



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

YARM SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

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Yarm School

Yarm Preparatory School and Yarm at Raventhorpe were inspected at the same time and separate reports published.

Full Name of School	Yarm School
DfE Number	808/6002
Registered Charity Number	1093434
Address	Yarm School The Friarage Yarm North Yorkshire TS15 9EJ
Telephone Number	01642 786023
Fax Number	01642 789216
Email Address	admin@yarmschool.org
Headmaster	Mr David Dunn
Chair of Governors	Ms Catherine Evans
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	703
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (421 boys; 282 girls)
Inspection dates	08 Nov 2011 to 09 Nov 2011 05 Dec 2011 to 07 Dec 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in September 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendation for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	8
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	9
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	11
(a) The quality of governance	11
(b) The quality of leadership and management	11
(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians	12
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	14

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Yarm School is a selective independent day school for boys and girls aged from 11 to 18 years. It was founded in 1978 with a roll of 60 boys and has subsequently expanded, becoming co-educational in 2002. This expansion has included the opening of a preparatory school in 1991 and the acquisition in 2006 of an existing preparatory school in Darlington, now known as Yarm at Raventhorpe. Oversight is provided by the same governing body for all three schools. The school has been physically expanded greatly on its present site. Since the previous inspection a new building has been opened, with facilities for English and modern foreign languages, a dance studio, a dining hall and an auditorium. Other facilities for information and communication technology (ICT), mathematics, religion and philosophy and sixth-form provision have been refurbished, and new sports pitches and a fitness suite built.
- 1.2 The school comprises 703 pupils, with boys in a majority, although in some year groups the gender balance is equal. There are 190 pupils in the sixth form. Most pupils come from professional households in Teesside, North Yorkshire and County Durham. Around a tenth of pupils come from homes where another language is spoken as well as English.
- 1.3 The school aims: to bring out the best in all boys and girls in its care and to give them the best possible all-round education; to build and sustain a friendly, tolerant and supportive community in which all its members are valued equally; to teach pupils to enjoy their education, see it as a lifelong experience and take full advantage of the opportunities on offer, and pursue high personal, social and academic standards; to support pupils in making important career decisions and prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of adult life; to encourage them to show a sense of responsibility towards the local and wider community; to develop an active and open relationship with parents.
- 1.4 Pupils are admitted on the basis of an entrance examination and reports from their current school. Standardised tests show that the average ability on entry to the school is above the national average, with a notable proportion of pupils being of far above average ability and a small proportion being of average ability or below. The ability profile of the sixth form is similar. There are 12 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), and very few require additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 116 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 50 receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

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

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The overall achievement of pupils of all abilities and ages is excellent. They make exceptional progress within a broad curriculum, enabled by excellent teaching. These elements, combined with the outstanding programme of activities offered, ensure that the school's aim to educate for life is met with great success. Pupils are co-operative and highly motivated learners, frequently taking responsibility for their own learning. Teaching is carefully planned, particularly with regard to meeting the needs of those with SEND. It often, although not wholly consistently, challenges more able pupils and enables them to achieve rapid progress. Teaching makes excellent use of assessment data to monitor the pupils' progress; marking is regular and thorough, and largely of a high standard.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is outstanding, typified by excellent social skills and a willingness to take responsibility at all ages. They show high levels of confidence and self-esteem, engendered by the house system, which recognises and promotes success at different ages and in many areas, such as sports and the performing arts. Pupils demonstrate a strong moral awareness. They display equally well-developed cultural awareness and a natural tolerance of others' viewpoints. The pupils' highly successful personal development is supported by excellent pastoral care and arrangements to ensure their welfare, and health and safety. In their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, pupils were overwhelmingly positive about the school. A small minority of pupils felt that their workloads are not monitored effectively. Inspectors found no evidence to support this view.
- 2.3 Excellent governance supports the school's aims and ethos strongly, providing forward-looking strategic planning to support the continued rapid progress that has characterised the school's relatively short history. Governors provide a firm foundation for the high educational standards achieved by pupils and their excellent personal development. Excellent oversight of the governors' legal responsibilities is combined with bold but well-considered financial management. Underpinning both governance and the school's excellent leadership and management is a strong culture of self-review. The school has responded successfully to the recommendations of the previous inspection report, outstandingly so in its provision for the performing arts, as seen in the newly built auditorium. Policy making is meticulous, and is implemented and monitored thoroughly overall. The school maintains excellent links with parents, who expressed strong satisfaction in the pre-inspection questionnaire with the education provided. There were no areas of concern identified by significant numbers of parents. Inspectors support these views.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

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

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that the current excellent practice evident in much teaching, with regard to marking, and providing appropriate challenge for the most able, is reflected across all subject areas.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The pupils' overall achievement is excellent. The school's aim to enable pupils to achieve high academic standards is reflected in outstanding achievement at all ages across a wide range of subject areas, in response to excellent teaching. This level of achievement includes the small number of pupils with EAL. Older pupils achieve particularly well; for example, sixth-form written work in religious studies and philosophy shows exceptional levels of refinement and critical thinking. All pupils develop confident speaking and listening skills, being both articulate and reflective. Their reading and writing skills are highly developed.
- 3.2 Pupils develop strong mathematical skills, demonstrated across a variety of courses, including further mathematics International GCSE (IGCSE), and these skills are applied successfully. In science, they develop strong understanding of both theory and practice. Their understanding of modern foreign languages is highly developed; they spot linguistic patterns and extract meaning from context rapidly. Pupils develop an understanding of Latin and this enables some to proceed to the study of Greek.
- 3.3 Independent research is strong and characterises much learning. For the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), sixth-form pupils research widely, for example analysing data on healthcare and initiating external interviews. Pupils handle ICT with confidence; they make excellent use of the school's ICT platform to continue classwork, such as in photographic manipulation. Some achievement in design and technology (DT) is exceptional. Pupils demonstrate effective creative and performing skills; work in art and drama is often characterised by a willingness to take risks. In physical education, pupils demonstrate strong technical skills and stamina.
- 3.4 The work of those pupils with SEND often matches that of their peers, exceeding the targets set for them. The achievement of more able pupils, and those with particular talents, is often strong, particularly when teaching provides additional levels of challenge or enables them to reinforce their learning by explaining concepts to others, and where this is more limited, progress is slower. More able pupils achieved outstanding levels of aural analysis at GCSE level when researching stylistic features of different musical periods.
- 3.5 Pupils achieve at the highest levels in many activities. They enjoy success nationally and regionally in many sports, including rowing and rugby, where they are members of national squads, and in biathlon, hockey, cricket, netball and fencing. They perform successfully in instrumental, and speech and drama examinations. They enjoy regular success in Young Enterprise competitions and have a long record of exceptional accomplishment in national engineering awards. Pupils regularly attain gold level in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. They achieve well in national mathematics competitions and science Olympiads, winning the national competition in physics at GCSE level.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE and A level have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained schools, with those at A level above the average for maintained

selective schools. In 2011, 72 per cent of pupils achieved GCSE results at grades A or A*. Results at IGCSE are higher than worldwide and UK averages. At A level, over 80 per cent of pupils regularly achieve grades A* to B. Pupils taking Pre-U examinations frequently achieve distinctions. These levels of attainment, evident in the pupils' work and when related to the breadth and depth of the curriculum, indicate that pupils make exceptional progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Most pupils transfer from Year 11 to the sixth form, with leavers proceeding to co-educational maintained sixth forms. Most sixth formers enter higher education and a significant number achieve places to study medicine or dentistry.

- 3.7 Pupils are co-operative and highly motivated learners. They respond well to the regular challenge to take responsibility for their own learning. The presentation of their work is excellent, with great care evident in the organisation of files and workbooks.

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

- 3.8 The school's curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent. The broad range of subjects offered in Years 7 to 11, the extended groups of subjects in the sixth form and the very wide scope of activities available enable the school to fulfil its aim of educating for life.

- 3.9 Pupils of all abilities are offered a range of subjects at a pace appropriate to their needs; for example, there are three different levels of entry for mathematics examinations in Years 10 and 11. Pupils can study at least one language, including Latin and, where choice and ability demand, Greek. Excellent technological facilities provide for study at a high level in DT and textiles. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 study a widely recognised course in computer literacy, and many attain at a high level. All subjects enable pupils to employ their ICT skills, meeting the previous inspection report's recommendation well.

- 3.10 Setting provided in languages, English, mathematics and science enhances the challenge for more able pupils. They are identified through analysis of standardised data and departmental recommendation. The excellent identification of and provision for pupils with SEND are overseen by the learning support department. The school information system gives staff the details they need to provide appropriate work for both sets of pupils.

- 3.11 The choice available at GCSE ensures that pupils of all abilities study a core that includes one language, and can choose appropriate options to suit their needs. The sixth-form curriculum adds politics, psychology, theatre studies and economics to the choice on offer. All pupils complete the general studies A level, in addition to at least three A2 subjects. Some pupils also complete EPQ projects, many to an exceptional standard.

- 3.12 The curriculum is carefully and regularly monitored. Recent changes include a new strategy to broaden the range of modern foreign languages available. There are extensive links with the preparatory school to ensure continuity of approach. Preparatory school pupils visit the DT, art and music departments, and collaborate regularly in musical performances.

- 3.13 Schemes of work in personal, social and health education (PSHE) are comprehensive, well planned and suitably resourced. They encompass politics,

human rights and other cultures. Sixth-form sessions offer a weekly programme of lectures and seminars that prepare pupils for university, and work and life outside school. Pupils receive excellent careers advice. This includes various testing programmes, starting in Year 9. Sixth formers appreciate the help they receive, particularly in applications to study medicine or dentistry. A comprehensive biennial careers convention provides further advice.

- 3.14 The activities programme provides an excellent array of varied activities, from art to table tennis, and religious studies discussion. A distinctive feature is the school's allocation of two timetabled periods a week to activities. Pupils participate willingly and enjoy the opportunity to mix with other year groups. Other activities, including sport and the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), are well attended at lunchtimes and after school. Outdoor pursuits trips are organised by a full-time specialist, beginning in Year 7 with a trip to Ullswater. These are complemented by rugby and other sports tours. A full range of music activities, plays and house competitions promotes widespread participation. The new auditorium is designed to support this provision further.
- 3.15 Pupils engage with the local community through charity work to help children abroad, and the elderly, including a Christmas party for pensioners. Parents, local businesses and university representatives assist with careers advice. A languages day for Year 10 pupils and a meeting for applicants to highly selective universities involve local schools.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The quality of teaching is excellent. Teaching fully embraces the school's aims to promote academic excellence and prepare pupils for life. The contribution made by staff to the pupils' achievement, both in and out of the classroom, is outstanding. Lessons have a brisk pace, and the energy of the teaching staff creates a dynamic atmosphere that fully engages the pupils' attention and their desire to learn. Throughout the school, the strength of the relationships between pupils and staff is palpable, and pupils are consequently keen to respond positively in class and to give of their best, rising to their teachers' high expectations of them. Teachers lead by example and courtesy is the hallmark of the classroom. In this environment, co-operative learning flourishes.
- 3.17 Lesson planning is thorough and well informed by prior academic assessment. Teachers are keen to eschew an over directed approach in the classroom; they afford pupils ample opportunities to discover patterns and facts for themselves, and to develop their own powers of reasoning. The study skills programme introduced for pupils in Years 7 to 11 has encouraged them to experiment with new learning techniques, to measurably good effect. This is especially true for pupils with SEND.
- 3.18 Teaching demonstrates good subject knowledge and appropriate scholarship. The best inspires pupils to take risks and explore new ideas with confidence. This is particularly evident in the creative subjects.
- 3.19 Careful use of both internal and standardised assessment systems enables teachers to track individual pupils' progress and to set clear targets for improvement. Use of the strong school management information system is developing rapidly so that relevant information on the needs of individual pupils is shared by all staff. As a result, appropriate action can be, and often is, taken to support pupils in their

learning. Occasionally, opportunities to provide extended challenge for the most able are not fully exploited, limiting the potential for them to make rapid progress.

- 3.20 Since the previous inspection, whole-staff training has been undertaken to encourage greater use of ICT in the classroom. In many subjects, new technologies are widely exploited to excellent effect, enabling pupils to become confident in their use of ICT over time. Whilst not all staff use ICT extensively, the associated emphasis on developing new teaching strategies has invigorated thinking on teaching styles and created greater variety, to which pupils have responded with enthusiasm. The library is well stocked and resourced with computers. Many departments make good use of this facility, and it is particularly well exploited by younger pupils and those in the sixth form.
- 3.21 Marking is thorough and gives clear help to pupils to improve their academic standards, although in a small minority of cases it does not meet the usual high standard. Pupils appreciate the prompt and regular marking of their work, and the fact that staff are readily available to help them when they feel insecure in their studies. They value the academic clinics that are available to them throughout the working week, and are particularly appreciative of staff's responses to their queries by email.

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' personal development is excellent. The successful fulfilment of the school's aim to teach pupils to pursue high personal and social standards is particularly evident in the high quality of their relationships with others and their willingness to participate in school life at all ages. Pupils develop excellent levels of self-esteem as they progress through the school; achievements at a variety of levels receive regular recognition, both within and outside school. They develop a strong sense of identity through membership of a house, and through the team spirit engendered by participation in sporting and other house competitions. Teamwork is common to much of school life, promoted in class, in activities and through well-focused assembly presentations. Younger pupils gain a good awareness of philosophical and non-material concepts within the curriculum and through activities. As they grow older, many develop this to a high level; for example through their perceptive understanding of literature or attendance at monthly inter-faith lunches.
- 4.2 The pupils' moral development is strong, often focused through house activities such as fund raising, and through supporting ecological initiatives and fair trade. An active group supports those who are unjustly imprisoned. Older pupils show high levels of moral awareness in projects. They develop well-argued personal viewpoints on issues such as the inevitability of war in relation to human existence. In PSHE, younger pupils showed excellent awareness of responsible behaviour when discussing sexual relationships. Fund raising is consistently successful; pupils support a variety of local causes, such as hospices and the elderly, as well as raising funds for international charities, for example supporting a school in Zimbabwe.
- 4.3 The pupils' very high standards of behaviour contribute much to the successful fulfilment of the school's aim to create a friendly and supportive community. There are many ways in which pupils help one another, particularly through schemes for older pupils to support younger ones, both socially and through academic mentoring. Year 7 pupils enhanced their problem-solving skills when challenged to build a tower using spaghetti and marshmallows by sixth formers attached to their tutor group. Younger pupils in turn visit the preparatory school to lead debates in the philosophy club, passing on their experience. Pupils engage with contemporary issues through mock general elections, and real elections are held for posts of responsibility. They willingly take on responsibility at a variety of levels, acting as guides on open days and leading societies and sports teams, and through conscientious membership of the school council. An appropriate understanding of public institutions is gained through the PSHE programme. Many pupils serve in the community through the DofE scheme from Year 9, and participation in the CCF enables many to develop leadership skills. These are significantly enhanced by the school's outward-bound provision.
- 4.4 Pupils develop strong cultural awareness. The school's success in promoting a tolerant community is evident in the manner in which pupils from diverse backgrounds mix and share experiences. They are keen to participate in drama at all ages, whether in year-group and whole-school plays or in duologues as part of house competitions. They participate in choral and other musical rehearsals with enthusiasm and tackle a good range of styles. Alongside experiences of Western European arts, enhanced by their understanding of modern foreign languages and classics, pupils develop a good awareness of various cultures. Through

participation in the school's outward-bound programmes many pupils explore places further afield, on trips to climb in France, to trek in Peru, or to ski in Austria. These complement cultural trips to New York, Russia and China, and sports tours to Holland and Australia, as well as regular language trips to other European countries.

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

- 4.5 Staff provide excellent support and guidance for the pupils, in accordance with the school's aims. Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive, and there is great mutual respect. Pupils appreciate the care and attention given to them by all staff, and feel consistently well supported. The pastoral structure places emphasis on the role of the form tutor, often assisted by a second member of staff; in turn, they are overseen by heads of year who show equally close knowledge of the pupils in their care. In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt that their workloads are not monitored effectively, but inspectors could not find evidence to support this view. The school's management information system is a useful mechanism for tracking the pupils' welfare. The pastoral system is managed effectively to provide a high level of care for pupils. Relationships amongst pupils are extremely supportive. Pupils mix well across different age groups, particularly in activities.
- 4.6 The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent. The school's robust arrangements to safeguard pupils are implemented with great care and dedication. Designated members of staff are trained appropriately on a regular basis and take their duty of communicating the information to other staff very seriously, ensuring that training is effective and that procedures are understood clearly. This is evident across different areas of the school's operations, including the catering and estates departments. Experience of safer recruitment training is widespread amongst senior staff and governors.
- 4.7 The school has excellent measures to guard against bullying, which are linked well to its arrangements to promote good behaviour. Pupils are confident that bullying is rare and that if any instance occurred it would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. The range of sanctions is clear, and more serious sanctions are used sensitively and appropriately on the few occasions they are needed. They are balanced by a rewards system that acknowledges success in all aspects of school life; younger pupils eagerly anticipate the presentation of a variety of awards in year group assemblies.
- 4.8 Suitable planning to improve access for those with physical needs is undertaken and the school takes its responsibility for those with learning needs very seriously. Registration of pupils is efficient and effective, and any absence is followed up appropriately. The school maintains and stores an appropriate admission register. Arrangements for pupils who feel unwell are excellent and are operated in conjunction with a good first-aid policy.
- 4.9 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are excellent and make strong use of professional expertise. Regular drills are held and recorded meticulously, and equipment is checked regularly. Arrangements to ensure health and safety during building work are carefully considered and implemented. A good policy ensures the pupils' health and safety on educational visits at all ages. This is reflected well in risk assessments.

- 4.10 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing sensible eating habits. School meals are of a high quality and appreciated by pupils. The full activities and sporting programme provides many excellent opportunities for regular exercise.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance provides excellent support for the school's aims. It shows a clear understanding of the school's ethos, the diverse urban and rural background from which pupils come, and the school's needs. The governing body includes a wide range of experience in finance and business management. It benefits from an excellent range of expertise in education. Planning for introducing new areas of expertise is well considered, including, for example, the appointment of a governor with experience in provision for pupils with SEND. A comprehensive system of committees operates effectively, particularly so in the case of the compliance committee, which ensures that the full body receives regular advice on its legal responsibilities and how to fulfil them. Governors are well informed about the school. They hold regular meetings with senior management figures and receive presentations from subject leaders, to which they respond with rigorous and highly focused questions; these provide both challenge and support. These arrangements are enhanced by easy communication between senior staff and governors; senior management team meetings are open to visits by governors at any time. Governors regularly attend school events and also engage in a yearly visit to lessons.
- 5.2 Governors provide strong support to the school through rigorous financial oversight and planning. Highly effective strategic planning has ensured bold and adventurous redevelopment of the site, including the building of an auditorium and performing arts facility that provides immense opportunities for both pupils and the wider community. Planning includes aims for the development of governance through revision of its committee structures, alongside longer-term objectives for the school to support its ethos of providing an education for life. Governors lead and support the school's widespread culture of thorough self-review. They provide excellent oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review safeguarding, staff recruitment, and health and safety arrangements regularly.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 Excellent leadership and highly effective management have enabled the school to make significant progress since the previous inspection. Resolute planning and a strong determination to fulfil the school's ethos of education for life have resulted in highly successful new building, forward-looking approaches to teaching and learning, the development of pastoral systems and revised senior management structures. These support the excellent achievement and personal development of the pupils. The vision of senior leaders, linked to meticulous attention to detail, ensures that planning is realised through highly effective policies in all areas of school life, which are implemented and monitored equally thoroughly. This fully meets the recommendation of the previous report. The co-ordination of policy with Yarm Preparatory School and Yarm at Raventhorpe is a further strength and is backed up by regular joint meetings at different levels of senior management.
- 5.4 A strong culture of self-review supports planning and ensures that the rapid development of the school during its relatively short history is capable of being maintained. The need for continual review is understood by all, including estates and ancillary staff, and is pursued rigorously across the school's diverse activities. The process identifies the views of all members of the school community, including

parents and pupils, and covers the pupils' perception of the teaching they receive and their approaches to their own learning, as well as testing the feasibility of large-scale developments. As a result, the school identifies staffing needs, professional development and associated training with great success. This is supported by a detailed procedure for performance review. This culture is mirrored in middle management, with departmental planning supporting that for the whole school. This means that initiatives in school policy are implemented and monitored with success that is consistent across nearly all subject areas. Pastoral structures throughout the school function highly effectively: strong leadership at head of year and head of section level is a contributory factor.

- 5.5 Careful financial management ensures that good teaching resources are provided. Existing buildings and facilities are kept in good condition, alongside new developments. The school's new auditorium provides exceptional facilities for the performing arts and has been carefully designed to meet other school needs, such as an assembly space.
- 5.6 The school appoints highly qualified staff, both teaching and non-teaching, who fully support its aims. The school's successful development is enhanced as it seeks to recruit from a wide area geographically in order to continually renew its academic and pastoral provision. The school ensures that its aim to develop a supportive community encompasses non-teaching staff, typified by the close relationships with the catering department, for example through its participation in pupils' curricular activities. Arrangements to ensure the pupils' welfare, and for health and safety, are implemented highly effectively, including the training of all staff in safeguarding procedures. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and governors to work with children are robust, and the central register is maintained with great efficiency.

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

- 5.7 The quality of links with parents is outstanding. This is in accordance with the school's aims to develop an active and open relationship with parents, and to build and sustain a friendly, tolerant and supportive community in which all its members are valued equally. The partnership between parents and the school is strong.
- 5.8 Parents are highly supportive of the school and are extremely pleased with the overall quality of the education that their children receive. The responses to the parental questionnaire, which covered all aspects of pastoral care, academic provision and achievement, behaviour and communication, were overwhelmingly positive and indicated strong satisfaction. Parents also praised the governance and management of the school. They are pleased with the progress made by their children and no concerns were raised by a significant number of parents in any area. The inspection findings confirm these views.
- 5.9 The school has a strong commitment to being as accessible to parents as possible. Parents said that they can communicate easily with the school and receive timely responses to questions. They appreciate the direct email contact they have with the teachers. The school takes seriously any concerns parents may have. Action is timely and has due regard for the pupils' welfare. Complaints are rare and are handled in accordance with the school's published procedure.
- 5.10 Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in their children's education and in the life of the school. For example, the school has sought feedback from parents

through its own questionnaires. Many parents take up opportunities for involvement, including attendance at talks, concerts, plays and sports fixtures. Some parents assist with mock interviews, careers education and activities such as Young Enterprise. The flourishing parents' association, the Yarm School Association, organises events, such as the Dovecote Festival and a craft fair. These events provide valuable opportunities for parents and staff to mix and help to raise funds that are used for the benefit of the pupils, for example to provide gymnastics and rowing equipment, and tables and seating for the new auditorium. Some parents are members of a school development committee.

- 5.11 All the required information for parents of current and prospective pupils is provided. The excellent website, the weekly newsletters and the school magazine help to ensure that parents are well informed. They are given good quality reports regarding the educational progress of their children; these are issued at least once a year and backed up by half-termly interim progress reports. The detailed and informative reports indicate the standards achieved in academic work, as well as in aspects such as behaviour and dress. They provide clear guidance to help pupils improve. Parents can add comments to be followed up by the school. There is also a full programme of parents' evenings, in order to discuss each pupil's progress and to provide additional information pertinent to specific year groups. Pupils attend these along with their parents.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Zelma Braganza	Former Head, GSA school
Mrs Karen Davidson	Deputy Head, GSA school
Mr David Holland	Head, SHMIS school
Mrs Gwen Randall	Former Head, HMC school
Mrs Yvonne Wilkinson	Head, GSA school