



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE DOWNS, MALVERN COLLEGE PREP

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	The Downs, Malvern College Prep		
DfE Number	884/6000		
Registered Charity Number	1120616		
Address	The Downs, Malvern College Prep Brockhill Road Colwall Malvern Worcestershire WR13 6EY		
Telephone Number	01684 544102		
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Email Address	asc@thedowns.malcol.org		
Headmaster	Mr Alastair Cook		
Chair of Governors	Revd Kenneth Madden		
Age Range	3 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	213		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 103
	3-5 (EYFS):	39	11-13 71
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	165	
Number of Boarders	Total:	48	
	Full:	37	Weekly: 11
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Jill Walters		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	15 May 2012 to 18 May 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 June 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. 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/or disabilities).
- (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.

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 June 2009 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and a governors' representative, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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 Jan Preece	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Loraine Cavanagh	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mr Andrew Lewin	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Eileen Grimes	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Penny Oates	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Downs, Malvern College Prep is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged between three and thirteen. It was formed in 2008 following the merger of Malvern College Preparatory School and the Downs Preparatory School. The school is overseen by an independent governing body, of which five members are nominated by Malvern College. The school maintains strong links with the college, sharing bursarial, human resources, information and communication technology (ICT), marketing and estates, and other services. The headmaster, who was appointed in 2009, is a member of the senior management team of the college.
- 1.2 The school is situated on a 55-acre site in the Malvern Hills, in the village of Colwall in Herefordshire. Amongst its extensive playing fields and sports facilities is the oldest privately owned narrow-gauge steam railway in the world. Since the previous inspection, Nursery and Reception classes have been relocated so they are now adjacent and the art department has moved to new accommodation.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide a first-class education in a secure, caring and disciplined environment where every pupil can fulfil his or her unique potential, academically, creatively, physically, socially and spiritually. The school's aim for boarding is to provide a safe, caring, supportive, homely environment in which each individual pupil can develop the confidence and self-assurance to achieve his or her full potential.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, there were 213 pupils on roll. Of these, 39 pupils were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 29 were in Years 1 and 2, which forms the Pre-Prep department, and 145 were in the Preparatory School. The school offers full or flexible boarding. At the time of the inspection, there were 37 full-time boarders and 11 weekly boarders. Whilst there is a broad spread of abilities in the school, its ability profile is above the national average.
- 1.5 Pupils are not selected by ability other than for scholarship awards. Prior to entry they attend a taster day to ensure that the school is appropriate for their needs. Thirty pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), twenty-seven of whom receive some support with their learning. Fifteen pupils from overseas are from families where English is an additional language (EAL) and eight receive support with their acquisition of English. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils come from professional and business families in the locality, and a number of full-time boarders come from overseas, from a range of countries.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims and offers an excellent educational experience to its pupils. Throughout the school, the pupils' achievement is excellent and they reach high standards both in their academic work and in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils make rapid progress in relation to their abilities as a result of teaching of high quality overall, which supports individuals, encourages independent thinking and is delivered with enthusiasm and extensive subject knowledge. The pupils' achievements are supported by the excellent and broad curricular and extra-curricular provision, as well as their extremely positive attitudes towards learning.
- 2.2 The personal development of pupils is excellent. It is exemplified in the pupils' high levels of inter-personal skills, confidence and self-esteem. Their social awareness is particularly strong; pupils are courteous and caring, and high standards of behaviour are the norm. There is a strong sense of community founded on outstanding relationships amongst the pupils themselves and between pupils and their teachers. Pupils from a wide range of backgrounds work and play together harmoniously and develop a strong understanding of each other's cultures. The quality of boarding provision is excellent, although development planning is limited in scope. Both boarders and their parents say that they are exceptionally happy with the boarding experience. Pupils feel happy, secure and well cared for due to the school's exemplary pastoral care. Overall, the school pays careful attention to arrangements to secure the welfare, health and safety of its pupils.
- 2.3 Governance is good overall, and the governors' encouraging oversight supports the development of the school's new identity and promotes its aims well. Whilst the governing body is aware of its responsibility for regulatory matters, it has not been sufficiently careful in ensuring that recruitment checks for governors and volunteers have been correctly carried out and has limited training to support them in their responsibilities. The quality of leadership and management at all levels is good and highly committed. The current delegation of leadership responsibilities does not provide sufficient time to be given to strategic planning and development. Priorities identified in strategic and departmental planning are not yet integrated into a succinct development plan and development plans in the EYFS lack key strategic priorities. The school has made good progress with the recommendations of the previous inspection; those to improve challenge for the more able and ensure consistency of marking have been met in full. It has established an informal appraisal system but this is not yet a regular and rigorous process linked to professional targets and the school development plan. Links with parents are strong and parents state that they are very satisfied with the school in almost all respects. Inspection findings support these views.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

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

- ensure that governors undergo the necessary checks as soon as possible on appointment [Part 4, paragraphs 21.(6)(a)(i) and (ii), under Suitability of staff and proprietors, and for the same reason Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety, and NMS 11];
- ensure that any volunteers undergo the necessary checks [Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

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

1. Re-assess and clarify the roles and responsibilities of the leadership team to provide more time for focused development planning.
2. Use the outcomes of self-evaluation, particularly in the EYFS and boarding settings, to strengthen development planning.

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' overall achievement is excellent.
- 3.2 In the EYFS, outcomes for the children in relation to their starting points and capabilities are excellent. They make rapid progress and are proud of their considerable achievements. The youngest children identify items from their initial sounds enthusiastically. Older children use their knowledge of letters, sounds and words to write simple, punctuated sentences. The children are enthusiastic about all aspects of the school day and listen carefully to instructions. They are articulate and enjoy discussing their work. They meet challenges eagerly, such as creating repeating patterns or investigating items that float. Most are confident to work and play independently and all enjoy opportunities to share equipment and help one another.
- 3.3 Standards across a broad and academic curriculum are excellent in relation to the pupils' abilities. Consequently, the school meets its aim to enable pupils to reach their potential very successfully. Pupils articulate their ideas confidently; they listen attentively and demonstrate a mature understanding and level of reasoning in their responses. By Year 2, many pupils demonstrate a good grounding in the key skills of literacy and numeracy. Creative writing shows steady development throughout the school so that by Year 8 pupils demonstrate considerable flair, as observed in their extremely expressive poems about Lady Macbeth. The pupils' numeracy skills are particularly strong and applied to problem solving and investigations with success. The more able mathematicians in Year 8 have used trigonometry in an extensive mapping project. Pupils conduct investigations and work to a high standard in three separate sciences by Year 8. They use ICT confidently to present their work, handle data and research topics in geography or for data logging in science. A high standard of art, showing the pupils' considerable technical skill and creativity, is evident in the many excellent displays around the school. Many pupils demonstrate a notable level of oral and grammatical competence in several modern foreign languages.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve high standards in a variety of individual and team sports. Both the girls' and the boys' teams have achieved success at district level and in competition against larger schools, whilst individuals have been selected to play at county level in netball and hockey, and at national level in fencing. The majority of pupils learn a musical instrument and many are successful in instrumental, singing, and speech and drama examinations, many gaining merits and distinctions. The choir is a regular winner at competitive local music festivals and pupils participate eagerly in dramatic activities, such as the recent school production.
- 3.5 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm, but on the evidence available it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. Whilst results from standardised tests indicate that pupils make progress that is appropriate in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities, inspection evidence as judged by the quality of learning seen in lessons, discussions with pupils and scrutiny of their written work indicates that they make good and often rapid progress in comparison with pupils with similar ability. Pupils achieve within a broad and rigorous curriculum. Particularly able or talented pupils demonstrate equivalent levels of progress in response to the good level of challenge they receive and on leaving the school, many gain academic, art,

music, sport, design technology or drama scholarship awards. Many pupils with SEND make excellent progress in relation to their starting points because they receive excellent additional support. This is evident in the improvement in their reading, spelling and numeracy skills, as well as their high levels of self-esteem. Pupils with EAL acquire sufficient oral fluency quickly; this allows them to settle and make friends, and they continue to develop their skills in English effectively to enable them to take the Common Entrance examination successfully. Some pupils leave at the end of Year 6 and proceed to local independent or maintained schools, and the majority of pupils move to Malvern College at the end of Year 8.

- 3.6 The pupils' achievements are very well supported by their extremely positive attitudes to learning and exemplary behaviour. They apply themselves diligently in lessons and demonstrate a palpable curiosity and eagerness to acquire knowledge, whether working independently or with others. They take an interest and pride in their work, and are keen to share and communicate ideas, relishing the opportunity to think deeply.

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

- 3.7 The quality of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum provides abundant opportunities for pupils of all abilities and needs, and consistently offers experiences across all areas in accordance with the school's aims.
- 3.9 In the EYFS, the needs of individual children are met extremely well. They receive rich, varied and imaginative experiences and are enabled to build firm foundations in all the required areas. Accessible, stimulating and age-appropriate resources are available throughout the setting although reliable access to ICT is sometimes affected by technical issues. The grounds and outdoor learning environment are an additional benefit though the school has identified that it is not possible to use the outdoor learning facilities in all weather conditions. The nearby woodland learning environment provides a further resource to support the children's knowledge and understanding of the world in which they live.
- 3.10 In Year 1 and above, the National Curriculum subjects are enhanced by strong provision in languages: French from Reception, Latin from Year 6, and German and Spanish from Year 7. Pupils are able to study the three separate sciences in Years 7 and 8. Music, drama and sport feature strongly. Whilst the pupils' adept use of ICT was evident during the inspection, it is not consistently planned for in all subjects. The broad curriculum and specialist teaching for older pupils, together with the extended school day, provide the pupils with an excellent range of learning experiences.
- 3.11 The curriculum is appropriate for the different ages and abilities of the pupils. Arrangements to provide support for pupils with SEND or EAL are excellent. Clear strategies given in individual support plans inform teachers of the needs of these pupils and enable them to plan effectively to meet some of these within classes. Learning support staff attend weekly meetings about pupils to ensure that their needs are fully communicated to colleagues. Individual education plans, which give clear targets, are provided where one-to-one specialist support is more appropriate. Since the previous inspection, provision for the most able has improved, so that they receive good challenge in lessons, as well as through extra-curricular activities such as Greek and debating.

- 3.12 Curricular plans have improved in consistency since the previous inspection, and well-organised schemes of work and comprehensive handbooks are produced and their contents implemented. An effective personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme, which supports the school's aims and ethos extremely well, is implemented throughout. Pupils are given many opportunities to become involved in cross-curricular projects, such as a school production that brought together art, music, drama and geography. Staff make full use of the school's rural location in organising fieldwork trips. The school is very successful in preparing pupils for the next stage of their education and in their choice of senior schools, and supporting parents in this respect.
- 3.13 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, including hobbies on Saturdays, encourages the pupils to develop and extend their interest, abilities and knowledge in many sporting and creative areas, in line with the school's aims. These range from chess, art and a number of crafts, digital photography, French, choir and orchestra to multi-sports, tennis and orienteering in the woods. The school provides many opportunities that enhance the curriculum, for example the Roman day and visits to historical sites and the theatre. Residential trips, such as a recent visit to Italy for older pupils, extend the pupils' knowledge of the world around them.
- 3.14 Pupils benefit from the school's extensive links with the local community, including those with local independent and maintained schools. The choir performs to local senior citizens and older pupils join members of the local trust in maintaining the school's narrow gauge railway. Pupils are encouraged to think of others, and the school has developed many supportive links with local charities as well as those further afield.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The quality of the teaching is excellent.
- 3.16 In the EYFS, children are helped to learn highly effectively. Outstanding teamwork ensures a consistency of approach. The classrooms are attractive, stimulating and welcoming. Staff know the children well, plan for their individual needs and abilities, and develop their interests. Through detailed and regular observations of what the children know, understand and can do, spontaneous learning opportunities are identified that extend the children's ideas.
- 3.17 Throughout the school, the expertise and enthusiasm of staff are a significant strength of teaching and enable pupils to make excellent progress. From the EYFS onwards, teaching is extremely effective in providing challenging activities that stimulate good progress, using detailed planning based on a thorough understanding of the individual needs of the pupils. Staff employ an exciting variety of teaching techniques and use a wide range of resources that significantly enhance the pupils' learning experience. Subject specialists use their detailed knowledge to ensure that high standards are maintained and different styles of learning are used to motivate all pupils.
- 3.18 Teachers have high expectations and set clear goals for pupils, who are encouraged to work both independently and collaboratively. Suitably challenging work stimulates pupils' interests and enthusiasm, and they have many opportunities to develop their ability to reason coherently and think critically. The quality of teaching is consistent throughout the school, enabling all pupils to thrive and maximise their potential. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, and include well-directed questions that

encourage participation and challenge the pupils' thinking. The excellent rapport between staff and pupils often fosters in-depth discussions. Whilst access to ICT is not always reliable, classrooms are well resourced overall and provide very purposeful learning environments.

- 3.19 Pupils who have been identified with SEND or EAL are enabled to make excellent progress through the extremely effective support they receive. Their progress is carefully analysed by staff to ensure that they receive assistance appropriate to their specific needs. Those pupils who have been identified as more able are given many opportunities to extend themselves, as demonstrated when a scholarship group was stimulated to make good progress in an advanced poetry analysis lesson.
- 3.20 Regular and thorough assessment of both effort and attainment, through weekly grades, end of module tests, examinations and standardised tests, is used to monitor the progress of pupils. Marking is thorough and in the best examples, it offers extremely informative feedback, identifying targets for improvement and providing positive motivation for the pupils. A small proportion of marking seen did not indicate how pupils could improve their work. During interviews, pupils clearly understood their own strengths and were aware of how they could improve. Alongside much praise, teachers provide copious oral feedback during lessons, which reinforces their marking.

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 pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' excellent spiritual development is clearly apparent in every area of school life. They demonstrate confidence and self-knowledge, as well as an appreciation of life beyond the physical as they engage in varied activities in the wooded grounds and participate thoughtfully in assemblies. Their awareness of beauty and spirituality is demonstrated in the high standards they achieve in the creative arts, and is enhanced by visiting authors, musicians and artists. In the EYFS, children show excellent personal development. They feel safe and secure so that they happily explore what is available alone or with others, playing purposefully and with great enjoyment. Successes are celebrated in weekly achievement assemblies. The pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem are further increased through participation in sports teams and house contests, such as the mathematics challenge in Year 4 in which pupils worked in teams and enjoyed the excitement of competition. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, pupils expressed their strong satisfaction with school life.
- 4.3 Pupils have an extremely well-developed moral sense. They understand right and wrong, and display consideration for their peers and adults, and a deep respect for the codes of good conduct expected of them from the earliest years. They understand moral and ethical values permeating every area, which are reflected in wall displays in classrooms and corridors. In an interview with inspectors, pupils explained the significance of not having rules but expectations. Pupils explore moral issues from the very youngest age in weekly PSHCE lessons and thought-provoking assemblies, and are able to articulate their views about these coherently.
- 4.4 The pupils exhibit an exceptional level of social awareness that is developed through excellent opportunities in school. They are able to accept responsibility and show initiative, contributing much to the school and the world beyond. The school council, which involves pupils from Year 3 upwards, affords them the opportunity to voice their opinions on school life. Year 8 pupils can volunteer for extra responsibility and receive formal leadership training. They show a marked maturity in exercising their duties and younger pupils appreciate their overall influence and kindness. Children in the EYFS understand the importance of healthy eating and personal hygiene, and leave the setting well prepared for the next stage in their education. Their behaviour is generally exemplary. Pupils think of those less fortunate than themselves when fund raising for good causes. They develop good political and economic awareness through their PSHCE lessons.
- 4.5 Pupils have an excellent understanding of and respect for each other's faiths and cultures. They benefit from the wide range of nationalities within the boarding community and appreciate and celebrate the diversity of cultures within the school. Special events such as the 'Mardi Gras' French day enable the pupils to enthusiastically demonstrate and develop their awareness of the wider world. Relationships throughout the school community are positive and harmonious.
- 4.6 By the time they leave the school, pupils demonstrate an excellent standard of emotional maturity and personal development, in preparation for the next stage of their education.

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

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care in the school is excellent.
- 4.8 Staff know the pupils extremely well. There is a confidential system by which pupils can alert staff to any issues or worries and a strong network of staff, The Circle of Care, to whom the pupils can go for help if they wish. Weekly pupil meetings ensure that formal discussion about individual academic and welfare needs takes place and pupils say they feel safe, secure and well looked after.
- 4.9 Pupils are surrounded by adults who provide outstanding support for their needs and development. In the EYFS, children are helped to develop particularly effectively due to the high standard of care they receive and excellent relationships within the setting. Throughout the school, relationships with staff are extremely strong, and relaxed yet respectful, and pupils display great loyalty to their school. Form teachers have immediate responsibility for the pupils' well-being and membership of houses gives pupils an excellent sense of community. The school actively listens to the views of its pupils through the school council, which enables pupils to play an active part in decision making.
- 4.10 The school is extremely effective in promoting good behaviour. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of the measures in place to deal with any bullying should it occur and cyber safety is strongly promoted. Senior staff promote a clear philosophy of high expectations which helps to engender a strong sense of responsibility and community. A system of 'stars' and 'stripes' promotes positive behaviour and pupils say that it is fairly administered. In the EYFS, any minor infringements are dealt with quietly and staff stress the positives rather than the negatives.
- 4.11 Healthy eating and exercise are actively encouraged. There is a wide choice of nutritious food and suitable provision is made for pupils with special dietary requirements. There are many opportunities for pupils to partake in physical activity in the school's extensive grounds. Children in the EYFS appreciate the benefits of and thoroughly enjoy physical activity. Lunchtime is a positive social occasion where the children show good understanding of healthy eating and the importance of hand washing, and they respect the fact that others may have a different diet to their own.
- 4.12 At the time of inspection, an appropriate three-year accessibility plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND was nearing its conclusion. The school has embarked on a comprehensive audit of its premises and provision to enable full participation in school life by all its community, to underpin the next three-year plan.

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

- 4.13 The quality of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good overall.
- 4.14 Policies and procedures are carefully implemented to ensure pupils' safety. The school ensures that all staff receive training in child protection at the required intervals, so that they have a thorough knowledge of how to respond should the need arise. The designated person and her deputy have undergone training in inter-agency working at a higher level. Staff in the EYFS promote the children's welfare well and ensure that procedures to keep them safe are followed. They ensure that children are appropriately supervised and that correct staff to child ratios are maintained. The children are supervised carefully whilst moving around or playing on site. The school is careful to ensure that the safeguarding policy is implemented well. However, whilst all staff appointments have conformed with safer recruitment procedures, arrangements to check the suitability of some governors, and of volunteers in the EYFS, have not followed statutory requirements fully, although this has now been rectified.
- 4.15 All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Fire prevention measures are thorough, and drills are practised regularly and efficiently recorded. Fire risk assessments have been undertaken for all areas of the school and all fire safety equipment is regularly checked. All staff receive training in fire safety as part of their induction.
- 4.16 Thorough arrangements for health and safety ensure the safety of all pupils whilst on site or on trips. These are reviewed each term by the health and safety committee. Risk assessments for all areas of the school and for educational visits are detailed throughout the school. The medical centre provides excellent medical care for pupils who are ill or injured. Appropriate numbers of staff are trained in first aid, and the recording of treatment and medication given is thorough. Sufficient staff in the EYFS have paediatric first-aid qualifications. Children are made aware of possible hazards and how to stay safe.
- 4.17 The school's admission and attendance registers have been maintained accurately and suitably stored for the previous three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.19 Outcomes for boarders are excellent, and their personal development is extremely well promoted by their boarding experience. They are proud of the contribution they make to the school community and are happy and self-assured. Boarders are extremely confident with staff and talk freely with them, for example discussing recent events in the news. Their rapport with staff is extremely strong, promoting a caring and harmonious atmosphere that is evident throughout the community. Boarders mix well and strongly support one another. They value the friendships they make at all levels, and boarders of all ages integrate extremely well. Older boarders help and support younger ones, for example with making their beds and reading stories to them; this contributes significantly to the family ethos. Boarders are encouraged to contribute to house life by undertaking some duties, such as tidying and cleaning the kitchen. They feel that this enables them to acquire useful skills for the future. Pupils from overseas are integrated into the boarding community extremely well. Boarding staff ensure that boarders widen and develop

their understanding of each other's cultures and faiths, such as in sessions when they talk about their country and culture. This reflects the school's commitment to equality and diversity, and to promoting each boarder's individuality.

- 4.20 The quality of provision and care is excellent. Boarding staff provide exemplary individual support and guidance that have a significant positive impact upon boarders and enable them to keep safe, fit and healthy. Medical well-being is carefully overseen by qualified medical staff, supported by matrons. Regular surgeries by local doctors and secure control of medicines and first-aid boxes are features of this provision. Comprehensive medical records are kept for all boarders. Catering staff prepare high quality meals that are varied, nutritionally well balanced and enjoyable. Boarders comment that they are able to influence and comment on the catering through the food committee and that all their suggestions have been addressed. These include displaying nutritional content to allow pupils to make informed decisions about the type of foods they require; pupils who are attending sports events may choose foods with higher carbohydrate content. Boarders enjoy making their own snacks and drinks during the evenings. Boarding accommodation is spacious and comfortable, and every effort is made to ensure that the environment is homely and welcoming. All areas within the boarding houses, including washrooms and dormitories, are well maintained, clean and periodically refurbished. Boarders are proud of their own spaces, keeping dormitories tidy and taking care of their 'home'.
- 4.21 Boarders experience a wide range of evening and weekend activities, such as barbeques and trips to the cinema. Staff encourage all boarders to participate fully in extra-curricular life, but also appreciate the need for boarders to relax. Boarders acknowledge this understanding. Appropriate levels of free time and study are maintained. Links with parents and guardians are excellent. In the questionnaires, they commented that boarding staff are helpful and caring, and respond promptly to any concerns that arise. Boarders are able to maintain regular communication with their families through telephones, the internet and, more recently, through letters.
- 4.22 Arrangements for the welfare and safeguarding of boarders overall are excellent and comprehensive policies and procedures are firmly in place. Staff have a thorough understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. Boarding staff are very well supported by senior managers and regular training, and have appropriate links with the local authority. All boarding staff are suitably qualified and experienced, and access to the boarding house is appropriately controlled. The boarders' welfare is at the forefront of everyday practice. Links between boarding and academic staff are very good, enabling any minor concerns and issues to be discussed informally, and recorded when necessary. Boarders know that they will be very well supported with any concerns, and staff are conscientious in promoting the school's behaviour and anti-bullying procedures. Boarders stress that instances of bullying are extremely rare and disagreements quickly and amicably resolved. Systems for behavioural management are fair and well understood by all. Stringent security measures and regular fire drills ensure the boarders' safety. Meticulous risk assessments are in place for both on-site activities and out-of-school visits, and boarders are encouraged to be conscious of safety, for example during adventure activities.
- 4.23 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent overall and the high quality provision successfully accords with the aims and ethos of the school. Senior staff provide a strong lead, supported by a knowledgeable staff team whose members work exceptionally well together. Whilst self-evaluation is thorough, the outcomes are not formally recorded. The school places significant value on the

views of parents and boarders, gathered formally and informally. In their responses to the questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the boarding provision. Recommendations made at the previous boarding inspection related to arrangements for Gap Year students, no longer employed by the school.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance overall is good.
- 5.2 Governance has been restructured since the previous inspection, and the new body strongly supports the school in promoting its aims and ensures the pupils' excellent academic achievement and personal development. An effective system of sub-committees for areas such as educational provision and development, welfare, health and safety, finance, and development and marketing allows careful consideration of school business and gives the governing body an informed oversight of its responsibilities. Minutes of the education committee indicate that governors have a good awareness of educational standards in the school. Governors are also kept well informed by informal contact with senior staff as well as through termly formal reports and subject presentations. The designation of individual governors with particular responsibility for an aspect of school life ensures that areas such as the EYFS receive effective oversight.
- 5.3 Governors with backgrounds in education, law, business and finance bring a broad range of experience and expertise to the board. Governors and senior staff consulted together to draw up the new school aims and governors are well informed of the strategic plan. At present there is no formal induction procedure for new governors and limited training to support them in their responsibilities. Governors take a close interest in the school and often attend school functions.
- 5.4 The safeguarding policy is reviewed annually and arrangements are in hand to ensure that all governors are trained in child protection. However, as at the previous inspection, governors rely on senior staff to whom responsibility has been delegated, to inform them in regulatory matters. Consequently, recruitment checks for several governors had not been carried out as soon as was practicable after appointment.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.6 Since the appointment of the current headmaster, leadership at all levels has undergone significant change and senior leaders are committed to establishing a clear identity for the school within the community. Leadership and management of the EYFS are good, with many areas of excellence. Throughout the school, leaders are exceptionally hard working but the current delegation of responsibilities does not provide sufficient time for strategic planning and development to be given appropriate focus. The school's emphasis on strong support for the individual owes much to the significance placed on this area by senior leaders, and is reflected in the high academic standards achieved by many pupils and the excellent standard of personal development evident throughout.
- 5.7 The leadership largely ensures that policies and procedures to assure the safety of the pupils are in place, reviewed at appropriate intervals, communicated to staff and implemented correctly, although some governor appointments have not had full regard to statutory requirements. In all day-to-day practice the safeguarding of children in the EYFS is assured, and staff deployment is well organised to ensure

that there are sufficient adults within the unit wherever the children choose to work. However, whilst all the required checks have been made on staff working with the children, some parent volunteers assisting staff in after-school activities have not undergone the required checks. Once alerted to this situation, the school acted quickly to rectify matters. Policies and procedures in the EYFS are implemented consistently to promote a positive and inclusive atmosphere that promotes equality and eliminates discrimination. This includes the effective provision and use of resources.

- 5.8 In reviewing the school's aims with governors, senior leaders have made a good evaluation of the school's strengths as well as areas for further development. In the EYFS, there is a strong commitment to maintaining the present high standards and to search for improvement through self-evaluation. A whole-school, three-year strategic plan is founded on assuring the school's aims, but the school lacks a succinct development plan, informed by departmental plans, which gives details of required actions and responsibilities for taking them, timescales and resources required to achieve success. Useful development plans exist for all subject areas but the EYFS development plan does not identify key strategic priorities and there is no formal plan for boarding.
- 5.9 Subject co-ordinators fulfil their roles with commitment, regularly liaising with subject heads at Malvern College as well as with the Pre-Prep department to ensure that pupils receive a consistent learning experience and smooth transition from one stage of their education to another. They meet termly with senior leaders to discuss planning and curriculum coverage, and this is fed into development plans. The quality of teaching and learning is overseen by senior leaders and subject co-ordinators. The school has met the recommendations from the previous inspection to provide challenge for the more able and to make curricular documents more consistent.
- 5.10 After a period of transition following the merger, the leadership has been successful in recruiting, motivating and developing staff of high calibre. A comprehensive handbook, as well as thorough induction arrangements, ensures that staff are well informed of school routines and procedures. Staff receive training at regular intervals to ensure that they correctly implement school policies for the safeguarding and well-being of pupils. In the EYFS, staff have established useful links with the local authority to assist them in monitoring their provision and gain useful advice and training. An informal appraisal system has been established, but the leadership recognises that this is not sufficiently developed to meet in full the previous inspection's recommendation that it is linked to targets for professional development and the school development plan. Staff have good opportunities to further their professional development and regular school-wide training covers areas of common interest, such as barriers to learning and teaching styles. The school's administration is effective but where certain areas, in particular recruitment checks, ICT and estates, are administered by the college, arrangements do not operate wholly efficiently.
- 5.11 Links with parents have been maintained at the excellent standard noted in the previous report. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that parents are very pleased with the school and no major concerns were raised. Almost all parents responded positively to all the questions and inspection evidence confirms these views. A few were less satisfied with the level of support for pupils with SEND. Inspection evidence found that support is excellent. In the EYFS, relationships with parents are extremely positive. Parents particularly appreciate the

ready availability of the staff and the way in which teaching helps their children to make progress.

- 5.12 Parents confirm that the school's 'open door' policy works very effectively, and comment that the very efficient three-way partnership between staff, parents and pupils enables their children to excel. Should longer discussion be required, teachers can also be seen by appointment. Parents appreciate direct email communication with teachers and this has resulted in much speedier resolution of any concerns. Communication between the school and parents is encouraged through the recently introduced forum. Regular communication between the forum and senior leaders ensures that views are shared and any general parental concerns are dealt with quickly so that good relationships are maintained. Minutes of the forum meetings are circulated to the entire parent body.
- 5.13 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school through the active and supportive 'Friends' association that meets regularly and organises social occasions. It also assists at a number of events arranged by the school, such as Bonfire Night. Parents also assist staff on trips and with some extra-curricular activities, and are welcomed to regular events such as assemblies and matches or to speak to pupils about their professional or cultural interests.
- 5.14 When children start school and at the beginning of the year for younger year groups, parents receive comprehensive handbooks and information. They also receive regular termly calendars and informative newsletters about the whole school, the Pre-Prep and the EYFS, which keep them up-to-date about events and celebrate pupils' activities and successes. A comprehensive prospectus provides full information for parents of prospective pupils.
- 5.15 Regular feedback in the form of grade cards and constructive and detailed reports, together with parent consultation evenings, keeps parents well informed about their children's progress and achievements. All of the officially required information is posted on the school's website and is also available in hard copy. Should a concern arise which cannot be settled informally, parents are well informed about the school's suitable procedure should they wish to make a complaint, and this is followed accordingly.

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