



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE HABERDASHERS' ASKE'S BOYS' SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Haberdashers' Aske's School for Boys

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

Full Name of School **The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School**

DfE Number **919/6221**

Registered Charity Number **313996**

Address **The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School
Butterfly Lane
Elstree
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Hertfordshire
WD6 3AF**

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Email Address **office@habsboys.org.uk**

Head **Mr Peter Hamilton**

Chair of Governors **Mr Mark Powell**

Age Range **11 to 18**

Total Number of Pupils **1137**

Gender of Pupils **Boys**

Number of Day Pupils **Total: 1137**

Inspection dates **08 Nov 2011 to 09 Nov 2011**

05 Dec 2011 to 07 Dec 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 inspection was in October 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

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

The inspection of 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 The Haberdashers' Aske's Boys' School was opened in 1690 following an endowment by a merchant haberdasher, Robert Aske, who established a school to educate the children of impecunious members of his profession. In 1961 the school moved with the Prep school to its current position on an extensive rural site in Elstree. Both are administered by a board of governors, many of whom are members of the Haberdashers' Company. They also govern the girls' school which occupies the adjacent site.
- 1.2 The core aims of the school are to challenge bright boys to achieve the highest standards within a strong community with shared values, to encourage individuality and to support parents in preparing their sons for a fulfilled life. Since the previous inspection a pre-preparatory school for pupils in Years 1 and 2 has been added nearby; there has been extensive investment in ICT; new changing rooms and pitches have been added to the sports facilities and all major buildings have been refurbished.
- 1.3 The school provides education for 1137 day pupils aged 11 to 18 including 321 pupils in the sixth form. The school draws its pupils from its own prep school and from a wide area of north London and south Hertfordshire. The school is socially and culturally diverse with a wide range of religions being represented.
- 1.4 Standardised tests indicate that three-quarters of pupils in Years 7 to 11 and half of the pupils in the sixth form have an ability profile that is far above average. Very few pupils have an ability that is less than above average. Twenty pupils have been identified as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) all of whom receive specialist support from the school. There are no pupils with 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 The school fulfils its aim to provide an outstanding educational experience and enable pupils to perform to the highest level of their ability. Pupils make excellent progress and demonstrate exceptional achievement in their levels of attainment and extra-curricular activities. The pupils achieve outstanding success at GCSE, IGCSE and A Level and go on to achieve places in universities of their choice. The pupils have access to an excellent curriculum which is supplemented by an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities and enrichment activities. Excellent teaching challenges and inspires pupils and leads to excellent progress and a love of learning which is at the heart of their success. In a very small number of lessons teaching does not provide the intellectual challenge the pupils expect.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is outstanding. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and is aided by a nurturing and intellectually stimulating school community. The pupils benefit from a high quality of pastoral care provided by a network of dedicated staff. The friendly and supportive school community provides an environment where strong friendships are formed and relationships with adults are relaxed and comfortable. The excellent quality of welfare, health and safety makes a strong contribution to their secure and caring environment. The pupils expressed pride in their school and an appreciation of their education in the interviews conducted during the inspection. Some concerns were raised by a small number of pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaire regarding fair treatment, but the inspection team found no evidence to support these concerns.
- 2.3 The leadership and management at all levels are excellent, supported by an excellent governing body who are supportive and well informed on progressive educational thinking. Their oversight of the welfare and safeguarding of the pupils is thorough and efficient. The school has successfully responded to all the recommendations of the previous report. The school has excellent links with parents who showed a high level of satisfaction with the education and care provided for their children in the pre-inspection questionnaire. Inspection evidence confirms these views. A small number of parents felt they were not involved sufficiently in the life and work of the school and that some of their concerns were not always well handled. The inspection team found no evidence to support the view that parents do not have opportunities to be involved in the work of the school but understood that the location of the school presented difficulties for some parents. The inspection team found that the school handled parental concerns carefully and diligently.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

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

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Extend current success in developing outstanding practice across all teaching.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills is excellent. The pupils are very well educated in accordance with the school's aim to challenge bright boys to achieve the highest standards. Their excellent achievements and progress are substantiated by public examination results and wide-ranging success in extra-curricular activities and cultural pursuits. Pupils with SEND achieve to the same high levels as their peers and the most able pupils frequently show exceptional levels of success in national competitions and creative exhibitions and performances.
- 3.2 Very high levels of knowledge, understanding and skill are demonstrated by all age groups in all subject areas. Outstanding levels of literacy are evident. Pupils show considerable pride in their written work, most notably in the excellent standard of academic journals they produce in many subjects. Pupils are exceptionally articulate and confident in oral work and can express their knowledge and understanding with ease. They are attentive listeners and are perceptive in their questioning. They show high levels of intellectual thought and weigh evidence carefully to reason and present logical argument. Excellent science and numeracy skills are applied across different subject areas and many pupils achieve considerable success in related national competitions. The pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) skills to good effect for independent learning, research projects and in the creative production of videos and graphics for use on the school intranet. Their creative abilities are outstanding and they have the skill to present their ideas with exceptional competence and imagination as seen in the high standards of art, music and drama.
- 3.3 Pupils consistently reach exceptional levels of achievement in a wide range of extra-curricular pursuits. Musical groups flourish and achieve success in national competitions, as do public speaking and debating teams. The school bridge team is the current UK national champion. A large section of the school voluntarily joins the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), which offers numerous opportunities for pupils to develop exceptional leadership skills and many participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme to gold level. High levels of skill and achievement are attained across a wide range of sports which enable teams and individuals to compete successfully at national and international levels.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses national data for the years 2008 to 2010, the most recent years for which comparative data are available. The school enters pupils for GCSE, IGCSE, and A Level examinations. GCSE results have been excellent in relation to the national average for boys in maintained schools and above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. Results in IGCSE are higher than worldwide and UK averages. Results in A-Level examinations are excellent in relation to the national average for boys in maintained schools and far above those for boys in maintained selective schools. For each of the 3 years, over 95 per cent of all the A level grades were achieved at A* to B grade, with over 40 per cent gaining A* in 2010. These examination results are good in relation to pupils' abilities and indicate that their progress from Years 7 to 11 and through the sixth form is above the average for pupils of similar abilities. The majority of pupils go on to gain places at their first choice of university.

3.5 The pupils' positive attitude to learning shines through all their endeavours. There is a mutual respect between pupils and staff which helps create an environment of enquiry akin to that found at university level. Pupils show sustained levels of concentration and ambition to succeed even when they struggle to understand. Their exceptional behaviour in the classroom and around the campus helps contribute to their high levels of achievement, as their responsible attitude allows them to pursue their interests without supervision.

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

3.6 The curriculum of the school, including the extensive range of extra-curricular activities, is excellent. The curriculum contributes effectively to all the requisite areas of learning and it enables pupils to make excellent progress throughout their time in school. The school clearly fulfils its aim to develop a curriculum which espouses academic excellence while keeping abreast of, and striving to be ahead of, national trends. The school encourages learning beyond the framework for qualifications as it fully prepares pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

3.7 Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has been reviewed; the recommendation that there be a balance and breadth of subjects offered in each year, to ensure continuity in learning experiences for boys as they move through the school, has been successfully addressed. There is now a completely open choice at A Level and the number of subjects offered has increased. Pupils study a broader range of subjects in Years 7 to 9. In Year 7 they start a good education in languages by having experience of three modern foreign languages as well as Latin. There are plenty of opportunities for creativity in music, drama, art, ceramics and photography and for developing technology skills in graphics, design and ICT. The curriculum is timetabled effectively which enables a full range of subjects to be studied by all pupils including those with SEND. For these pupils, weekly support sessions are run within the departments and individual learning support lessons with a specialist teacher are provided. Work to extend the learning of the most able is integrated into every subject. The general studies enrichment programme in the sixth form encourages high intellectual endeavour. Examined courses are chosen for their challenge and academic rigour and schemes of work go beyond the specification.

3.8 The well structured personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme encompasses outstanding careers guidance and promotes the school's ethos for healthy and safe lifestyles. There are days devoted to PSHE topics such as the relationships session for Years 7 and 9 delivered by a theatre group.

3.9 The curriculum is supported and complemented by an exceptional range of rich and vibrant extra-curricular activities including highly intellectual clubs and societies to stretch and challenge all pupils. Many of these activities are initiated and led by the pupils and have a high degree of staff participation. The CCF and the DofE scheme develop confidence, leadership and practical skills. The Houses are instrumental in developing competition through a wide range of activities and promote the pupils' personal development through charity work, such as a Ugandan child soldiers' rehabilitation charity. An excellent range of sporting activities promotes exercise for health and fitness, competition and fun. There are many opportunities to further expand curriculum experiences abroad such as trips to Venice, Paris and Tanzania. All the extra-curricular activities seen were well resourced and well attended.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 Teaching in the school is excellent and effectively supports the aim to help boys achieve to the best of their ability. Interesting and challenging lessons enable the pupils to acquire new knowledge, make good progress, increase their understanding and develop new skills. A strength of the teaching is the excellent relationship between pupils and teachers which is characterised by good humour, mutual respect and shared intellectual curiosity. Teachers have exceptional subject knowledge which is employed with a lightness that encourages pupils to investigate new topics confidently.
- 3.11 Teaching supports the pupils' needs, including those with SEND and the most able. A thorough review since the previous inspection of how to improve teaching standards has resulted in the appointment of a director of personalised learning to consider the different learning needs and styles of all the pupils. The school has addressed the concerns of the previous inspection report. It has made considerable strides in improving the skills of all staff through peer observations and training. Teachers give of their time generously after class to offer assistance and encouragement to pupils who find particular aspects of the course difficult. Pupil feedback is invited as a method of reviewing the success of these initiatives.
- 3.12 Teaching fosters interest and understanding through a wide range of activities and tasks which both consolidate learning and offer challenge. In a GCSE Spanish lesson, pupils relished the level of difficulty posed by using maps of Valencia to practise directions; they enjoyed the task and made rapid progress. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, who respond well when given opportunities to develop co-operative learning skills in pairs and small groups. In a theology lesson exploring the problem of evil, the use of different thinking approaches elicited animated discussion amongst younger pupils. Teaching expects pupils to work independently and they respond with a high degree of autonomy in the presentation of their work, especially in maths and science. Younger pupils created sophisticated individual commentaries on, and analyses of, a range of linguistic and technical features in a poem by Wilfred Owen.
- 3.13 Most teaching is meticulously planned and employs a range of methods and resources to ensure rapid progress. Time is used very effectively in most lessons to inject a brisk pace and maintain focus. On the very few occasions when teaching is less effective, time is not so well managed, and little variety is evident in methodology, with an emphasis on undemanding tasks. This limits opportunities for pupils to be intellectually challenged. Teaching in all subject areas employs ICT confidently and many lessons make creative use of interactive whiteboards. Technology is used to good effect to support the pupils' learning, for example video recordings or lesson materials stored on the whiteboard which are accessible for use after class on the intranet. The excellent library is well used by pupils and is a valuable learning resource.
- 3.14 Assessment and marking is effective. Pupils understand the marking process and they feel that the comments received help them make progress. The best marking provides clear targets and makes use of peer assessment. Written comments are reinforced with encouraging oral feedback and probing questions. The school operates an excellent system to track the pupils' progress consisting of academic grades updated every four weeks. In some subjects, the tracking grades are on display and are used to motivate the pupils' improvement in lessons. In addition clear expectations are outlined in the front of pupil books or files.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' personal development is outstanding. It fulfils the school's aim to develop a sense of community and shared values and to ensure that the pupils are fully prepared for life in a multicultural and sustainable global environment.
- 4.2 Pupils achieve excellent levels of spiritual development. They value and celebrate the wide range of faith traditions present in the school. They engage enthusiastically with the weekly faith assemblies, run by pupil committees, and with events put on by the faith societies. A 'Burger Bash', organized by the Jewish society to celebrate the festival of Hanukkah, attracted pupils from beyond the Jewish community including from the girls' school. Pupils show awareness of and sensitivity to the non-material aspects of life. In a sixth form general studies lesson pupils showed an awareness of the possibility of a reality beyond the physical universe. The pupils respond well to opportunities to be silent and reflective. They make good use of the chapel and prayer board. Older pupils, in an outstanding sixth form assembly, reflected intelligently and positively on how to live out values which promote goodness and enable the individual to flourish, and on the challenge to embrace these values in their own lives.
- 4.3 Pupils have high self-esteem and self-confidence, devoid of arrogance. They are self motivated young men who are fully prepared for the changes of the future. They appreciate the school's emphasis on individuality and the encouragement they are given to shine in whatever area they seek to pursue. Their emotional intelligence is well developed in self-awareness and their empathy towards others. Pupils have a well developed sense of right and wrong displaying strong moral development. They are clear about the school's expectations and they are respectful of the norms of good conduct. Positive behaviour is strongly encouraged by the excellent role models provided by senior pupils and staff and by the high quality of personal interaction in the school. Through debates in the classroom pupils demonstrated their understanding of fair play and were keen to discuss current moral and human rights issues. During pupil interviews, boys appreciated the harm done by bullying and unkind behaviour and understood the need to care for members of the school community.
- 4.4 The social development of pupils of all ages is excellent. They greatly value the school's house system and the strong sense of belonging to a caring, supportive and encouraging community which the system engenders. Pupils are kind, considerate and respectful towards each other and have a strong sense of service, not only for each other but also for those beyond the school community. Pupils respond very well to the many opportunities they have to exercise leadership and responsibility. Older pupils enjoy facilitating positive interaction between year groups by taking leading roles in managing extra-curricular societies and holding academic clinics. Younger pupils aspire to be prefects and spoke warmly of the support given by sixth form mentors assigned to tutor groups.
- 4.5 In every year group, pupils offer themselves for election to the pupil-led School Council and respond positively to the opportunities to contribute to discussions about a wide range of school issues. They serve the school community through house-organized duties around the campus and a large number join the extensive school community service scheme. As part of this scheme, some pupils work in a local

home for adults with physical disabilities. The pupils raise money for a wide range of charitable causes in the UK and overseas.

- 4.6 The cultural development of the pupils is outstanding. They are comfortable in their multi-cultural school community and recognize and appreciate the richness of the traditions and customs which are an integral part of their everyday life. They make friends across a range of cultures, faiths and backgrounds. The theology and philosophy department makes a strong contribution to the pupils' understanding and appreciation of different faiths, and work in such departments as music, art and history, together with the wide range of overseas trips, enhances their experience and understanding of different cultures. Pupils have a good understanding of British institutions and the constitutions of other countries through their work on citizenship across many subject areas.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety and the quality of pastoral care throughout the school is excellent. Together they support the pupils' outstanding personal development. The school works hard to fulfil its aim of providing a caring, safe and secure environment.
- 4.8 The combination of support provided through the form tutors and the House system, which are all overseen by the heads of section and the deputy head of pastoral matters, results in an excellent overlap of care and ensures concerns are identified and handled quickly. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff, are very positive. Teachers know their pupils well and communication amongst staff is very effective. Senior managers discuss any pastoral issues on a weekly basis and there are regular meetings between the heads of year and heads of house to ensure continuity of care. Pastoral arrangements are clearly understood. The pupils report that there is always someone they can turn to with a problem including the senior boys who act as mentors. The school counsellor and chaplain and the nursing team are also highly valued by the pupils. Parents are kept well-informed of any concerns regarding their children.
- 4.9 There are clear policies and effective procedures to promote the welfare of the pupils. School policies are reviewed annually and are available to parents on the school web site. Pupils understand what is expected of them through a detailed code of conduct which is emphasised frequently and results in good behaviour around the site and in the classroom. Thorough records are kept of any incidents involving poor behaviour. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, some pupils raised the issue of teachers not treating pupils equally and of unfairness in the way rewards and punishments are given. Discussions in pupil interviews did not support these views.
- 4.10 A detailed anti-bullying policy is clearly understood by both staff and pupils and the issues surrounding bullying are kept at a high profile throughout the year. Thorough attention is paid to safeguarding pupils. All staff and governors have had recent training in child protection and any child protection matters are followed up rigorously and carefully logged.
- 4.11 The health and safety committee includes members from all sections of the school and a dedicated governor. This committee meets twice a year for a full review and is monitored on a daily basis by the bursar's office. Risk assessments are thorough and 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 plan to promote access for those with disabilities which is put into practice well.

- 4.12 There is an effective healthy living programme promoted through the curriculum and through the many extra-curricular clubs and activities. The pupils have excellent access to grounds and facilities for exercise and sporting activities. The school has a good dining facility for eating lunch and a nutritious choice of food is on offer to suit all tastes. The medical centre is both comfortable and inviting. It is well equipped and carefully managed and highly qualified medical staff are on duty throughout the school day. The school has a number of staff trained in first aid and their training is updated frequently. The admissions and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The board of governors, known collectively as the Aske Board, ensure that the school's aims, and the broader aims of the Haberdashers' Company, are upheld successfully. The board is very effective in its principal role of providing sound oversight for the educational standards and major strategic development for all three schools, which share the same site. The Boys' School Committee (BSC), which focuses exclusively on the boys' school, reports formally to the Aske Board and provides an extra layer of governance and scrutiny. This committee oversees the day to day management of the school and provides excellent oversight of teaching and learning, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. The very high standards of the pupils' achievements and personal development are testimony to the clear vision and guidance provided by this dual governing structure.
- 5.2 A number of changes have taken place since the previous inspection which has helped raise attainment levels, including the formation of sub-committees to monitor and support teaching and learning in the classroom and in ICT development. Governors, especially those of the BSC, offer their wide range of expertise and experience in professions such as education, law, business and property development to benefit the school. Many governors have previous experience of governance and education which is utilised to good effect, especially in setting performance targets for staff. High quality training for all governors is provided regularly by a wide range of professional bodies, including the Haberdashers' Company, which keeps them well informed of current legislation and practice. Governors are effective in discharging their responsibilities for child protection, welfare and health and safety with policies and procedures reviewed annually. The school has a dedicated governor for child protection and for safer recruitment procedures to maintain good standards of regulatory compliance.
- 5.3 The Aske Board, the BSC and the sub-committees hold regular strategy planning sessions and conferences with the leadership team to keep the school at the forefront of educational thinking. Strategic development planning is thorough with all aspects of the school under consideration and with clear targets and time-frames. Excellent communication is maintained between the chair of the BSC and the head through weekly meetings and termly reports. Knowledge of the day-to-day working of the school is improving through a new initiative by the BSC to hold a visiting day for governors with a different governor scheduled to visit each term. In addition governors attend school frequently for meetings of committees such as the health and safety committee and to attend events and performances.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent and the school successfully achieves its aims through a shared vision and drive to maintain and improve excellent educational standards. The strong and often inspirational leadership of the head and senior management team, combined with an effective extended leadership group, provides clear direction to every section of the school. Together these groups establish high expectations which lead to the pupils' excellent achievement and outstanding personal development. This leadership and management have consolidated and developed the strong standards of education commented upon in the previous inspection report and is moving the school forward into exciting new areas of development.
- 5.5 The effectiveness of the management structure is due to good delegation of authority by the senior leaders to carefully constructed committees who take responsibility for detailed monitoring and development of the key areas of school life. There is rigorous oversight of the pupils' attainment, their care, welfare, health and safety, staff recruitment and ICT by committees who meet frequently with clear agendas and minutes that are published to all staff. Through consultation with the senior management and with departments, this structure ensures that all staff are involved in decision-making and contribute to school development planning. Extremely thorough strategic planning involves self-evaluation at all levels. The school conducts a survey of pupil and parental views every two years and detailed analysis of academic performance is undertaken every year by governors, senior managers and departments.
- 5.6 The recommendation in the previous report, that senior managers work with heads of department to evaluate their effectiveness, has been successfully achieved. An emphasis on tracking pupil attainment every four weeks, sharing good practice in the classroom and monitoring assessment has contributed much to improved standards of teaching. A more integrated approach involving excellent work and co-ordination by section heads and House staff has also raised awareness of pastoral issues and the support needed for all pupils to ensure their personal development. Strong emphasis is placed on the recruitment and retention of highly qualified staff and the support needed to maintain the highest standards of teaching. Induction of new staff is thorough, training budgets are generous and professional development is fostered. Annual appraisal is focused on continual improvement. The targets set in departments and by middle management are linked to the strategic development plan and evaluated for their levels of success.
- 5.7 Policies are monitored closely and applied appropriately. Staff are fully up-to-date with their training for their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety and implement all policies thoroughly. Safe recruitment procedures ensure that all the required checks on prospective employees and governors are made, and that they are correctly entered on the central register.

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

- 5.8 Links between the school and parents are excellent and have improved considerably since the previous inspection. Greater attention has been focused on improving communication with parents in the school's aim to foster a community which allows parents to share in the life and development of the school. The importance of such relations is highlighted and developed through the school development plan.
- 5.9 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that parents are very pleased with the education and support provided for their children. Almost all parents who answered the questionnaire were very pleased with the quality of academic achievements, the extensive curriculum, the standards of care, the quality of communication and the information provided for them. Inspectors support these views. A small number of parents expressed concern that they are not encouraged to be involved in the life and work of the school. The inspection team found no evidence to support this view but the school is aware that owing to its wide catchment area and location it is difficult for parents regularly to visit the school. The parents are, however, invited into school to attend the Foundation lectures, listen to visiting speakers, support school teams and join in a number of other events. An email bulletin once a month reminds parents of forthcoming social events. The parent ambassadors for Year 7 pupils are also a valuable addition to parental involvement and play an important role in the induction process for Year 7 pupils.
- 5.10 An excellent, informative website provides parents and prospective parents with all the required information about the school including policies and procedures. Other forms of ICT are used to communicate with parents and the school encourages interaction through the use of the school intranet and parent portal. The school House system uses the school intranet to allow parents to share the involvement of their children in the many events and activities in the Houses. One of the school House sites has a 'happy parents' site encouraging positive feedback to the school. The school produces regular high quality publications alongside its prospectus. The end of term magazine, *Skylight* and the annual magazine *Skylark* round up the many experiences and achievements of the pupils throughout the year. In addition *The Aske Report* helps to keep parents and past pupils involved in both the work of the school and the Foundation. A number of academic journals of high intellectual quality produced by the pupils invite parents to share in their children's studies in science, geography, economics and literature.
- 5.11 A strength of the school is the excellent feedback it gives to parents on their children's academic progress. The school produces at least one full report a year with details of effort as well as academic attainment and sound advice on how pupils can improve. It also provides pupil grades seven times a year on the parent portal for parents to be kept fully up to date with progress. Annual parents' evenings are held for each year group and other information meetings as required.
- 5.12 A very small number of parents indicated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that they were not always satisfied with the way the school handled their concerns. The inspection team found day-to-day concerns are communicated by email or telephone and are handled quickly and diligently by tutors, house-staff or members of the senior team. All concerns are carefully logged and followed up and good levels of monitoring are evident. The school's complaints policy is available to parents on its website and meets minimum requirements. The inspection team found that the threshold for when a complaint becomes formal and the timescales for handling

complaints could be more clearly expressed to support the school in resolving concerns quickly and parents in finding resolution.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and 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 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 |
| Mrs Sarah Williamson | Deputy Head, HMC school |
| Miss Vicky Barrett | Deputy Head, HMC school |
| Mr David Dawswell | Second Master, HMC school |
| Rev. Steven Harvey | Head, HMC school |
| Ms Phillipa Message | Deputy Head, HMC school |