



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**OLD BUCKENHAM HALL SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	<b>Old Buckenham Hall School</b>
DfE Number	<b>935/6019</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>310490</b>
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Telephone Number	<b>01449 740252</b>
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Email Address	<b>office@obh.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr John Brett</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Michael Shallow</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>204</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (122 boys; 82 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): <b>29</b> 5-11: <b>115</b> 11-13: <b>60</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>104</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>100</b> Full: <b>53</b> Weekly: <b>47</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>15 May 2012 to 18 May 2012</b>

## 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 January 2009.

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](http://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.

The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and/or disabilities).

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.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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 January 2010 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the

school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Sara Wiggins

Mr Robin Davies

Mr Adrian Downie

Mrs Sue Bennett

Mrs Deborah Buckenham

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Old Buckenham Hall School is an independent preparatory school for boys and girls aged from three to thirteen years, set in its own park just outside the village of Brettenham in rural Suffolk. It was founded in 1862 as the boys' school South Lodge in Lowestoft, moving to its current premises in 1956. It became a charitable trust with a governing body in 1968 and co-educational in 1998. From the age of 10 the majority of pupils are boarders and the younger pupils are offered transitional or weekly boarding. The headmaster was appointed in September 2010.
- 1.2 Old Buckenham Hall School aims to offer all its pupils an excellent education inspiring them to achieve their best within a rich, happy, safe and fulfilling school environment upon which will be built future success. To achieve this the school seeks, with the help and support of parents, to prepare children for the academic, social, creative and technological demands that will be required in their future alongside promoting Christian values of respect, tolerance and diversity.
- 1.3 The school has on roll 204 pupils consisting of 122 boys and 82 girls. It is organised into: a pre-preparatory department (pre-prep) which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), with 14 full-time and 15 part-time children, and Years 1 and 2, with 24 pupils; a middle school for Years 3, 4 and 5 with 64 pupils; and a senior department for Years 6 to 8 with 87 pupils. Entry is broadly non-selective academically. The school assesses whether pupils are able to benefit from the education provided at the time that they visit the school with their parents, taking into account any report from a previous school. The overall ability profile is above the national average, although the ability range is wide, from below to well above average.
- 1.4 Most pupils come from local families with parents in farming and the professions, and very few come from a minority ethnic background. Thirty-one pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive support in school. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Three pupils have been identified as needing support for learning English as an additional language (EAL). The majority of pupils transfer to independent schools at the age of thirteen.
- 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 pupils' achievement is excellent; they are enthusiastic, work highly co-operatively and as a result enjoy their learning. Their generally exemplary and polite behaviour strongly supports their overall achievement. The curriculum is good. It is suitable for all ages and abilities and consistent with the school's aims; it is broad and balanced and enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and visits. It does not provide adequate coverage of design and technology skills. Progression in the pupils' learning is planned effectively in most curriculum areas although curricular material for the pre-prep is not appropriately identified in some whole-school subject handbooks. The provision for pupils with SEND and those who require support for EAL is excellent. Teaching is good and supports the school's aims in inspiring pupils to achieve their best. The quality of provision for the EYFS is excellent.
- 2.2 The pupils' excellent personal development reflects the schools aims and core values. It equips pupils to make a positive contribution to their school, the local community and wider world. The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent strongly meeting the school's aims and ethos. The staff are highly committed and provide excellent support and guidance to pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are excellent. The school has excellent systems which ensure that pastoral issues are carefully monitored. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. The quality of boarding education is excellent. High quality, supportive environments enable boarders to develop impressive personal skills.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are excellent throughout the school. Governors are fully involved in strategic planning as they work together with staff and senior leadership in working parties set up to consider the future developments at the school. The school leadership team, supported by the curriculum management team, provides strong and caring educational direction, which is reflected in the educational success and excellent personal development of the pupils, as well as the high quality of pastoral care. Pupils are strongly supported by highly committed teaching, administrative, and support staff. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire parents indicated they were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of school life and inspection evidences supports their opinions. The recommendations of the previous inspection have all been met.



## **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. Include the pre-prep in all whole-school written documentation.
2. Extend the provision for design and technology within the curriculum.
3. In the EYFS, institute classroom displays to celebrate children's achievements.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is successful in meeting its aims. Pupils achieve high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in curriculum subjects and extra-curricular activities. Reading standards are high throughout the school. Pupils of all ages speak confidently in order to express their thoughts and opinions. They learn to write highly effectively in a variety of styles, including creative and extended writing. Younger pupils compose poetry and letters and write creatively at length. The pupils' numeracy skills are excellent, strongly encouraged through a whole school ethos that encourages pupils to work independently, solve problems and think critically. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) competently across a range of subjects, such as for development of their linguistic skills but their development of other technology skills is limited. Pupils display strong scientific skills as they investigate habitats in the school grounds or different components working in circuits. High levels of creativity are evident, from technical and creative art work to the excellence of the singing by the chapel choir.
- 3.3 Outcomes for children in the EYFS are excellent. All show evidence of good progress towards achieving the Early Learning Goals in all six areas of learning. They have a well-developed knowledge of phonics and an excellent understanding of number recognition up to and sometimes well beyond 20. They are able to work independently, think critically and be creative. In the Nursery the children discussed different vegetables, made their own salt dough examples and painted them once they were dry. Children achieve very well in what they know, understand and can do, and as a result they thoroughly enjoy their learning.
- 3.4 Throughout the school, sports teams achieve high levels of success locally and nationally in a range of sports. Individual pupils are successful in music and speech and drama examinations. The wide range of extra-curricular activities, both day and boarding, enables further achievement in areas such as ballet, musical ensembles and the Gordonstoun Challenge. Pupils, including those with SEND or EAL go on to their first choice of independent senior school; many achieve academic, sporting, musical or all-round awards.
- 3.5 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but, on the evidence available from lesson observations, work scrutiny and interviews with pupils, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations and excellent in some areas, for example mathematics. The pupils follow a broad curriculum and this level of attainment indicates that pupils, including the most able, make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils with SEND and EAL make equally good progress, in relation to their abilities, as demonstrated by a range of assessments. This is due to the specialist support provided, the small class sizes and the focused help given in lessons.
- 3.6 Pupils have excellent attitudes to their work and activities. Their generally exemplary and polite behaviour in class strongly supports their overall achievement. Pupils have excellent cooperative working relationships, whether developing and presenting an argument from either side of the feud between Thomas Becket and Henry II or as members of 'tribes' fashioning survival-wear in a Bushcraft activity. As a result, the pupils apply themselves and enjoy their studies and school life.

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

- 3.7 The overall quality of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.8 The curriculum is suitable for all ages and abilities and consistent with the school's aims; it is broad and balanced and enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and visits. The breadth of the curriculum throughout the school contributes strongly towards the pupils' development of knowledge, skills and understanding, and thereby enables them to make good progress. The curriculum broadly follows the National Curriculum from Years 1 to 6 and older pupils are prepared for Common Entrance and scholarship examinations. The additional provision of French throughout the school, and the introduction of Latin and Spanish in Year 6 enhances the pupils' linguistic skills. The recent and ongoing curriculum review has resulted in a strong focus on an inter-disciplinary topic approach in the pre-preparatory department and the emphasis on an 'Independent Curriculum' in Years 3 to 8 which enables the pupils' to solve problems and to employ critical thinking.
- 3.9 The provision for physical education and games is a strength. Excellent opportunities are provided in creative subjects and the development of ICT skills are good. Pupils have limited opportunities for design and technology as it is not taught as a discrete subject. In the EYFS the curriculum is stimulating and well balanced and covers all six areas of learning and as a result the needs of all children are very well met. Here and in Years 1 and 2, the curriculum is enhanced by the use of specialist staff to teach subjects such as music, drama and French and, from Year 3 onwards, much of the curriculum is taught by specialist staff. The programme for personal, social, health education (PSHE) is comprehensive and encompasses topics that further the pupils' personal development.
- 3.10 The provision for pupils with SEND and those who require curricular support for EAL is excellent. Clear targets are set in individual education plans (IEPs) which allow these pupils' needs to be met effectively in individual and group lessons. The learning of the most able pupils is carefully extended in many lessons. In addition to this they are challenged outside the classroom through the rich breadth of extra-curricular opportunities and work in scholarship groups in Years 7 and 8.
- 3.11 Curricular documentation is thorough; individual departments, including the pre-prep, have well-organised schemes of work and handbooks which support teaching well. Progression is planned effectively in most curriculum areas but reference is not made to material for the pre-prep in some whole-school subject handbooks. In the EYFS, planning is thorough and enables a good balance of adult- and child-initiated activities, ensuring excellent opportunities for the children's individual interests to be followed at their own pace.
- 3.12 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities enhances the curriculum and enables all pupils, including those in the EYFS, to develop and extend their interests, abilities and knowledge in many sporting and creative areas. The pupils benefit from activities such as rocket making, sport, including golf, croquet and archery, art and a plethora of musical ensembles. This is further supported by a wide range of visits out and visitors to the school. These include trips to the USA, Spain and France as well as visits to places of worship, science fairs and an African artefacts workshop. The pupils' learning is further enhanced by experience of specialist workshops in school, such as willow dome construction and African art. The school maintains

excellent links with the local community, visiting the local chapel regularly, singing in and performing frequently within the local surrounding area.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.13 The standard of teaching is good.
- 3.14 Teaching fully supports the school's aims of inspiring pupils to achieve their best and a significant amount of teaching is of excellent quality. Since the previous inspection regular opportunities have been provided for pupils to investigate, with this being a particular strength in the teaching of mathematics. Additionally standardised indicators of progress are used to analyse and track standards. The most successful teaching demonstrates a brisk pace, excellent subject knowledge, clear learning objectives and a strong emphasis on encouraging pupils to think critically, reason and develop independent study skills. For example, pupils reviewing book covers of Carnegie Award books in English lessons considered the aesthetic and commercial qualities of each, before creating their own covers for their own stories. Much teaching incorporates a variety of presentational and questioning techniques, which are tailored to the individual learning needs of pupils and engage their interest. Most teaching builds very well on the pupils' previous knowledge and individual needs. A small amount of teaching lacks pace and relies on a teacher-led approach which does not encourage maximum attention and the best behaviour from the pupils and as a result, progress is limited. Relationships between teachers and pupils are strong; pupils of all abilities are confident about asking for help and in interviews many express their appreciation for the way staff support their learning. Praise and encouragement are used to good effect and add to the pupils' enjoyment of the subjects being studied, as well as promoting their effort.
- 3.15 The most able pupils are suitably challenged through the well chosen activities that enable pupils to work at their own pace, think for themselves and discuss their ideas. The support in the classroom given to pupils with SEND and EAL is of a high standard. It enables the provision required for any pupil with a statement of special educational needs. In addition, teachers often provide extra lessons to help pupils through more challenging work, or in preparation for exams.
- 3.16 Teaching is supported by excellent resources which are used highly effectively. Pupils construct electric circuits and make acid and alkali indicators in well-resourced laboratories and use ICT resources competently to learn about Romans, Vikings and Victorians and revise for French speaking exams.
- 3.17 In the EYFS the quality of provision is excellent. The knowledgeable and experienced staff meet the needs of children exceptionally well. Excellent resources are well utilised. The accommodation is attractive and well-resourced although classroom displays lack examples of the children's work. The six areas of learning are taught highly effectively through practical and creative activities which strongly enhances the learning experience. For example, nursery children initiated a lesson where they competently used a 'danceathon' program, copying actions and moving to the music.
- 3.18 Assessment procedures enable pupils' progress to be effectively tracked and in the best, targets are provided to enable improvement. Personal reviews with the pupils, including self-assessments further complement the variety of assessment measures used although they have yet to be clearly identified through a whole school policy. In the EYFS regular observations take place to track the children's attainment and

progress and these are appropriately recorded. The recently formulated presentation and marking policy has begun to be applied in practice with some marking identifying clear steps for improvement and providing evaluative comments.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of the spiritual moral social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' personal development reflects the schools aims and core values. It equips them to make a positive contribution to their school, the local community and wider world. The pupils have an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave the school.
- 4.3 The development of the pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent. Pupils are emotionally mature for their age. They strongly appreciate the non-material aspects of life, and value the many opportunities provided by the school grounds to learn, play and relax. They genuinely appreciate each other's talents; they spontaneously applauded a duet sung by older girls during an assembly and admired the art work created by others during a lesson. From an early age pupils show a high degree of confidence and self-awareness and as a result have the ability to discuss issues such as puberty with relaxed ease.
- 4.4 Pupils demonstrate an excellent standard of moral development. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and understand and adhere to the highly effective code of conduct. Children in the EYFS and pupils in the pre-prep are aware of their golden rules which they discuss at appropriate times. Pupils understand the rewards system and are aware of the need for sanctions. They explore moral themes competently during weekly, tutor-led PSHE lessons and assemblies. They value the 'Not in this School' bin where such things such as unkindness can literally be disposed of.
- 4.5 The pupils have excellent social awareness, encouraged by the strong community throughout the school. They are proud of their school. They co-operate highly effectively, wait patiently and listen to each other. Older pupils readily assist younger pupils. Year 8 pupils help new pupils settle into the school environment. Children in the EYFS are polite, co-operative and share at all times both in class and at play, developing social skills for the future well. Pupils of all ages take their positions of responsibility seriously. Prefects act as excellent role models and play a strong part in ensuring the smooth running of the school. Pupils contribute greatly to the wider community and show considerable concern for those less fortunate than themselves. A sponsored walk arose from a desire of the pupils to help wounded soldiers and substantial amounts of money have been further raised for other charities such as Sport Relief. Older pupils display a good growing social and political awareness enhanced by the fortnightly 'world of work' talks from people in different professions.
- 4.6 Pupils have an excellent understanding of other faiths and cultures through extensive curricular study and extra-curricular opportunities, which enable visits to a variety of places of worship. Younger pupils displayed a good understanding of African culture after completing an extensive project and pupils furthered their understanding of Chinese culture as they celebrated the Chinese New Year. Pupils show extensive knowledge of western culture as they write about their visits abroad, the visitors to school and trips to theatres and museums.

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

- 4.7 The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.8 The staff are highly committed and provide excellent support and guidance to pupils. Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are excellent. The school has excellent systems which ensure that pastoral issues are carefully monitored through staff meetings and the highly effective use of software. Highly effective pastoral plans are drawn up and are regularly reviewed. The school strongly meets its aims and ethos. In the EYFS children are helped to develop highly effectively through the careful measures taken to provide individual support and guidance.
- 4.9 Arrangements to promote good behaviour work well and pupils consider them to be fair and appreciate their importance. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a very few parents commented that anti-bullying measures were not always effective. In interviews and questionnaires, the pupils said that they felt very safe and well cared for and that staff quickly solved any issues that might arise. Inspection evidence supports this view. The systems in place to record and track patterns should bullying be identified are thorough and efficient, and effective in guarding against bullying, addressing the concerns of the previous inspection.
- 4.10 Pupils have an excellent understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise. This is reinforced through the PSHE and sports programmes. The excellent school meal service offers an extensive healthy menu that is much enjoyed by pupils. In the EYFS children understand the need for healthy eating and enjoy the nutritious school lunch. The plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND is appropriate and meets requirements.
- 4.11 The pupils' views are sought regularly and highly effectively. The school council has representatives elected by the pupils from Years 3 to 8 and meets termly. Additionally a variety of boxes exist around the school including 'Food for Thought' and 'Suggestions and Concerns.'

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

- 4.12 The provision made for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good.
- 4.13 Since the previous inspection considerable improvements have been made. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive, reflects current practice; and now follows all statutory guidance. Throughout the school all staff receive child protection training, which is updated with the required frequency, including for those with designated responsibilities.
- 4.14 Health and safety procedures are extremely thorough. Good risk assessments are now in place for all areas of the school and include detailed arrangements for external visits, addressing the concerns of the previous inspection. Effective measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards, and records and documentation of all aspects of health and safety are carefully maintained. The admission and attendance registers are maintained accurately and correctly archived.
- 4.15 Arrangements for sick or injured pupils are excellent and nursing staff provide exemplary care. Staff are very well informed about individual needs and conditions, including any pupils with SEND. In the EYFS, members of staff regularly attend

relevant individual training courses and have the required training in paediatric first aid care.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.16 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.17 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. They develop outstanding personal skills. Boarders are highly articulate and confident when talking about the school's life; equally, they are self-assured when contributing their views on current events within the wider world. Boarders demonstrate high standards of self-reliance and integrity, promoted through dormitory captain and prefect responsibilities. They feel happy, extremely safe and very well supported by staff within the boarding community and know who they can approach for personal guidance and help, including nominated adults outside school. Support for boarders with EAL and SEND is a strength. Robust systems of behavioural management are in place and well understood by boarders. Boarders have very good opportunities to contribute views through regular dormitory meetings and consider their opinions to be greatly valued by the school. Recent suggestions resulted in menu reviews and common room refurbishments. There is an overwhelming sense of community, tolerance and mutual respect within the boarding houses; boarders, including those from abroad, sustain friendly and constructive relationships with the staff and their peers, including day pupils. There is a good induction procedure in place for new boarders. Additionally, older boarders support the needs of younger boarders well and understand the importance of presenting themselves as good role models.
- 4.18 The quality of provision and care is excellent. The highly nurturing environment supports the individual needs of boarders exceptionally well. House and academic staff work very well together, ensuring continuity for all aspects of a boarder's life. Arrangements for boarders who are unwell, including during the night, are excellent. Qualified and experienced staff are complemented by local medical, dental, optometric and other specialists. Comprehensive medical records, including prior medical history information and permissions for emergency treatment, are kept for each boarder. Scrupulous procedures for self-medication and the use of household remedies are in place. The quality of food provided is nutritious, plentiful and varied. Staff encourage boarders to eat healthily, and specific dietary needs are extremely well provided for. Boarders are offered a variety of snacks and drinks. An excellent range of evening and weekend activities are available for boarders to participate in, including visits to local attractions and events. Boarders have an appropriate balance of study and free time. The school's extensive grounds facilitate excellent opportunities for boarders to both relax and enjoy physical activities such as skateboarding and golf.
- 4.19 Boarding accommodation, including the dormitories and washrooms are of a good standard, and address the concerns of the previous inspection. All areas are secure, homely and welcoming; house common rooms are well resourced. Boarders are able to personalise their own areas and have ample provision to store their personal effects, including lockable trunks for valuable possessions. Arrangements for the boarders' laundry needs are particularly thorough and good provision is made for replenishing their personal and stationery items. Boarders have many opportunities to contact families, for example, by phone or email. House parents communicate effectively with parents of boarders, who are warmly welcomed to visit houses after weekly events, such as sports matches and church services.



- 4.20 Arrangements for the boarders' welfare and safeguarding are excellent. Effective safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented in full. The school has addressed the recommendation from the last inspection of boarding and rigorous processes for staff recruitment are now in place. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities relating to the boarders' welfare. They receive regular safeguarding training updates and are well supported by designated people. All boarding staff have detailed job descriptions and are suitably qualified for their respective roles. Boarders are extremely well supervised and registration systems ensure that staff know their whereabouts at all times. Stringent measures are in operation around the school, to ensure boarding areas cannot be accessed inappropriately and risk assessments are meticulously undertaken for all activities. Fire practices regularly take place within the houses, including at night, and are efficiently recorded, ensuring that boarders are fully aware of emergency evacuation procedures. Staff are vigilant in their management of appropriate behaviour and anti-bullying procedures. No incidences of serious misbehaviour or sanctions have been recorded.
- 4.21 The leadership and management of the boarding are excellent. Boarding is viewed as an important part of the school and well-developed communication channels exist between senior management and boarding staff. The school's website, together with documentation for staff, parents and boarders, including those new to boarding, provides comprehensive guidance on aspects of boarding life. The views of parents and boarders are warmly embraced by the school. A large majority of parental questionnaire responses overwhelmingly support the boarding provision, and mention the exceptional levels of care for boarders by the dedicated staff. A very small minority of parents expressed concerns about boarding consistency however inspectors did not find any evidence to support these comments. Regular boarding meetings review provision and set targets for future improvements. Policies relating to boarding management are thorough, periodically reviewed and well understood by all staff. Consequently, through this cohesive approach the school is highly successful in meeting its boarding aims. .

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 Governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors provide considered and careful governance which carefully supports the development of the school and is fully in line with its aims. It supports the pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. Governors have a broad range of specialist skills. Many of the governors are parents of former pupils, which strengthens their relationship with the school. Governors exercise prudent financial management and communication between governors and senior leadership is excellent. The governors' involvement in the EYFS is effective. All aspects of education and care provided by the school, including pastoral, education, finance, and safeguarding, are discussed as part of the highly efficient committee system.
- 5.3 Governors are fully involved in strategic planning as they work together with staff and senior leadership in working parties, set up to consider the future developments at the school. Their thorough understanding of the school's needs enables them to maintain well-informed oversight of the school and oversee strong educational provision and appropriate investment in staff and material resources.
- 5.4 Governors are well aware of their legal responsibilities and discharge them carefully. With regard to safeguarding and child protection, they maintain regular contact with the school's designated persons and review its policy annually; this shows improvement and successfully meets the requirements of the previous inspection. Health and safety policies and procedures and the associated risk assessments are carefully monitored.
- 5.5 Governors attend concerts and a variety of other school functions including attending sports matches and pre-prep events. Some governors, particularly those with areas of specific responsibility, visit the school to observe the day-to-day practice.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 The excellent quality of leadership and management, including in the EYFS, enables the school to fulfil its aims. Since the previous ISI and Ofsted boarding inspections the school has ensured that appointment procedures are robust. It has established excellent links between senior managers and those responsible for the day-to-day administration of the school which results in the smooth running of the school. The school leadership team, supported by the curriculum management team, provides strong and caring educational direction which is reflected in the educational success and excellent personal development of the pupils, as well as the high quality of pastoral care. They are strongly supported by highly committed teaching, administrative, and support staff. Regular staff meetings, together with excellent communication systems, ensure that staff are kept well informed and feel highly involved in sustaining the caring, family ethos of the school.

- 5.8 At all levels management structures are clear. Whole-school development planning has been carefully devised to ensure staff and governor involvement, including that in the EYFS. Processes of self-evaluation are excellent throughout the school. Working parties have carefully examined a variety of issues including considering a creative curriculum, pastoral care, and school management. The resulting development plan is comprehensive and appropriately identifies future school improvements, for example the requirement for development in assessment procedures. The inclusion of pre-prep staff in all meetings has strongly contributed to ensuring a smooth progression in the pupils' learning from the EYFS to Year 8. However, not all school documentation yet reflects this inclusivity. The monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough; a system of lesson observations and book scrutiny has resulted in staff considering common threads of good practice, and areas for further development.
- 5.9 Effective policies and procedures cover most aspects of school life. Throughout the school they ensure equality. Management is highly successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all pupils. The comprehensive appraisal system provides yearly targets for individual staff and identifies needs for professional development. In addition, whole-staff training is regularly provided, for example, on methods of assessment and classroom management skills. Procedures in relation to the appointment of suitable staff, volunteers and governors are robust and are appropriately recorded in a central register and individual files. All staff receive the required child protection and welfare, health and safety training for their roles. Procedures in the EYFS ensure the safeguarding of children.
- 5.10 The school's links with parents are excellent, from the EYFS onwards, successfully meeting the aims of the school. An open and accessible culture ensures that parents feel welcome.
- 5.11 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire parents indicated they were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of school life. They were particularly pleased with the opportunities they have to be involved with the life and work of the school. Parents in the EYFS gave overwhelmingly positive support for the setting's provision. Inspection evidence supports these highly positive views.
- 5.12 Parents have excellent opportunities to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children. Parents' meetings are held regularly and parents can meet with staff at any other time should they feel the need. Complaints are treated seriously, through an appropriate procedure, with due care and properly documented in a central record, which meets the requirement of the previous inspection. Further daily means of communication are provided through reading records and pupil planners and staff are readily accessible to parents by email. Termly reports provide parents with good information about their children's work and progress. The best reports identify targets for improvement although this is not consistent across all year groups and subjects.
- 5.13 Parents are invited into school by the Friends of Old Buckenham Hall for a range of social and fund raising events including the Christmas Fair and the Burns night celebration. Parents also attend assemblies, informal concerts, plays, the weekly church service and the numerous sports event hosted by the school. Information provided to parents of pupils and of prospective pupils is comprehensive and relevant.

- 5.14 The school website provides appropriate access to required policies and procedures for parents of pupils and prospective pupils, and information about school events and activities. An excellent weekly newsletter, an annual magazine, and a text messaging service, keep parents up to date on events and achievements.

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