not been sufficiently rigorous in the past to ensure that every adult employed in the school has been subject to appropriate checks before starting work in the school. This has now been rectified and safe recruitment procedures now ensure that all the required checks on prospective employees are made and they are correctly entered on the central register. All staff and some members of the governing body have participated in appropriate safeguarding training.
- 4.13 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are kept under review by an effective health and safety team with representatives from all areas of the school. Detailed risk assessments are undertaken and are regularly reviewed. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken and the required fire prevention procedures are in place. The school has an appropriate three-year disability plan in operation and disabled access to buildings and toilets is good. The medical facilities are well equipped and managed by healthcare professionals, and all medicines are stored and distributed safely. The school has a number of staff trained in first aid. The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding (for schools providing boarding accommodation)

- 4.14 The overall quality of boarding education is good.
- 4.15 The boarders' personal development is clearly promoted by their positive boarding experience. They are supported and encouraged by the boarding staff, who work hard to develop good relationships and a spirit of community in each of the houses. The boarders develop strong friendships that are enhanced by the combined day and boarding house structure. They develop key qualities such as confidence, self-reliance and tolerance, which are supported and promoted by the efforts of the house team as the boarders mature. Pupils from different countries are welcomed into the community and are integrated well into the houses. The induction procedure for new pupils is thorough and they are supported effectively in different ways according to age. The house handbook provides key information and pupils feel confident in raising any issues of concern with members of staff. All boarders reported that they have someone to turn to if they have a concern. Each house has a house council that allows pupils to raise issues and to have a voice in the running of the house. Positions of responsibility, including boarding house prefects, allow for leadership opportunities, and roles are well defined and monitored. Boarders feel highly valued and are seen to make a positive contribution to the school community.
- 4.16 The quality of boarding provision and welfare is good. Boarders are well cared for and their individual needs are well met. The sick bay is staffed at all times by qualified nurses and the boarders receive excellent care and supervision when ill. There are good policies and procedures in place for medical emergencies and staff are appropriately trained. Pupils are aware of the procedure for contacting a member of staff at night if they are ill. The school doctor holds a regular surgery in school and is readily available if necessary. Pupils are able to access other outside specialist services when necessary, including a dentist and optician. An efficient laundry service is provided for clothes and bedding, and older pupils have facilities to care for their own clothing. The standard of accommodation varies. The rooms are bright and clean but furniture and decor range in standard between the houses. Boarders have suitable facilities in which to study in the evening, including their study bedrooms and the library. Some refurbishment has taken place since the previous inspection including an extension to the girls' sixth-form house, which has en-suite accommodation. In interviews with boarders, however, it was reported that in some of the older houses some of the showers were old and did not always function well. The leisure and recreational areas and kitchen facilities in all of the houses are of a very good standard.
- 4.17 Some concerns were raised in the pre-inspection pupil questionnaire about the quality of food, although boarders reported in interviews that they enjoy the food and that the quality has improved recently. Throughout the inspection the quality was found to be good. There is a good choice at mealtimes, quantities are generous and dietary needs are catered for. Fresh fruit is readily available and is provided in the

boarding houses for evening snacks, along with other provisions. The active food committee feeds back views that are acted upon. The houses for younger pupils run a pocket money system and records are kept. Questionnaire responses indicated that some pupils feel possessions are not safe and one house reported personal items going missing.

- 4.18 Boarders are able to maintain contact with parents and guardians using mobile telephones, house telephones and email. Each house has Wi-Fi internet access and a number of computers available for use. The choice of after-school activities is good and ranges from sporting activities to music, drama, art and community service. Weekend activities are more limited. Boarders are able to take part in off-site activities including shopping, bowling and trips to the cinema. Some boarders expressed in the pre-inspection questionnaire the view that weekend activities are limited. From interviews with pupils, the inspection found that most are happy with what is on offer. Lower School boarders, however, do have some restrictions on the range of activity in which they can participate.
- 4.19 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are good overall. Boarders are well cared for, and they feel safe and know where to go if they require help. They have access to a counsellor, and telephone numbers for appropriate helplines are displayed. All staff, including ancillary staff, receive safeguarding training that is regularly updated, and staff spoken to had a full knowledge of the procedures to be followed with safeguarding and bullying issues. The anti-bullying policy is detailed and robust, and boarders interviewed said that bullying is rare and swiftly dealt with if cases are discovered. Risk assessments are in place for boarding accommodation and activities, and regular fire drills take place in boarding and school time. Boarders are registered several times a day, including at weekends, and pupils leaving the school site with permission are required to sign out.
- 4.20 Leadership and management of the boarding provision are good. Leadership and management of the house parents are strong, and care provided by these key people, including the house mothers, is excellent. The staff throughout the houses also feel well supported by management. There is a clear statement of boarding principles and practice, which is publicised in the handbook for parents. A suitable complaints procedure is made available to boarders and critical incident planning is well developed. Links between the boarding and academic staff are strong and they have regular meetings, which makes communication very efficient. Regular meetings of the pastoral committee involve a wide range of staff across the whole school, including the chaplain, the nursing sister and the deputy head (pastoral). Levels of supervision in the houses are good, with a member of staff on duty during boarding time and supporting staff on duty in the house during the day. Boarding staff have clear job descriptions and a full boarding handbook that gives clear and detailed information. Training is available for all boarding staff and meets the recommendation from the previous inspection, and all staff have undergone child protection training.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good.
- 5.2 The governing board is successful in its aim to make Ellesmere College a happy and confident school providing an all-round education where pupils strive to do their best. Governors offer good support and encouragement to the whole of the school community. Many have a personal connection with the school and there is a deep commitment to maintaining the caring ethos whilst striving for high standards.
- 5.3 The governors have a good range of experience in areas relevant to the school, especially in business, finance, buildings and education. In addition, there are members from the Church of England. The governing board's performance is scrutinised on an annual basis by the Woodard Corporation and regular informal support and monitoring take place through the attendance of corporation officials and employees at governors' meetings. The senior management team is well represented and a member of the teaching staff is voted onto the board by the staff common room, evidence of the high level of collaboration and transparency that pervades the governance and management culture of the school.
- 5.4 The governing board provides effective oversight of finance, accommodation and resources through the finance and general purposes committee, which closely monitors budgets. The board has been successful in providing new buildings and facilities to improve the quality of education and care on offer to the pupils. The strategic development plan is discussed thoroughly in governors' meetings and is clear in its long-term aims and financial requirements.
- 5.5 Governors are well informed about their legal obligations and have proper oversight of them. Although there have been past shortcomings in carrying out pre-appointment checks on staff, child protection matters are now monitored closely and members of the governing board have undertaken relevant training. They review school policies and are aware of the need to keep abreast of information on safeguarding. For example, the governor with responsibility for child protection meets regularly with senior managers and reports to the board. Many of the governors are well known to parents and pupils through their regular attendance at school events and through their work in the school.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.7 The leadership and management provided by the senior management team are strong, clear and well respected by the school community. There is a clear strategic vision in accordance with the aims of the school and this vision is acknowledged and well established at all levels. Development planning sets out the delivery of that vision and tackles identified weaknesses whilst working to promote and enhance the strengths of the school. The strengths and areas for development are evaluated frequently by all members of staff in both formal meetings and through day-to-day discussion with senior management, who are always available to listen. The senior leaders are clear about putting policy into practice. Communication is strong, being effective through the many committees and team meetings, and evident in the daily routine of the school. There is a transparent approach to keeping staff fully informed on all issues.
- 5.8 The good management structure covers all aspects of school life. The pastoral management at all levels is particularly effective in strongly promoting the core values of the school. Those with responsibility for pastoral care ensure excellent personal development of pupils of all ages through clear procedures that are carefully monitored. The good management of boarding makes a significant contribution to the way all pupils feel at home in the school, allowing both day and boarding pupils to take advantage of all leisure and house facilities. The quality of academic middle management is more variable. At its best, it incorporates effective administration, a collegiate approach to decision making and a pro-active approach to seeking ways to raise academic standards. However, this is not consistent throughout departments. As a result, there are shortcomings in the quality of self-evaluation, particularly in matters of teaching and assessment, and in providing for more able pupils. There are generous training and development opportunities and support for staff is good from all levels of management.
- 5.9 Close attention has been given to areas of child protection, in which all staff have been trained. Satisfactory systems are now in place for the safe recruitment of staff, but these have not always been monitored and diligently followed when Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) certificates have been delayed. All staff working in the school have a CRB certificate and any previous cases of weakness in the recruitment system have now been rectified. Management has successfully recruited and retained suitably qualified staff, both teaching and support, who give generously of their time in support of the pupils.
- 5.10 The quality of links with parents and guardians is excellent. Relationships with parents are constructive and supportive, and contribute to the school's success in seeking to be an inclusive community. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were fully supportive of the school and responses were very positive about the education provided for their children. Parents are especially pleased with the range

of extra-curricular activities provided, the safe and excellent care of their children and the good communication with staff. There are many opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school through the numerous activities provided for their children and through the work of the parents' society, by attending school events such as lectures and social occasions.

- 5.11 The school makes good use of technology to communicate with parents. Email is used for day-to-day communications and a parent portal has also been launched alongside the virtual learning environment. These allow parents access to their children's lesson timetables, homework assignments, assessment information and examination timetables. Although this development is still in its infancy, it is providing good communication when used. The website is informative and is up to date with all the relevant information regarding school life. Complaints are dealt with in accordance with the published complaints procedures.
- 5.12 Published material about the school is of high quality and covers every aspect of school life. An excellent yearly magazine, *The Ellesmerian*, as well as a termly newsletter keeps parents abreast of school news. A weekly newsletter is also sent out from the Lower School by email. Tutors communicate with parents at least once each half term and as required throughout the school year. Twice-yearly reports throughout the whole school are sent to parents about their children's progress and these are informative and constructive, with targets set in every subject. These are complemented by grades for effort and attainment awarded at least every half term, to inform parents about the progress of their children. There is also a formal parents evening once a year, and further meetings with teachers, tutors or house parents can be arranged.

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