



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

LOCKERS PARK SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Lockers Park School

Full Name of School	Lockers Park School		
DfE Number	919/6024		
Registered Charity Number	311061		
Address	Lockers Park School Lockers Park Lane Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 1TL		
Telephone Number	01442 251712		
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Email Address	secretary@lockerspark.herts.sch.uk		
Head	Mr David Farquharson		
Chair of Governors	Mr Paul Nicholas		
Age Range	5 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	137		
Gender of Pupils	Boys		
Numbers by Age	5-11:	94	11-18: 43
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	101	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 60
Number of Boarders	Total:	36	
	Full:	17	Weekly: 19
Inspection dates	04 Oct 2011 to 05 Oct 2011		
	02 Nov 2011 to 04 Nov 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 November, 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 boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in March 2011 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Lockers Park School was founded in 1874 on its present 23-acre site in Hemel Hempstead. It is a day and boarding school for boys aged five to thirteen. The school has a board of governors, and the present headmaster was appointed in September 2010.
- 1.2 Some of the teaching rooms and the boarding accommodation are housed in a listed building; other specialist teaching facilities are in a nearby building that was extended in 2007 to provide new facilities for science and technology. Since the previous inspection in 2005, the age range has been extended by the introduction of a class for five to seven year olds.
- 1.3 The school currently has 137 pupils, with 94 in the lower school (aged from five to eleven) and 43 in the upper school (aged from eleven to thirteen). Thirty-six pupils are full or weekly boarders and others spend a few nights each week in the school. The average class size is thirteen. Most pupils join the school at a young age, but pupils can enter at any age if places are available. Entry to the school is by informal assessment of the pupils, to ensure they will benefit from the education offered. Most pupils continue until the age of thirteen before proceeding to a wide range of independent schools.
- 1.4 Most pupils come from professional families living within 30 miles of the school, and have been born in the UK; a few boarders come from the Far East and from Russia. Nine pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), and these receive extra specialist help. Twelve pupils are receiving specialist individual help for their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Standardised tests show the pupils' average ability is above the national average, with pupils having a wide range of ability. One in five pupils have ability below the national average, and one in ten have ability far above this average.
- 1.5 The school's aims are to enthuse pupils with a love of school, and to create a safe, happy, caring environment, within which each pupil feels cherished, and to enable them to achieve their potential in a wide range of academic and non-academic areas.

- 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 tables.

Pre-preparatory Department

School	NC name
Chestnuts	Year 1/2

Preparatory Department

School	NC name
C3G	Year 3
C4G	Year 4
B5D	Year 5
B5E	Year 5
B6D	Year 6
B7T	Year 6
A7P	Year 7
A7S	Year 7
A8G	Year 8
A8H	Year 8

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school has a strong boarding ethos and provides a very happy learning environment through an excellent wide-ranging curriculum and programme of activities. The overall standard of teaching is good and this enables pupils to achieve and progress well; the teaching is occasionally excellent. The pupils who have learning difficulties, and those with EAL, receive specialist lessons. Pupils with SEND make good progress, and those with EAL especially fine progress. Some lessons lack real challenge and are over-controlled, with insufficient involvement by pupils. Teachers know their pupils and their subjects well, and prepare pupils very thoroughly for external examinations. The attitude of pupils to their lessons is usually good, varying with the quality of the lesson. Pupils achieve high standards outside the classroom, especially in games, art, music and drama.
- 2.2 The personal development of the pupils is excellent, fostered by the warm, family atmosphere of the school, supported by first-rate pastoral care. Pupils develop a quiet confidence and speak easily with adults. They are friendly, caring and courteous, and have a strong sense of right and wrong. Younger pupils feel that they can make a contribution through the school council and that this is effective in reflecting their ideas. Pupils from other countries are easily assimilated into the school community. Good, appropriate arrangements are made for the welfare, safeguarding, health and safety of the pupils; the high quality medical centre is well resourced and manned, and the kitchens produce high quality food appreciated by the school community. The boarding arrangements are excellent, and many pupils enjoy and benefit from the time they spend as boarders.
- 2.3 The governance of the school is good overall; the governors' financial planning for each year does not include medium-term considerations, nor are they involved sufficiently in the educational direction of the school. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The ethos of the school is clearly overseen by the headmaster and his senior managers. Many staff devote much time and energy to pastoral care and to out-of-class activities. Each recommendation made at the time of the previous inspection has received attention, but the improvements implemented have not all been maintained. A rigorous staff appraisal system, planned a few years ago, was implemented fully for the first time in the week before this inspection; the formal monitoring of colleagues' teaching has declined recently. The links with parents are excellent, and parents are pleased with all aspects of the school.

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) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Bring all teaching closer to the outstanding standards achieved on occasions, by planning lessons that challenge all pupils fully, encourage thinking and allow active involvement by pupils.
 2. Increase the formal monitoring of classroom teaching by heads of department and senior management, and introduce rigorous staff appraisal.
 3. Improve the governance of the school by preparing long-term financial forecasts, and by increasing the oversight of educational issues.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 All pupils are well educated, ensuring their good overall achievement, so that the school's aim of helping pupils to achieve their potential in a wide range of academic and non-academic areas is fulfilled. Pupils are well grounded in their basic literacy skills; they read and speak confidently. The older pupils reach a high standard of writing and comprehension, and have an impressive command of vocabulary; they have insufficient opportunities to write imaginatively. Pupils of this age have also acquired a wide range of mathematical skills, but struggle to apply them to real-life situations. The younger pupils have sound arithmetical skills but have yet to realise the fascination of numbers and the ability to see short cuts to answers. Pupils are very enthusiastic about science and enjoy doing experiments; the more able Year 8 pupils can apply their knowledge to new situations. The pupils' creativity is strong in art, design and technology, music and drama. Computer skills are high and are used often in a range of subjects.
- 3.2 Pupils do not take national tests at the ages of seven or eleven, but they take standardised tests to measure achievement in English and mathematics. Lesson observations, interviews with pupils and scrutiny of their books indicate attainment is high in English in relation to national expectations at all ages; attainment is good in mathematics by the time pupils reach Year 8 and satisfactory at a younger age. The older pupils are prepared very thoroughly for a variety of external examinations; all gain places into their first choice of senior school at the age of thirteen. A good number of scholarships are won at this age, some for academic excellence. Standards are high in most non-academic areas. The pupils compete successfully in sport against other schools, and individual success at regional level has been achieved in athletics, cricket, rugby and swimming. Artistic standards are excellent and much work is displayed around the school; even the less artistic pupils produce memorable results, encouraged by sympathetic teaching and high expectations. Pupils of all ages enjoy their music; results in national examinations in music, and in speech and drama, have been outstanding, with the majority of pupils passing with merit and distinction grades. Parents appreciate the high quality of the concerts and of the three drama productions performed each year by pupils of all ages. Most activities are well run by knowledgeable staff, leading to lively participation and good achievement by pupils.
- 3.3 Pupils of all ages make at least good progress. Those with SEND make good progress and those with EAL make excellent progress, helped by continuous conversation with their peers. In some lessons the more able pupils are given tasks that challenge them fully thus enabling them to progress rapidly.
- 3.4 Pupils are usually well motivated; they respond enthusiastically when actively involved in a lesson. They settle quickly to their work and concentrate hard on the tasks they are given. The collaborative approach to learning is used frequently; a successful example being the trios of Years 1/2 pupils seen discussing sensibly the differences between rules at home and at school, before putting pencil to paper. The pupils' many successes inside and outside the classroom owe much to their positive attitudes, the opportunities provided by the curriculum and the relationships they enjoy with their teachers.

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

- 3.5 The overall curriculum is excellent; it has considerable breadth during the course of an extended school day and fulfils the school's aim of providing a full and rounded education. Many non-academic opportunities are included, with a wide range of activities, and chapel services or assemblies are held each day.
- 3.6 All the National Curriculum subjects are taught, with appropriate amounts of time for each one. French is taught from Year 4 and Latin to older pupils, with drama for those in Years 3 to 5. Since the previous inspection the provision for personal, social and health education is much improved, with citizenship included for pupils in Years 6 to 8. Games are timetabled for each afternoon but all pupils do another activity instead of the main game of the term on at least one occasion each week. Within the context of a demanding school day, the pupils' enjoyment is obvious; however, the lunchtime silent reading period is ineffective in encouraging a love of literature. Saturday school with morning lessons and afternoon sports matches is the norm. Years 1 and 2 have a much shorter day and a voluntary Saturday activity.
- 3.7 The provision for pupils with SEND or EAL is good, with specialist tuition provided. In Years 5 to 8, classes are streamed according to ability, with the more academically gifted Year 6 pupils doing Year 7 work, so having the possibility of sitting for scholarships in their final year. Special provision is made in the activities and games programme for those talented in sport, music, art and technology.
- 3.8 The wide range of activities includes many sports, chess, debating, drama, three choirs, several instrumental groups and an orchestra. The activities of the recently created cub pack are very popular. A full programme of matches enables all the pupils in Years 3 to 8 to enjoy the opportunity to represent their school. Major drama productions by the junior and senior pupils, and a Nativity play by those in Years 1 and 2, enable many to gain confidence from performing in public. Nearly all pupils learn musical instruments, chosen from a wide range, with the most expert players delighting the audiences in the spring and summer term concerts.
- 3.9 The educational experience of pupils is enhanced each year by visiting speakers and by a number of trips, sometimes related to their academic studies, to places of interest. The Year 8 leavers' programme includes visiting speakers, such as magistrates and police regarding drugs. In addition, pupils undertake residential trips, such as camping for pupils in Years 3 to 5 and a cricket tour, as well as the annual ski trip. Pupils in Years 5 to 7 have the opportunity to take part in a week in France during the summer holidays.
- 3.10 Links with the local community have improved greatly since the previous inspection. These include maintained primary schools participating in events and using the grounds for science and nature studies; Year 8 pupils provide coaching for local children. Raising significant sums of money for local, national and international charities brings a richness to life at the school; for example, pupils showed great enthusiasm in raising money for charity by means of a sponsored six-mile walk. Pupils take part in an annual concert in London for The Children's Trust, and the school have an initiative for supporting troops in Afghanistan.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The overall standard of teaching is good; this enables pupils to progress well and supports the school's aims. The teaching is occasionally excellent. Teachers know their pupils very well and inculcate in them a strong work ethic. They are fully aware of those pupils with SEND or EAL, and support them when they can in the classroom. Teachers are sometimes less successful in providing greater challenge to interest and inspire the more able pupils; some lessons for older pupils are pitched at a suitably demanding level.
- 3.12 The appropriate response of pupils in lessons is a consequence of the outstanding relationships that exist between most teachers and their pupils. Praise and encouragement are used effectively by most teachers, and this adds to pupils' enjoyment of the topics studied. In an excellent lesson on how to convey information in amusing ways, considerable involvement by pupils was skilfully encouraged. The infectious enthusiasm of the teacher enabled pupils to make rapid progress using indicators to determine the acidity of a pretend stomach, after a fast-moving but clear introduction by the teacher. Resources are usually used effectively, and interactive whiteboards are mostly used appropriately to add to pupils' understanding and engagement.
- 3.13 In the best lessons, excellent knowledge and enthusiastic teaching, at a brisk pace with high expectations, enables pupils to achieve well. For example, all these qualities coupled with frequent variation of activities for pupils were apparent in a lesson on unfamiliar French words and phrases, with excellent participation and learning resulting. The lessons of older pupils are often structured successfully towards the requirements of external examinations but with insufficient encouragement for independent and creative thought. Less successful lessons lack real challenge or pace and are over-controlled with insufficient variation of activities for pupils, with all being given the same work; this results in the more able pupils lacking the inspiration to make maximum progress. Lesson planning is usually thorough, with clear objectives and outcomes.
- 3.14 Assessment of pupils' abilities and progress is much improved since the previous inspection. The range of tests now used provides a wealth of information, which enables the progress of each individual to be tracked efficiently. In addition, the efforts of each pupil are recorded every three weeks and progress is assessed by examinations twice a year. All work is marked, with encouraging and constructive comments added, especially in English and mathematics. When this is allied to oral feedback, as is often the case, pupils have all the guidance they need to move forward in their learning.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 Pupils of all ages have outstandingly well-developed personal qualities, are friendly and polite, and take an obvious pride both in their own achievements and in those of others, in accordance with the school's aims. The high standards noted at the time of the previous inspection have been fully maintained.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual development is aided by acts of worship in chapel where they have the opportunity to think and to pray. Pupils' self-esteem is raised by the rewards they have earned being announced in weekly assemblies. Pupils reported that finding pigeon eggs in a tree and watching them hatch were inspiring moments for them. Music, art and drama all contribute to the spiritual development of the pupils by enabling them to explore their own creativity. Pupils feel valued and able to develop as individuals. Year 6 pupils have an understanding of other world faiths, gained through religious studies lessons.
- 4.3 Pupils are natural, co-operative and well mannered. The school rules are based on courtesy, co-operation and common sense, and pupils usually adhere to a strong moral code. They have a highly developed sense of right and wrong, and of justice and fairness. Pupils of all ages mix well together, and positions of responsibility, even that of head boy, are rotated to give as many as possible the opportunity to have this experience and to show they can carry out duties conscientiously. Since the previous inspection a school council has been introduced, with elected representatives from each class in Years 3 to 8 meeting regularly. Younger pupils speak positively of the council's impact, feeling that their wishes are considered seriously; food features often on their agenda, and they were involved in reviewing the school's anti-bullying policy and they even took part in the selection of the new headmaster. Older pupils are more ambivalent in their attitude to the council. An eco-committee has introduced the important initiatives of recycling paper, tree planting and energy efficiency, and younger pupils talk enthusiastically about these matters. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 have recently started to grow vegetables in their allotment. Every new boy has a 'pater', usually an experienced boy in their class, to guide and advise them in their first fortnight. Pupils say that they will quite often go to a prefect if they have a concern. Pupils in their questionnaires wrote positively about the school, especially mentioning how much they liked being here.
- 4.4 Pupils develop a sense of their own and other cultures and traditions. Overseas pupils are welcomed into the school and integrated by the kindness and openness of others. Pupils were very aware of the Haiti earthquake and its implications for the survivors. Visits to theatres and museums feature prominently during the year, but not to places of worship. Regular themed lunches and suppers play an important part in the boys' consciousness of other cultures and add fun aspects to school life, with an especially ghoulish one on Halloween being witnessed by inspectors.

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

- 4.5 The pastoral care provided for pupils is excellent. The staff know the pupils very well and this enables the school to fulfil its aim of creating a safe, happy, caring environment, within which each pupil feels cherished. The staff provide support and guidance through their roles as class teachers; the heads of juniors and seniors monitor pupils' behaviour closely and they are excellently supported by the boarding staff. Teachers work hard to make the school experience special for each pupil. The high quality of pastoral care noted in the previous inspection has been further enhanced by closer attention to detail and greater emphasis on appropriate behaviour, and on a sympathetic approach to problems when they occur.
- 4.6 Any concerns about pupils are discussed between staff informally and are highlighted in weekly pastoral meetings. The form periods are used profitably by some class teachers to discuss moral issues or help pupils with organisational matters; a teacher encouraged an excellent brainstorming discussion, chaired by a pupil, on 'whether it is ever possible to learn nothing'. The staff set high standards and help to instil traditional values, such as courtesy and politeness. Pupils wrote on their questionnaire that they appreciate the help they receive from teachers but a significant minority feel that a few teachers do not treat pupils equally; no evidence of this was observed by the inspectors. Pupils are very conscious of the school's green and red slips for behaviour; this system of rewards and sanctions operates as a positive one overall.
- 4.7 Pupils report that bullying is minimal and is usually dealt with swiftly and effectively on the rare occasions it occurs. They feel that the school is a safe environment, staffed by people whom they trust. Pupils are aware of the independent listener, what she offers and how to contact her.
- 4.8 The provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is highly effective. Risk assessments have been developed for every aspect of school life. Electrical equipment is tested annually, and any emergency repairs are attended to promptly by the school's maintenance staff. The sick bay has first-rate facilities and the matrons provide excellent care in the surgery for accidents and ailments. Records are kept of medicines dispensed and entered onto a pupil's file each day. The safeguarding of pupils is good and all staff have received child protection training; the safe recruitment of staff is undertaken meticulously. Measures have been taken to minimise the risk from fire and other hazards, and regular fire practices occur, sometimes with a route blocked to simulate a real fire. The excellent school meals are popular with pupils and staff for their quality and choice; the school also provides refreshments in the mid-morning and mid-afternoon breaks. Pupils lead active lives, and the games and activities programmes ensure that they take regular exercise. The admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained. The school has an appropriate plan regarding educational access for pupils with disabilities.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.9 The arrangements for those who board are excellent. They safeguard and promote the welfare of boarders, and make a very significant contribution to their educational experience. The boarding experience fully supports the aims and ethos of the school and the school's daily routine is based on the needs of the boarders; this enables pupils to move seamlessly from being day pupils to boarding on two or more nights, to all weekday nights or to staying at weekends as well. At the time of the inspection up to 70 boarders were present on one night of the week. A number of day pupils stay at school for prep and supper.
- 4.10 The good boarding arrangements reported by Ofsted recently have been further improved by additional refurbishment and by the addition of a large, comfortable and newly equipped common room close to the dormitories. Pupils enjoy using this room when watching television, playing games or just sitting comfortably. The Year 8 boarders have an area within the common room where they may make refreshments for themselves and for younger boarders.
- 4.11 The school aims to make the boarding experience fun and discussions with pupils confirm that it is successful in achieving this aim. Much of the enjoyment derives from the relaxed atmosphere. Organised activities are provided on some evenings; at other times boarders are happy to enjoy one another's company, playing impromptu games. The availability of the sports hall, the computer room and the table tennis and pool tables are much appreciated. Many of the younger boarders are enthusiastic about the cub pack that has been formed at the school, which provides a wide variety of enjoyable games and team activities each week. Additionally, on summer evenings, boarders enjoy making use of the extensive and partly wooded site. Boarders report that at weekends staff provide popular activities, often involving trips away from school.
- 4.12 A number of teaching and medical staff are on duty each evening; boarders say that very good relationships exist with the staff who care for them, and also between the boarders themselves. Boarding gives pupils a range of opportunities to develop responsibility by undertaking duties such as being a dormitory captain. In these ways boarding makes a valuable and significant contribution to pupils' personal development, while also providing preparation for senior school for those who will board there.
- 4.13 The dormitories are warm, cheerful and in excellent decorative order, and the boarders' washrooms have been recently refurbished to a high standard. The minor matters raised by Ofsted in their previous report have all received attention, with the upgrading of the dormitories an ongoing process. The cooked breakfast and hot supper are of excellent quality and are much appreciated by the boarders.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good overall. Sub-committees to consider financial matters and marketing meet each term. An education sub-committee, which is scheduled to meet annually, did not achieve this objective last year; the remit of this committee is unclear and governors are aware that their oversight of academic matters has been insufficient. The finance committee sets annual budgets and considers matters in considerable detail, but does not use indicators such as predicted numbers of pupils or staff costs to look ahead and plan finances beyond the current year. Governors have resolved to address this issue and to incorporate future financial scenarios into next year's school development plan, which will be jointly produced by governors and senior managers. Governors also intend to reinstitute next term the practice of receiving presentations from members of staff, thus widening their understanding of school issues. Governors have continually updated their knowledge of independent school issues by attending a large number of training courses. Each term the governors receive a comprehensive written report from the headmaster, as well as all newsletters sent to parents. An individual governor has particular responsibility for child protection and another governor attends the school's health and safety committee meetings.
- 5.2 Half the governors are parents of past or current pupils, and they take very seriously their role of maintaining the ethos and quality of the school, in accordance with its aims, and their responsibility for safeguarding pupils' welfare. The chairman is in fairly frequent contact with the headmaster to discuss the school. The governors have considerable experience of finance, law, medicine and secondary education; this enables them to praise, advise and question the headmaster effectively on most subjects; the governing body does not include someone with experience of preparatory schools. A number of the governors attend school events and other functions.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 The leadership and management of the school are good overall. Strong leadership of the school sets a high moral tone, encouraging every pupil to give of his best. Improvements have taken place in the past year, whilst retaining the special qualities of the school; more remains to be done to improve the academic education provided. The staff are united in their desire to provide a rounded education for their pupils and to engender an atmosphere in which they thrive. Staff work hard to support one another and their pupils; many staff devote much time and energy to pastoral care and to out-of-class activities. Action to increase the involvement of heads of department in management issues, recommended in the previous report, was taken but has not been fully sustained.
- 5.4 The senior managers give sound support to the headmaster but the successful discussion of issues, during their weekly meetings as a team, is hindered by the short time allowed and by the large number of managers involved. The headmaster has individual meetings with some of his senior managers. Matrons attend the weekly pastoral meetings for all teachers to consider pupils causing concern; these indicate the priority staff rightly give to pupils. A teaching and learning committee was set up in recent years and it recommended a number of initiatives; staff

changes have resulted in some of these, such as the monitoring of colleagues' teaching by heads of department, not being fully implemented during the past year. The routine, day-to-day administration of the school is efficient. Since the previous inspection, the school has produced a comprehensive development plan that covers each aspect of the school.

- 5.5 Since the previous inspection, the school has planned a rigorous staff appraisal system, but it has yet to operate fully for any staff; the leadership has just begun to rectify this omission. In-service training (INSET) occurs for the whole staff before the start of most terms and some staff have attended a number of individual, external INSET courses. New teachers are helped to adapt to the school by a mentor advising them during their first year. Appropriate arrangements are made for newly qualified teachers, with a suitably reduced timetable and an experienced member of staff monitors their progress. The required checks have been carried out rigorously on all staff and recorded appropriately.
- 5.6 The non-academic staff support the school exceptionally well and, by their pleasant demeanour, they contribute fully to the family atmosphere; parents and visitors appreciate the warm and professional welcome they receive from the office staff, the outstanding state of the buildings and grounds, and the high quality of the meals provided.

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

- 5.7 Links with parents are excellent. The parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive about all aspects of the school; a number of glowing comments were made, particularly referring to the caring atmosphere of the school.
- 5.8 Since the previous inspection, many improvements have been introduced and parents are now exceptionally well informed about both future events and the achievements of the school. New parents receive a comprehensive handbook. Parents also receive an email each week, a full newsletter each month, and a high quality annual magazine with a review of each term by a different member of staff which reveals the real flavour and special qualities of the school. The website is now continually updated. The written reports received by parents each term are good; they highlight individual strengths and weaknesses and the best include targets for improvement. In addition, parents receive their son's effort grades in each subject four times a term. Parental consultations about their children's progress are held, and the school has recently introduced an appointments system to aid the smooth running of these occasions. In these ways, parents are kept fully informed about their child's progress. Form teachers contact parents at the beginning of each term to invite discussion of the previous term's report. The headmaster discusses suitable senior schools with individual parents and twenty senior schools have given presentations to parents in the past four years, with five represented each year.
- 5.9 Parents of day pupils appreciate the presence of senior members of staff to greet them and their children each morning in the entrance hall. Parents are also invited to meet staff on social occasions, and these meetings are sometimes used to raise issues, such as the use of the internet. Parental complaints are rare; they are dealt with professionally and all details are recorded carefully.

- 5.10 Parents provide strong support for the school, attending matches, concerts and plays. Parents also assist with make-up for drama productions and make scenery and costumes, and some help with school trips and talk to pupils about their lives. A parents' committee is very active and organises a variety of social events; these raise sums of money for school resources. Parents volunteer to act as representatives for each class and they organise coffee mornings and dinner parties with the form teacher. In these ways, parents who live relatively close to the school are able to provide it with strong support.

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, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, form periods and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding accommodation and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr David Defoe

Mr Nicholas Park

Mr Andrew Potts

Reporting Inspector

Deputy head, IAPS school

Head, IAPS school