



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HEATHFIELD SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	Heathfield School	
DfE Number	867/6000	
Registered Charity Number	309086	
Address	Heathfield School London Road Ascot Berkshire SL5 8BQ	
Telephone Number	01344 898343	
Fax Number	01344 890689	
Email Address	headmistress@heathfieldschool.net	
Head	Mrs Joanne Heywood	
Chair of Governors	Mr Tom Cross Brown	
Age Range	11 to 18	
Total Number of Pupils	194	
Gender of Pupils	Girls	
Numbers by Age	11-18:	194
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	0
Number of Boarders	Total:	194
	Full:	194
Inspection dates	28 Feb 2012 to 02 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 2007.

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

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

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and 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.

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.

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. 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 June 2011 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS**

registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and another governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding provision 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 and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Beryl Fawcett	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Vicky Buckman	Team Inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Jenny Dwyer	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Timothy Halsall	Team Inspector (Assistant deputy head, HMC school)
Mr Matthew March	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Heathfield School is a school for girls between the ages of eleven and eighteen years. Founded in 1899 as a boarding school for girls, it has remained in the same buildings, extended and modified, ever since. The main building is a large Georgian house, surrounded by extensive grounds and playing areas. Following the merger of Heathfield School, Ascot with St Mary's School, Wantage, in 2006, Heathfield incorporated St Mary's onto the Ascot site.
- 1.2 The aim of the school is to provide a holistic education, appropriate for girls of the 21st century, and set within a Christian boarding community. Emphasis is placed on the way in which, as a full boarding school, pupils and staff should strive to live successfully as a community. Pupils are invited to contribute to the life of the school, and to respect others, acquiring through daily life an understanding of the values it promotes. The school aims to meet parents' and pupils' needs by providing a warm and welcoming atmosphere and ethos, and by providing small classes.
- 1.3 There have been various changes following the merger and since the previous inspection, including changes in leadership teams and the appointment of the current headmistress in November 2009. Major restructuring of the senior leadership team has taken place and fully came into effect from September 2010. The process of strategic planning has been completely changed with a revision of vision and aims. There has been a significant amount of building work, including the building of a new performing arts centre, which was officially opened in December 2009.
- 1.4 Pupils join the school at the ages of eleven, thirteen and sixteen and are selected through either 11+ or 13+ Common Entrance papers, or the school's own entrance papers, set for pupils at all levels. The school also uses a range of standardised tests to identify the academic profile of pupils on entry. There is a wide range of ability across the school but the ability profile is above the national average. In Year 7, the pupils' ability is slightly above the national average and in Year 9 it is above the national average. The ability profile of the sixth form is in line with the national average. Those pupils joining at eleven or thirteen years of age generally join from fee-paying preparatory schools, with very few maintained schools represented. Most pupils have not boarded before.
- 1.5 There are 194 pupils on roll, all of whom are full boarders, including 68 in the sixth form. A total of 46 pupils receive some sort of fee support provided by the school. The school draws from a wide range of feeder schools, with pupils coming from more than 50 schools over the last four years. English is not their principal language (EAL) for 25 pupils and 19 receive special language support. The school provides learning support for 35 pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Four-tenths of pupils live in London, a similar proportion elsewhere in the UK, and one-fifth live overseas, half of whom are from expatriate families and the remainder foreign nationals.

- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
First Year	Year 7
Second Year	Year 8
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievement is good. Pupils of all ages and abilities develop good levels of knowledge and understanding in a wide range of curricular activities. They are open, courteous and articulate, with listening and reading skills appropriate for their ages and they apply their numeracy skills well in a range of subjects. Small classes give the pupils the opportunity to develop their powers of reasoning and their creativity is highly developed in subjects such as art, music and photography. Achievement in physical activities is high and girls achieve much success in a varied range of extra-curricular activities. Individual specialist support for those with SEND and EAL is very good and has improved considerably since the previous inspection but provision for those pupils identified as gifted and talented is not yet embedded in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils make good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability and A-level results in 2010 are high in relation to their abilities. Overall, the quality of teaching is good but a significant amount is sound. There was little evidence of the use of ICT to aid teaching and the school acknowledges that the practice of marking and assessment is inconsistent. The pupils have a positive attitude towards their work in those areas where much is demanded from them and respond well to those teachers with high expectations.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good. Pupils are confident, articulate and self-aware. They appreciate the non-material aspects of life and are loyal to friends, house and school. The pupils show respect for norms of good conduct and moral and ethical values. Pupils know each other well and there is much genuine support and friendship both within and across year groups. Several thousand pounds have been raised for charities through a variety of pupil-led fund-raising activities. The school community is culturally diverse and all pupils are accepting and feel accepted. The quality of pastoral care, welfare, health and safety, and boarding is excellent.
- 2.3 The governors provide good oversight of the school in line with its aims. The governing body has a realistic insight into the working of the school and provides support and stimulus for its growth and improvement. Leadership and management are good overall and provide clear educational direction that is reflected in the quality of the pupils' education, the high standard of boarding and pupils' personal development. It effectively discharges its delegated responsibilities, and particularly those for the safeguarding of pupils, which is now compliant and considerably improved since the previous inspection. Re-designed aims and a new school development plan have engendered a number of initiatives to give direction and purpose to the work of the school but monitoring is not yet sufficient to ensure that initiatives are well disseminated or implemented. The school is committed to recruiting staff with expertise and empathy with the school's ethos and is successful in securing and supporting sufficient high-quality staff. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed great satisfaction with the education offered, the support provided for their children and with the quality of communication with the school. They regard the school as a happy place where their children can thrive and prosper and this was supported by the inspection findings.

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 meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Implement a consistent marking and assessment policy throughout the school.
 2. Improve the quality of teaching to that of the best, through challenging pupils to aim high, to think, explore and show initiative, and regular and consistent monitoring of classroom practice.
 3. Ensure all staff have sufficient training to make effective use of ICT in support of teaching and learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement is good overall.
- 3.2 Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND or EAL, develop good levels of knowledge and understanding in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. They are open, courteous and articulate, as demonstrated in meetings with the inspection team. Pupils' listening and reading skills are appropriate for their ages and they apply their numeracy skills well in a range of subjects, such as a sixth-form chemistry lesson and in GCSE biology. Small classes give the pupils the opportunity to develop their powers of reasoning and, when given the opportunity, they do so well. Their creativity is highly developed within the art and photography departments, evident through displays around the school, and in music-making, both within lessons and extra-curricular activities. When given the opportunity to use ICT, pupils show good facility, such as their understanding and use of appropriate software in photography and effective digital presentations of their work in biology. Achievement in physical activities is high.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve success in a varied range of activities outside the normal curriculum. They have won places in the national schools symphony orchestra and a number have had success in music board examinations. All of the 91 students who took speech and drama examinations were awarded a distinction or merit in 2011 and a number were successful in classical ballet examinations. Two girls have been chosen for the national lacrosse squad and a small number represent their county at under-15 or under-19 level. The equestrian team has had success in a number of school show-jumping events. Recent achievements at the school-girls' skiing championships have resulted in training in a prestigious French ski school.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. GCSE performance has been good in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools, although results have declined from 2008 to 2010. GCSE performance was similar to the national average for girls in selective schools in 2008. A-level results have been good in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools, with results showing improvement from 2008 to 2010. A-level results were similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools in 2008 to 2009, and above this average in 2010. The level of attainment at GCSE and A Level indicates that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability and A-level results in 2010 are high in relation to the pupils' abilities.
- 3.5 The pupils have a positive attitude towards their work in those areas where much is demanded from them and respond well to those teachers with high expectations. Where expectations are limited, pupils' responses are similarly limited and inhibit what can be achieved. In Years 7 and 8, pupils have had study days to support independent learning, which the girls evidently enjoyed and from which they benefited, although few opportunities were observed where the skills learnt could be developed in curriculum lessons. Pupils work co-operatively in class and listen to each other's opinions

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

- 3.6 The quality of curriculum and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.7 The academic curriculum effectively covers the requisite areas of learning and supports the aims of the school. It provides good opportunities for pupils to aim high, and show initiative. The broad and balanced approach to the pupils' education offers a good number and range of options at all ages. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) now has a more formal position on the timetable and is beginning to encourage pupils to develop social, political and economic awareness.
- 3.8 A variety of well-planned visits, both at home and abroad, enhance the quality of provision. The school is working towards a curriculum that caters for pupils of different abilities and the availability of both dual and triple award science, together with settings in a range of subjects, is evidence of this emerging in some subject areas. The individual support for pupils with SEND or EAL in the special needs (Spectrum) department is very good and has improved considerably since the last inspection but there is less evidence of this being consistently put into practice in mainstream lessons, for example where learning assistants were under-utilised. Provision for those pupils identified as gifted and talented is not yet embedded in all areas of the curriculum.
- 3.9 Pupils note their teachers' very great willingness to support them beyond the classroom with clinics or in one-to-one tuition to address specific needs. However, timetable and curriculum organisation into lessons of either 35 or 70 minutes leaves some teachers feeling constrained in how they can meet the pupils' needs within the time allotted and, in particular, how they can enable the most able to demonstrate their potential in the classroom. There are opportunities in the sixth form for pupils to undertake extra exercises that foster independent learning and responsibility, such as preparation of extended essays, attempted by all, or the biology Olympiad, although that is not widely taken up.
- 3.10 Pupils receive careers guidance from Year 9, supported by good quality information for pupils and parents. Those who seek to go to higher education benefit from a programme that starts in Year 11 but some pupils who do not intend to follow this path did not find the guidance particularly helpful.
- 3.11 The facilities, such as the new performing arts centre, the refurbished and extended library and ICT provision, are excellent but inconsistently utilised for educational purposes. While set sizes in Years 10 to 13 are often small, those in Years 7 and 8 are relatively large for subjects such as art and science, and limitations of space sometimes inhibit what can be attempted.
- 3.12 The school is justifiably proud of the breadth and scope of the extra-curricular provision that extends the academic studies of the pupils, as well as offering them new opportunities, for example in sport or the arts. It is particularly commendable for a small school. The specialist course by a London cookery school, for example, is a notable and popular addition to the extra-curricular provision, as are the speech and drama and dance activities and the engagement in World Book Day by staff and pupils in Years 7 and 8. They are complemented by socials with other schools and theatre trips. Most pupils interviewed spoke positively about what they were encouraged, and enabled, to do and three-quarters of the respondents to the pupil questionnaires agreed with the idea that there was plenty to join in with. The Friday afternoon programme offers a good range of activities. Some pupils in other year

groups felt that weekends were particularly busy, whereas the evening programme between Mondays and Thursdays is more sparsely operated. The school arranges this deliberately to allow pupils some time for relaxation.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 Overall the quality of teaching is good.
- 3.14 Teaching goes some way to supporting the aims of the school. The relationship between staff and pupils is good and there is an easy informality which promotes good learning. The teaching makes a marked contribution to the pupils' success in public examinations. Teachers show good subject knowledge, for example in chemistry where a teacher explained how infrared could be used to test the purity of a substance. The use of resident professionals in art, drama and music enriches the pupil experience. Lessons are suitably planned and there is awareness, if not a complete understanding, of the pupils' individual needs. In some subjects and at some levels, for example at GCSE and A Level, effective schemes of work are supportive of the teaching but many are simply lists of topics to be covered and do not help lesson planning or aid progression through the year or across the years. Although staff are aware of pupils with SEND, there is little evidence of dedicated and planned help in lessons. Different activities to meet and challenge pupils with different needs are suitably illustrated in schemes of work and lesson plans but not always used.
- 3.15 At its best, teaching has high expectations of what pupils can achieve and the pupils are challenged to think for themselves, for example in creative subjects such as art and music. The acquisition of new knowledge is encouraged and enables pupils to make good progress, including an increase in their understanding and development of their skills. As a consequence, pupils respond positively and their learning is good. In a GCSE music lesson, for example, pupils were productively involved in listening, reading and performance of music during the course of a short lesson. Some independent learning is encouraged, for example in the setting of project work, and some year groups have benefited from dedicated days associated with a subject or topic but fewer independent learning skills were observed in day-to-day classes, for example in note taking or reasoning.
- 3.16 A significant amount of the teaching is sound because it lacks flexibility. Lesson plans are adhered to without assessing how much the pupils have learned and making appropriate adjustments. In such teaching, pupils were offered insufficient challenge and encouragement to think and act for themselves. Lessons often lacked pace, pupils were not punctual and insufficient time was allowed to set homework. As a result, some pupils demonstrated a lack of ambition and curiosity and some petulant behaviour was not effectively challenged.
- 3.17 Resources and facilities are excellent and support good teaching to provide a variety of activities. Interactive whiteboards were not used to their full potential and there was limited evidence of ICT being used by the pupils or as part of the teaching. Marking and assessment is, at its best, helpful and informative and allows pupils to make progress. Overall, however, the school acknowledges that practice is inconsistent and is currently being reviewed by a marking working group. Little evidence was seen of the use of standardised performance data to plan teaching. The perfunctory nature of much marking does not help pupils to improve. Useful marking policies are evident in some departments, but not all, and where they exist, they are not always followed.

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 spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils have a high standard of personal development by the time they leave the school. The school is largely successful in meeting its aims to develop spiritual awareness, moral values and a sense of community. Pupils are confident, articulate and self-aware. They appreciate the non-material aspects of life, as illustrated by the fine art displays of the pupils' work around the school, their regard for the chapel and the Christian principles for which it stands, and the need to appreciate the many roles of people in society who offer help and support (for example, in an assembly about the role of paramedics). Pupils show loyalty to friends, house and school.
- 4.3 The pupils have a good sense of right and wrong, respect for norms of good conduct and moral and ethical values, which were explored in classes and in displays around the school. A discussion on factory farming in a Year 10 biology lesson and the basis of Christian marriage in Year 11 are good illustrations of this. In Year 7, pupils revealed a lively indignation at the thought that someone they knew might break the law and Year 11 felt that minimum tariffs for drink-driving were insufficient. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, and during the inspection, a number of pupils felt that rewards and sanctions were not always fairly distributed but inspectors could not find evidence of this. A debate in Year 11 allowed pupils to explore racial tolerance and other global issues, which they did well.
- 4.4 The school is a civilised place and the pupils know each other well; the form groups are cohesive units and there is much genuine support and friendship both within and across year groups. The pupils, particularly Year 12, enjoy taking responsibility for events within their houses and contribute well to the life of the school. Successes, both big and small, are celebrated at many points and contributions to activities such as house events are highlighted in pupil-led assemblies. The pupils are aware of those less fortunate than themselves and several thousand pounds have been raised for charities through a variety of pupil-led fund-raising activities. A number of activities take pupils out into the wider community.
- 4.5 The school community is culturally diverse and all pupils are accepting and feel accepted. There is a real interest in the traditions of those from other countries, as well as awareness of Western cultural traditions, and this was seen in a number of formal settings, such as literature lessons, and, more informally, the enjoyment of food from different heritages. There are a number of visits to places of interest both at home and abroad and the influence of these was evident in some lessons. Year 7 pupils had developed ideas they had seen, during a recent trip, into the designs they were working on. Pupils develop a knowledge of English public institutions through the PSHE programme.

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

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 The staff provide excellent pastoral support and guidance for the pupils in accordance with the aims of the school. Relationships are particularly strong outside the classroom and the boarders speak warmly of the help and support they receive in the evenings. Tutors know their pupils well and discuss their progress with them on a regular basis. Formal and informal structures ensure that pupils receive appropriate guidance.
- 4.8 The strong relationships between pupils and staff and between pupils of different ages were apparent at the house meetings where the lower sixth pupils were fulsome in their support of younger pupils for their contribution to house events.
- 4.9 Pupils of all ages are encouraged to eat healthily and the food in the dining room gives scope for choice by the pupils. Although a few pupils expressed concern about the quality of the food, the inspectors found no evidence to support this. Pupils in Year 13 have the good opportunity to cater for themselves in their purpose-built accommodation and in this they are being well prepared for life beyond school. All pupils have a good choice of sporting activities in which to participate, ranging from team sports to golf, gym or dance.
- 4.10 The school is very effective in promoting good behaviour. Pupils reported very few incidents of bullying and felt that any such issues are dealt with quickly and effectively by the school. Appropriate anti-bullying and discipline policies note the responsibility of the whole school community.
- 4.11 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.12 The school employs both formal and informal strategies that are effective and ensure that the pupils are able to express their views. The school council was held to be effective by some pupils, whilst others felt that informal means such as conversations with members of the senior team were more useful.

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

- 4.13 The arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.14 All necessary arrangements are meticulously undertaken and overseen by the active and effective health and safety committee. The safeguarding arrangements are fully implemented and meet the requirement of the previous inspection report. The designated child protection officer and all members of staff are appropriately trained to deal with matters of child protection. Measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are in place and include regular and varied types of fire practice. Risk assessments are detailed and thorough and all other arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective, including provision for pupils who are ill or injured. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained, and correctly stored for the previous three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.15 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.16 Boarders' excellent standard of personal development is strongly promoted by their experience of boarding. They are erudite and confident and demonstrate a high standard of care for one another. They have strong and positive relationships with one another and with pastoral staff and the warmth of feeling for their house staff is palpable. They value the friendships they form with one another and there is a strong, yet informal support network amongst them. They are comfortable in their house environment and acknowledge the efforts made by their house staff to create a homely atmosphere and regard their house as being their term-time home. They have high standards of behaviour and respect different cultural traditions, such as a celebration of Muslim festivals and the preparation of food at dusk during Ramadan. The school policy of changing bedrooms termly means that all girls within the year group are encouraged to integrate fully with their peers and all greatly value this experience.
- 4.17 There is an excellent standard of boarding provision and care. Boarding is in year groups and the boarding staff are fully involved in all aspects of the boarders' lives. Interaction with the house system, which goes across year groups, although largely informal, is highly effective. An open-door policy across the housemistress team ensures easy access to staff. The youngest boarders live in small dormitory areas which are well furnished and bright whilst, by the beginning of Year 10, all boarders are offered single, well-equipped bedrooms. Some Year 12 girls contribute to the life of the younger year groups by living amongst them and operating as prefects. Year 13 pupils have no formal school responsibilities and live in a separate house, the bungalow, where they cater for themselves twice daily, an excellent preparation for the next stage of their lives. All boarders have their own laptops and facilities exist in common rooms for overnight charging. Other than in Year 7, comfortable common room areas are separate from sleeping accommodation. They are adapted according to the age of the boarders and privileges are appropriately increased with age. Boarders are encouraged to contribute to the local community in a variety of ways and they take care to stay fit and healthy. A comprehensive range of weekend activities is available to all boarders and during the week they have the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities and lessons delivered outside the working day. The quality of medical care is excellent with twenty-four hour on-site cover and bright, modern accommodation for those pupils who are unwell. This is led by a dedicated team who demonstrate a sound knowledge and understanding of those in their care. The catering staff provide all meals for all boarders below Year 13. The food is considered varied, and at times imaginative, which was borne out during the inspection.
- 4.18 Procedures for the welfare and safeguarding of boarders are excellent. Recruitment of staff meets requirements and good care is taken in the checking of suitability of staff. The central register of appointments is carefully maintained. The school has implemented the recommendations of the most recent Ofsted report. Boarding arrangements ensure that girls are protected from harm. The risk assessment policy is updated annually and all external visits attract separate risk assessments. There are considerable number of adults within the school to whom boarders are able and willing to turn to in times of difficulty. Good behaviour is maintained. A strong emphasis is placed on rewarding good behaviour together with sanctions for transgressions. Boarders understand the anti-bullying policy and believe it to be fair.

House staff are rapid in dealing with any issues that arise and policies support the victim and the bully.

- 4.19 There is excellent leadership of the boarding provision which provides energetic and committed leadership to the boarding staff. The friendly and positive atmosphere within the houses is actively promoted and there are excellent relationships between boarders and the adults who are responsible for their welfare. Policies are comprehensive and regularly updated and form the framework within which the house staff operate. Alongside daily, informal contact there are regular, minuted meetings with the heads of house, during which the boarders' progress forms the basis of discussion. Housemistresses meet weekly, considering day-to-day pastoral matters and also more strategic issues, such as how to improve the school's provision against the modified National Minimum Standards. Boarding staff are regularly encouraged to take part in training courses in order to develop their skills, although not all have recently taken responsibility for their professional development. The duties of boarding staff are carefully constructed to ensure a high level of cover throughout the boarding areas at all times. Contact with parents is meticulous and relevant at all pastoral levels. Whilst there is a formal conduit for the boarders' views to be considered through the school council, on a day-to-day basis they report that much is achieved through discussion and compromise. The needs of all boarders are well known and records follow them as they progress through the school.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governors provide good oversight of the school in line with its aims. The members of the Council represent a good and effective range of skills and expertise that are brought to bear in discussion about the work and progress of the school and enables them to discharge their responsibilities for educational standards, the pupils' personal development and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. The latter are well supported by careful financial planning. The new performing arts centre is a particularly notable example of such provision and a continuing programme of maintenance and refurbishment ensures that best use is made of existing accommodation.
- 5.3 The governing body has a good and realistic insight into the working of the school and provides support and stimulus for its growth and improvement. They evaluate the success of the school through the work of the strong finance, education and health and safety sub-committees, headmistress's reports, routine analysis of academic results and biennial strategy meetings with senior members of the school's staff. A designated governor for child protection makes regular visits to the school and ensures that the governing body is provided with good information upon which to base their oversight of this area of provision.
- 5.4 The governing body is highly effective in discharging its responsibilities for statutory requirements, and this is significantly improved since the previous inspection, meeting requirements to ensure that procedures for checking suitability of staff were effective. Annual reviews of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school are in place.

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

- 5.5 Leadership and management is good overall.
- 5.6 Leadership and management provide clear educational direction. Delegated responsibilities are effectively discharged, and particularly those for policy implementation and the safeguarding of pupils.
- 5.7 At the senior level, leadership and management is good, often excellent, and leads to the good standards achieved and the excellent quality of pastoral care. Middle management is more variable in quality. Some, such as that for pastoral care and boarding, is good, as is some strong, incisive and confident subject leadership, that is evident in the physical, practical and creative subjects and enables consistently effective teaching and learning. In other areas, however, oversight is insufficient and teaching and learning is less effective.
- 5.8 Since the previous inspection the school has undergone considerable changes that ultimately have seen the reorganisation of the senior leadership team, the effective restructuring of the faculty system and the establishment of clear responsibilities for academic and pastoral oversight, boarding and financial provision. In the past year and a half, re-designed aims and a new school development plan have been

carefully constructed with input from governors, staff and parents. This has engendered a number of carefully reviewed initiatives to give direction, such as training associated with child protection, the development of procedures to use the range of performance data held in the school, tracking of the pupils' performance and planning to introduce a system of appraisal of staff. Much of this represents considerable work in progress that is yet to come to fruition. Well-conceived documentation and readily available training materials have been produced but are yet to influence teaching practice consistently and monitoring is insufficient to ensure that initiatives are well disseminated or implemented.

- 5.9 The school is committed to recruiting staff with expertise and empathy with the school's ethos and does so successfully. It ensures they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all children, safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. New members of staff are carefully inducted and a new system of appraisal of all staff aims to support individual professional development and the development of skills associated with teaching, learning and assessment.
- 5.10 In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed great satisfaction with the education offered, the support provided for their children and with the quality of communication with the school. They regard the school as a happy place where their children can thrive and prosper and this was supported by the inspection experience. Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school. Published material, including newsletters, is clear, colourful and well-presented. In accordance with its aims, the school maintains a constructive relationship with its parents through meetings, special events and information sessions, such as provision of information about curricular choices, and email contact. Any parental concerns are handled with considerable care, in accordance with its published procedures.
- 5.11 Parents have good opportunities to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children and are encouraged to participate in visits or school events. They receive newly-devised, informative reports about their children's work and progress, which provide a helpful indication of the curriculum content of each subject, grades for attainment and effort and a summary of the pupil's performance. Three personal targets for the next term are included for each subject but as yet these are of variable quality and not necessarily associated with identified educational outcomes.

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