



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ALDENHAM SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Aldenham School

Full Name of School	Aldenham School		
DfE Number	919/6003		
Registered Charity Number	298140		
Address	Aldenham School Elstree Borehamwood Hertfordshire WD6 3AJ		
Telephone Number	01923 858122		
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Email Address	enquiries@aldenham.com		
Head	Mr James Fowler		
Chair of Governors	Mr Stuart Lewis		
Age Range	3 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	735		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (542 boys; 193 girls;)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 123
	3-5 (EYFS):	58	11-18: 554
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	617	
Number of Boarders	Total:	118	
	Full:	37	Weekly: 81
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Kate Watts		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	13 Nov 2012 to 16 Nov 2012		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2008.

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 on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

Ofsted monitors the work of independent inspectorates, including a sample of inspections, and you can find the latest evaluation of the work of ISI on the Ofsted website.

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 Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

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 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

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mr Garry Bowe	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Richard Cross	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Jane Davies	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mrs Perdita Davidson	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Peter Kelly	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Keith Walton	Team Inspector (Second Master, HMC school)
Mr Tony Halliwell	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Sarah Godfrey	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Penny Oates	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Aldenham School is a coeducational independent day and boarding school for pupils aged from three to eighteen years. It was founded in 1597 and still occupies its original site. The school has, since 1984, been governed by a mixed governing body including representation from the Brewers' Company and other local bodies including the Diocese of St Albans, as well as co-opted governors. In 1995 The Court of the Worshipful Company of Brewers gifted the transfer of the School's land to The Aldenham School Charity.
- 1.2 The school occupies a 120-acre green-belt site in Hertfordshire. It comprises the senior school for pupils aged from 11 to 18 which includes boarding, and the prep school for younger pupils; this includes the pre-prep department consisting of Years 1 and 2 and the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It currently educates 735 pupils, of whom 554 are in the senior school, including 178 in the sixth form, and 181 are in the prep school. Of the latter, 58 are educated in the EYFS. There are 118 boarders, accommodated in five boarding houses; Martineau's for boys and girls in Years 7 and 8 who board weekly, Paull's for older girls and Beevor's, Kennedy's and McGill's for older boys. Some senior school day pupils are also members of one of these houses. Girls make up about one-quarter of the school. The school has a Christian ethos but welcomes pupils of all faiths or none.
- 1.3 The school is accommodated in a range of buildings dating from the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries. Since the previous inspection a sixth form centre has been opened and facilities for music extended in the senior school; outdoor play areas have been extended and additional facilities created for sport, music and drama in the prep. The head of the prep school was appointed in 2011. In 2011 the Aldenham Foundation incorporated St Hilda's School Bushey, a nearby girls' prep school with which a number of links have been established.
- 1.4 The school aims to: encourage each pupil fully to develop his or her intellectual, physical and cultural talents in response to appropriately challenging goals; emphasise the social, moral and spiritual dimensions of community life in a modern society and nurture the character and skills with which to meet the challenges of life beyond school; recognise and reward personal and collective achievement. It seeks to support this by forging a partnership with parents and the wider community and maintaining and developing a staff which seeks fulfilment through the pupils' progress.
- 1.5 Pupils are admitted following tests and an interview. The average ability on entry to both sections of the school is above the national average, with some variations at different entry points. On entry to the sixth form the average ability is slightly below the national average. Most day pupils come from north London, Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, from a range of social backgrounds. Some boarders come from overseas, including Europe, Africa and Asia. Many pupils come from homes where another language is commonly spoken in addition to English; 35 pupils receive support for English as an additional language (EAL), most in the senior school. Four pupils have statements of special educational needs. There are 189 pupils throughout the school who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom 72 receive specialist help.
- 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 overall achievement of pupils throughout the school is excellent. Pupils develop well in knowledge, skills and understanding across all subject areas and some achieve excellent standards, particularly in the EYFS, the prep school and the sixth form. Senior school pupils achieve at outstanding levels in activities. Pupils make good progress, and some, including those pupils with SEND or EAL make rapid progress although that of the gifted and talented is not as marked when teaching provides insufficient challenge. They do so as a consequence of curricular provision which is excellent throughout the school, allied to a wide range of activities. The pupils' progress is facilitated by excellent teaching. At its best, teaching stimulates pupils and challenges all, including the gifted and talented, and offers excellent assessment of the pupils' progress but this is not wholly consistent across all subject areas and ages. Pupils are keen and well-motivated learners and they work well with others.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Children in the EYFS achieve excellent personal development for their ages. Pupils of all ages show confidence and mutual respect, and are highly articulate. They show a strong sense of right and wrong and develop excellent social skills and cultural awareness, the latter heightened by the easy integration of a wide range of cultures into the school community. Their personal development is supported by excellent pastoral care and arrangements to ensure their welfare, health and safety. Those pupils who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires were positive about the school. The quality of boarding is excellent. The experience of boarding contributes outstandingly to the boarders' personal development.
- 2.3 Excellent governance supports the school's aims and ethos and gives strong support to individual areas of the school, such as the EYFS. Governors demonstrate a clear understanding of the school's needs and the role they play in supporting the executive work of senior leaders. This, combined with careful financial provision, enables them to support the pupils' excellent academic achievement and personal development. They fulfil their responsibilities for oversight in those areas where they have legal responsibilities well, although arrangements for boarding are less structured. The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection. Leadership and management are excellent, particularly strong at senior level and in pastoral areas. This results in well-focused policy making which is implemented and monitored successfully overall, including in the EYFS and in boarding, but not wholly consistently in teaching and learning. Parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the education provided by the school in pre-inspection questionnaires throughout the school. Inspection evidence confirms these views.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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) Recommendation for further improvement

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that teaching consistently reflects the best practice already current in the school, particularly in assessment, and in the provision of challenge for the gifted and talented.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

Whole School

3.1 The pupils' achievement is excellent overall.

Prep School

3.2 In the EYFS, achievement and progress are excellent with all children, whatever their starting point, showing significant development. In the Nursery children complete complex puzzles requiring considerable levels of concentration and in Reception some can use their phonic skills to build complex words and then spell newly-discovered rhyming words. Good enquiry skills are developed through tasks involving investigation. Children discovered that water freezes and melts by using ice boats. Their creativity is developed very well through varied role-play opportunities as well as a wide range of art activities.

3.3 Pupils in Years 1 to 6 have excellent knowledge, skills and understanding. Their literacy skills are strong. Pupils are highly articulate and express their ideas confidently. Their numeracy skills are developed to a high degree and are applied successfully in solving problems. They achieve well in science. Pupils show high levels of creativity and they are enthusiastic and skilful performers. They are able to use information and communication technology (ICT) successfully for graphics and word processing.

3.4 Pupils achieve good standards in extra-curricular activities. They achieve well in sports including gaining membership of a regional gymnastics squad. They are successful in local speech and drama festivals, and instrumental examinations.

3.5 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available from their work and their performance in lessons and standardised tests, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. This attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make good progress when compared to the average for pupils of similar ability. Those pupils with SEND usually achieve in line with their peers, indicating progress which is often rapid, given their learning needs, in response to carefully-tailored support. The more able often respond to oral questions at levels in advance of their ages but in some areas this is not matched in written work because the tasks they are given offer limited additional challenge.

3.6 The pupils' successful achievement is generated by their enthusiastic attitude to their work, by high standards of behaviour in class and successful cooperative work with staff and with their peers. Pupils are able to work independently when encouraged to do so. Children in the EYFS are aware that they are part of a group. Their ability to listen to and show respect for others, and to share, is a strength of the setting.

Senior School

3.7 The pupils' achievement is good, enabled by well-planned teaching and strong relationships between teachers and pupils in the classroom. All pupils, both boys and girls, including those with EAL, are highly articulate and express their views with confidence. They read responsively and with insight and write fluently and

accurately. Pupils develop good knowledge, skills and understanding across a broad range of subjects in Years 7 to 9 and in preparation for GCSE. Achievement in the sixth form is consistently good and often excellent.

- 3.8 Pupils develop strong mathematical skills and apply them successfully in other subjects. Achievement in science is good and often excellent. In modern foreign languages pupils achieve well. Pupils can reason well but are less inclined to do so when teaching sets tasks which give limited opportunities for independent thinking and learning. Pupils use ICT well, including music and art software, and some reach excellent standards in graphics, media studies and textiles. The school's extensive provision for design technology (DT) results in good standards. Pupils demonstrate strong creative and performing skills in theatre studies and dance. Excellent standards are attained in physical education (PE).
- 3.9 Those pupils with SEND achieve the targets set for them with regard to their potential and individual needs, and frequently surpass them. Some gifted and talented pupils achieve very high standards, notably in art and English, but this level of achievement is not seen consistently across all subject areas, particularly when teaching offers limited provision for these pupils' needs. Pupils with EAL achieve good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding.
- 3.10 Pupils reach excellent levels of achievement in activities. Some are members of the National Youth Theatre, others perform well in instrumental examinations, gain prizes in local music festivals or have enjoyed success in a national Diamond Jubilee portrait competition. A good number attain gold in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. Pupils have achieved highly at regional level in business enterprise competitions. They participate in sports at the highest levels nationally, including membership of premier league football academies, the country's most successful ladies football team, and the Great Britain dressage team. Many are members of county cricket squads.
- 3.11 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE and at A level have been good in relation to the national average for pupils in maintained schools. Results in 2012 indicate that this level of attainment in GCSE has been maintained, and the proportion of pupils gaining passes at A or A* increased. Results in those subjects which began to be taken in IGCSE in 2011 are above or similar to the average for schools worldwide. A-level results consistently include 50 per cent or more of passes at grades A* to B. These results, when considered alongside evidence from the pupils' work and their achievement in lessons, indicate that they make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. The results of those pupils with SEND indicate excellent progress in relation to their starting points. Around three-quarters of pupils proceed from Year 11 into the sixth form, with leavers proceeding to maintained or independent sixth forms. Most sixth formers enter higher education, with others choosing a vocational path within varied commercial organisations, for example the banking and film industries.
- 3.12 Pupils are keen to learn and are well motivated. They take care over their work although presentation can vary in quality. They are very successful in working co-operatively, helping each other and sharing ideas freely.

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

Whole School

- 3.13 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

Prep School

- 3.14 The prep school offers an excellent, extensive curriculum, which meets its aim to provide a broad education for all pupils. The curriculum provides a very good range of subjects with a strong emphasis on linguistic and mathematical areas. Science provision has been restructured since the previous inspection to good effect, meeting the recommendation of that report. It now includes more experimental work. Investigation work in other subjects has been increased. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about the regular investigations they undertake in mathematics. The opportunity for Year 6 pupils to be taught in the senior school laboratories offers additional resources and strengthens links between the two sections of the school.
- 3.15 A good mix of creative, expressive and technological subjects are offered. Specialist teaching in music, speech and drama, French, PE and games as well as Year 6 science, is a particularly strong attribute of the curriculum, in several areas an innovation since the previous inspection. Swimming enhances the curriculum for pupils from Reception to Year 6. Provision for games is enhanced by recent development of the prep sports field and specific provision for girls has been improved by the opportunities created by the link with St. Hilda's school.
- 3.16 The EYFS provides a carefully planned curriculum in a caring, rich environment, both inside and outdoors, which is rigorously monitored to ensure that high standards are maintained and improvements continue. Comprehensive and detailed recording of observations enables staff to plan to fully meet the needs of each child, ensuring excellent progress. This includes those children whose starting points are either significantly below or above those expected for their age. There is a very good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.
- 3.17 New accommodation for drama, music and art has enabled the pupils' progress in these areas. All pupils benefit from discrete ICT lessons in a well-resourced suite but its use is not yet fully embedded across all areas of the curriculum. Citizenship is an integral part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, taught in discrete lessons and thoroughly enjoyed by pupils. The programme is supported well by assemblies and in some extra-curricular activities.
- 3.18 Curricular documentation is extremely thorough and helps to ensure a uniformity of approach in teaching. Planning shows support for pupils of differing abilities, and opportunities for assessment. Monitoring of the curriculum is carefully managed to ensure the adoption of appropriate methodology.
- 3.19 Pupils with SEND receive excellent support to enable them to benefit from the curriculum. Teaching assistants provide support within each class and individual education plans are drawn up which are shared with parents and communicated to all staff. Curriculum plans require differentiated work for more able pupils and the gifted and talented but the implementation and monitoring of this provision is at an early stage. The recent appointment of a co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils is designed to support provision for them.

- 3.20 The school offers a good range of extra-curricular academic, sporting and creative activities that are well organised and enjoyed by those pupils who participate. Pupils in the cookery club made good use of the new facilities provided and those engaged in fencing enjoyed improving their reflexes.
- 3.21 Educational trips such as those to Flatford Mill and the Houses of Parliament enrich and broaden the pupils' educational experience. Residential trips are arranged for pupils in Years 3 to 6, including an overnight stay for Year 3 pupils at the Science Museum, and the pupils say they are memorable experiences for them. Links with the wider community have been strengthened recently and include partnership with local and national charities such as Children in Need and Macmillan Cancer Care.

Senior School

- 3.22 The curriculum in the senior school is excellent. It provides for all the required areas of learning and suits the ages and abilities of the pupils, encouraging each to develop his or her intellectual talents in line with the school's aims. The school keeps the curriculum under regular review to ensure this. Good provision in Years 7 to 9 ensures that pupils are enabled to make free choice from the extensive range of subjects available at GCSE. Year 7 pupils have taster sessions in the modern foreign languages available before making a choice of which to study through to GCSE. Currently, it is not possible to study a second modern foreign language at GCSE although Latin is available. Sixth form pupils choose from a diverse range of academic subjects including economics and vocational options such as media studies. These cater well for the needs of all pupils, including international boarders.
- 3.23 Strong support is provided for pupils with SEND who are given individual support where necessary or who may follow a reduced timetable. Similarly, pupils with EAL are given additional tuition in English, usually at times which do not disrupt their other lessons. The school places pupils in Years 7 to 9 in groups determined by ability which enable appropriate challenge to be given for their individual needs, including for the gifted and talented in many subject areas. Individual core subjects such as English, mathematics and science are set at various stages. From Year 10 onwards groups are more mixed in ability and the onus is placed on staff to provide appropriate challenges for the different abilities present. These arrangements, together with the recent appointment of a co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils, meet the recommendation of the previous report. Although embryonic, plans to further extend and enrich the experience of gifted and talented pupils have been carefully laid.
- 3.24 A well-structured PSHE programme forms the basis of 'Lifeskills' sessions which are conducted by tutors alongside pastoral tutorial meetings. These are supplemented by outside speakers. These provide a good basis for the pupils' personal development although the need to share time with tutorial matters can occasionally be restrictive.
- 3.25 The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. It is justifiably proud of its sporting activities which are a major strength. These have been strengthened by recent development in opportunities for girls which is on-going. In addition, weekly activity programmes provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils of all abilities, skill levels, and interests. Activities in non-sporting areas, including music, drama, debating, and a very well-supported group 'Les Philosophes' which includes talks and discussion on diverse topics for older pupils, are extensive and promote the school's philosophy of all-round development. Competitions between

the houses, or within Paull's in terms of sport for girls, are central to school life and much enjoyed by pupils.

- 3.26 Pupils are supported by a well-structured careers programme which offers more detailed advice when they reach Year 11 and includes opportunities for aptitude testing. A course of careers lectures in Year 12 provides additional help.
- 3.27 Strong community links which benefit the pupils have been developed over a number of years. These include involvement with local village life, inviting a local maintained school to join the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), charity events, participation in World Challenge events and work in the community through the DofE scheme which pupils say they find fulfilling and rewarding.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.28 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.29 Throughout the school, teaching is highly successful in promoting the pupils' progress and supports the aims of the school. The quality of the teaching is a major factor in enabling pupils to reach their potential. The warm and purposeful relationships in the classroom between pupils and teachers and amongst pupils create an atmosphere conducive to learning.
- 3.30 Lesson planning and preparation is excellent with clear learning objectives. It demonstrates a good understanding of the pupils' needs, informed by successful use of standardised tests and national benchmarks which meets the recommendation of the previous prep school report. These needs are met consistently, including those of pupils with SEND or EAL. The provision for those pupils with statements of special educational need meets their requirements. Strong, detailed planning is particularly evident in English, history and science and in the prep school, where it includes regular reinforcement of the pupils' understanding alongside challenge to extend their thinking. Occasionally, when teaching lacks these elements pupils have limited opportunity to participate fully and they develop their reasoning skills less effectively. In some sixth form teaching pupils say they are less confident in their learning because support to enable them to understand some concepts is limited. In the most successful teaching pupils are asked well-directed questions that encourage them to participate fully in the learning process, challenge their thinking and confirm their understanding.
- 3.31 In the EYFS, children are encouraged to think creatively, solve problems, explore, concentrate, take the initiative and see things through to their conclusion. These characteristics of effective learning stand them in good stead as they prepare to move to the next stage in their schooling.
- 3.32 Throughout the school, the provision of tasks suited to individual need in some mixed-ability groups, particularly in English and art, enables the gifted and talented to achieve their full potential. Sixth-form pupils in English, given research projects individually selected by the teacher to offer appropriate levels of demand, achieved high standards. However such strategies are not yet common to all teaching. In the prep school, advantage is not always taken of the identification of varied ability groups in each form to provide different tasks. This results in slower progress by the most able, for example when uniform worksheets are provided. In a prep school English lesson some younger pupils writing a play script including nursery rhymes were encouraged to select more complex examples to develop, and made rapid progress.

- 3.33 Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. They manage time and resources very effectively to promote interest and ensure understanding. Interactive whiteboards and other resources are used well. Teaching assistants in the prep school are generally well deployed. Good use of visual resources is common throughout the school, stimulating the interest of all pupils but benefitting in particular those with learning difficulties related to literacy. Practical work is used to stimulate the pupils' reasoning skills. In a biology lesson, both ICT and the contents of a pond were used very successfully to enable younger senior school pupils to understand why animals had evolved in a variety of ways. Libraries are well used by staff for class projects and research work and by pupils for private study, meeting the recommendation of the previous prep school report. Provision includes increasing online resources as a complement to books and journals. In the EYFS, a wide variety of stimulating materials and resources helps children to develop their imagination through role play, and to acquire problem-solving skills. The outdoor area is used to encourage children to develop physical skills and to play imaginatively, independently and co-operatively.
- 3.34 Work is marked regularly to assess the pupils' progress. In the most successful marking, high quality comments give encouragement and inform pupils how to improve. Excellent feedback about assignments in ethics and in science informs pupils of their progress, provides points for improvement and information on likely examination grades. In psychology, marking includes encouragement to pupils to email the teacher for additional assistance. These methods are supported in some teaching by the use of self-assessment by the pupils, and peer review in some lessons which enable rapid progress. However, assessment is not wholly consistent across, or occasionally within, subject areas in the senior school. Oral feedback is given regularly to pupils and they confirm that they usually know what they have to do to improve. Planning, observation and assessment in the EYFS are excellent and effectively determine what individual children know, understand and can do and how best to take this further.

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 impact of the emphasis in the school's aims on these areas of community life in a modern society is seen in the outstanding levels of personal development, for their age, that pupils reach on leaving both the prep and senior schools. They develop the character and skills to meet the challenges of life beyond school, exemplified by high levels of self-confidence and mutual respect. In the EYFS, the children's personal development is excellent, an area on which the setting has a strong focus.
- 4.3 Throughout the school, strong spiritual development is evident in the pupils' confidence, which renders them able to articulate their views and to listen to those of others. Those with SEND are encouraged to find outlets to do this such as public speaking or drama, to excellent effect. They do so secure in the school's culture of recognising achievement at all levels. Senior school pupils appreciate the role that Chapel plays in their school lives and readily volunteer to participate in its activities although some feel that the timing of Chapel at the end of the school day challenges their focus on these. All pupils relish the fulfilment that performance brings them, whether singing heartily in 'Congers' hymn practice or in the school choir, or participating in house competitions. In the EYFS, children are treated as individuals with different interests and needs. They respond to the high expectations of staff who guide them to behave with consideration and courtesy towards each other. Independence is promoted and planning places great emphasis on raising the children's confidence and self-esteem.
- 4.4 High levels of moral understanding are evident at all ages. Pupils show a highly developed sense of fairness, and respect the need for rules of community life. Some older prep pupils show excellent awareness for their age of issues such as racism. Pupils throughout the school are very keen to support charitable causes and help others through a wide range of activities such as groups for elderly citizens who come into school or work in charity shops in the locality.
- 4.5 The pupils develop strong social skills. Behaviour around the school is excellent. Both day and boarding pupils are aware of the social responsibilities of life in the school community. The strong house system is the driving force of social integration in the senior school, allowing pupils of different ages to mix and bond in healthy competition between houses. The prep school has recently given fresh impetus to a similar system and enabled pupils in Years 1 and 2 to be included in the opportunities offered. Older pupils give strong support to younger; recent initiatives by prefects to institute mentoring whereby younger senior school pupils are matched with older who share similar interests have been given full support by the school. In the prep school, pupils develop a good understanding of their social responsibilities through visiting speakers, and an annual visit to the Houses of Parliament by older pupils results in good knowledge of key British figures. Pupils in both sections of the school take seriously opportunities to participate in decision making through school councils. The recent introduction of prefect posts in Year 6 has enabled pupils to show the same seriousness of purpose in fulfilling their roles that senior prefects demonstrate.

4.6 Pupils develop excellent cultural awareness, strengthened by strong tolerance of those from different backgrounds, borne of the ethos of natural integration of all cultures into school life. Drama and musical performance are well supported by pupils, and they show strong awareness of the styles of different artists, with many senior school pupils able to reflect these in their own, original work with success. Younger pupils in the prep school showed similar understanding, appropriate to their age, in reproducing Klimt's approach to shape and colour and many correctly identified where the calypso originates in music. An annual trip to Malawi for Year 12 pupils is supported enthusiastically and pupils appreciate highly the understanding it gives them of how others live.

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

4.7 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.

4.8 The school's aim to provide outstanding pastoral care is met resoundingly well throughout the school. All staff work hard to ensure good relationships between pupils and also between pupils and staff. A very strong sense of community exists and pupils show kindness to each other. The well-established house system in the senior school and the recently re-launched structure in the prep school promote mutual tolerance and understanding. Clear pastoral policies are implemented to excellent effect to provide highly effective support. Pupils throughout the school feel safe and confirm that they have plenty of adults to whom they may turn for help. They talk positively about the induction programme they receive when joining the school.

4.9 In the EYFS each child has a key person who knows them well and works closely with their parents to celebrate their individuality. They form very positive relationships and are very well taken care of in a welcoming environment. The behaviour policy is implemented thoroughly throughout the setting, leading to a calm and happy atmosphere. Adults act as excellent role models.

4.10 Pupils are given regular advice on leading a healthy lifestyle and have a clear understanding of the importance of healthy eating. Meals are nutritious and individual dietary needs are catered for, including through the use of different coloured place mats at mealtimes in the EYFS to identify individual needs. Children in the EYFS have an increasingly clear understanding about eating healthily and they enjoy their food. The twice daily fruit snack is very popular. They are aware of the need to maintain good hygiene and are generally able to manage personal hygiene independently. Throughout the school exercise is encouraged through PE and extra-curricular activities

4.11 Rewards and sanctions are in place in both the senior and prep schools to reinforce the high expectations the school has of the pupils' behaviour. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, some pupils in the senior school felt that sanctions were not applied consistently. Recent changes to the school's behaviour policy ensure that clear guidance is now given as to which sanctions should apply in different situations. The policy ensures that due account is taken of individual pupils' circumstances. The high standard of the pupils' behaviour ensures that serious sanctions are rarely needed but when applied these are proportionate and appropriately recorded. Pupils actively celebrate achievement along with staff and systems of rewards, such as smiley faces in the prep school, and gold awards in the senior, ensure that day-to-day success is rewarded appropriately.

- 4.12 All pupils are taught the need to guard against harassment and bullying and good measures are in place to promote harmony. All are confident that, should any incident occur it will be dealt with quickly and effectively.
- 4.13 The school has an appropriate plan in place to develop access for those with particular disabilities or needs. This reflects the school's on-going concern for the individual.
- 4.14 The school provides good opportunities for the pupils' views to be heard. Some pupils, in response to questionnaires, felt that their views were not considered. In formal interviews and informal discussion pupils were confident that their views are heard and that school councils in each section of the school are effective. The senior school council has successfully promoted many pupil-initiated projects, for example, recycling, water fountains, pasta bowls at lunch time and the introduction of vending machines.

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

- 4.15 The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent.
- 4.16 The school has strong arrangements to safeguard the pupils' welfare and these are implemented with great care throughout the school. Designated staff receive regular, effective training, and training for all staff, at the appropriate level, is similarly effective, with arrangements to ensure that temporary staff and volunteers are aware of procedures securely in place. Relationships with external agencies are strong and advice from such agencies is sought whenever appropriate. In the EYFS, a comprehensive range of policies and procedures supports all activities and underpins welfare, health and safety extremely effectively. Children feel safe and secure and readily share any concerns with their key person or other trusted adult.
- 4.17 Registration of the pupils is undertaken in an orderly and careful manner and any absence is followed up quickly. The school maintains an appropriate admission register electronically, which is backed up and stored appropriately. Arrangements to ensure the pupils' health and safety are excellent, as are arrangements for pupils who feel unwell during the day, via the medical centre in the senior school and suitably trained first-aiders in the prep school. These are operated in conjunction with a comprehensive first aid policy. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of those with special physical or learning needs.
- 4.18 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are highly efficient. Regular drills are held and equipment checked appropriately. Assessments of risk are effective and wide ranging throughout the school.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.20 Excellent outcomes for boarders reflect the comprehensive fulfilment of the school's aims. Boarders display high levels of confidence and integrity at all ages. An ethos of mutual respect exists between boarders and house staff. Boarding makes a vital contribution to the distinctive nature of the school; the successful integration of the range of boarding combinations, from flexi-boarding over one or two nights per week to full boarding, is a real strength. Boarders, both boys and girls, contribute significantly to the life of the school. Their individual contributions reflect the school's commitment to equality and diversity, and the importance it places on

fulfilling each boarder's potential. The strong community spirit in boarding engenders in the boarders a considerable loyalty and pride in their houses.

- 4.21 Boarders are comfortable in their house environments and acknowledge the efforts made by staff to create a homely atmosphere. They often regard their house as being a home from home. Boarders make a positive contribution to boarding through the house and school councils and demonstrate excellent behaviour. The wide range of nationalities and backgrounds represented in boarding, are integrated positively and add to the cultural diversity of the school; boarders with EAL receive strong support. Boarders value the friendships they form with one another and a strong, yet informal mentoring network exists which is reflected in the current move by prefects to set up a more structured system amongst older and younger pupils, both day and boarding.
- 4.22 In response to questionnaires parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with boarding. In their questionnaires many boarders expressed adverse comments regarding catering for boarders, and some criticised the school's provision of activities. Inspection evidence does not support these views. Most boarders, in discussions, reported that the food on offer is good in terms of quality, quantity and variety; healthy eating options are available and individual dietary needs are catered for. Additionally all boarding houses have the facility for pupils to prepare snacks. During the inspection an excellent range of sporting and non-sporting activities was observed and appropriate activities are arranged for those who board at the weekends.
- 4.23 The quality of the boarding provision and care is excellent. Thorough induction processes are in place for new boarders, including team-building exercises before term begins. Parents and guardians of new boarders are invited to induction days at the start of the school year to meet with boarding staff. All house and school prefects receive appropriate training. Boarders reported that they feel safe. Staff work hard to ensure that the academic and pastoral needs of individual pupils are well met, including those with SEND. Medical care is very good and effective policies are in place for dealing with all health issues including individual care plans where required. Excellent collaboration between medical staff, house staff and the counselling service ensures a high standard of pastoral care is maintained. A healthy lifestyle is encouraged. Older students benefit from appropriate periods of non-directed time for rest, relaxation and study.
- 4.24 Boarding accommodation is comfortable and pupils have the opportunity to personalise their working and living space with posters, photographs, and personal items. A refurbishment programme is underway and this has resulted in improvements across all houses although at present the standard of decor in two of the senior boys' houses is not as high as in the other boarding houses. Both houses are, however, included in the decoration and refurbishment programme. Routines and procedures are posted on the main house notice boards together with contact details allowing access to appropriate external child protection services and the school's own well-equipped medical centre and independent counselling services. Boarders are able to communicate easily with their friends and parents. Wireless access in houses facilitates communication for overseas pupils and skype is also available. House staff maintain regular contact with parents, usually through email and telephone.
- 4.25 The effectiveness of the arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. Boarding staff ensure that child protection has a high priority. Procedures for

promoting the welfare and safety of boarders are very well managed by all the staff. All staff with access to boarders are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. All required recruitment checks are completed and staff undergo rigorous induction procedures. House staff are conscientious in implementing the school's policy on good behaviour. Boarders are at all times under the supervision of suitably qualified and experienced staff, all of whom have received appropriate training and many of whom hold first-aid qualifications. Arrangements to ensure the security of pupils in the boarding houses are effective. Boarders report no instances of bullying but they are fully aware of how to address any concerns, confident that they will be dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. Behaviour is well managed by staff who are committed to challenging the occasional inappropriate behaviour. Clear guidance is given on sanctions and rewards so that boarders know and understand what is expected of them, and they respond appropriately.

- 4.26 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. Boarding houses are led by highly professional and dedicated staff teams who demonstrate an on-going commitment to professional development. Consistency of approach and uniformity of procedures are maintained without compromising the unique identity and flavour of each house. Inter-house competition is encouraged both between and within year groups promoted by house shields and the recently introduced Brewers' Bowl which ensures equal opportunities for girls to compete with boys.
- 4.27 All boarding staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and have detailed job descriptions. Boarding staff use self-evaluation as a significant tool to support the long-term development of boarding, including the production of individual house development plans which feed into whole school development. Regular meetings of house staff ensure that boarding matters are consistently reviewed and dealt with. Staff are well supported, benefitting from regular review leading to related training. A number are engaged on boarding pastoral courses including those offered by the Boarding Schools' Association, and good practice is shared across house teams. Boarders are consulted about rules and practices which are generally agreed on and they feel that they have an effective voice through groups such as the boarding and food committees. This meets the recommendation of the previous OFSTED report.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governance provides strong support for the school's aims; it promotes the school's ethos of an integrated Christian community through highly effective governance structures which are guided by clear delineation of the respective responsibilities of governors and school managers. Governors ensure support for all aspects of the school's work, informed by regular opportunities for training, and thus promote the pupils' excellent academic achievement and personal development. Involvement in the EYFS is highly effective and assisted by thorough training for those with particular involvement in this area; boarding is similarly well supported although direct involvement is less structured. The governing body includes an excellent range of experience and the appointment of new governors is carefully organised to suit the school's needs. A comprehensive system of committees gives highly effective challenge and support, including challenging questioning regarding new initiatives which ensures that these are thought through with care. Presentations to governors by senior leaders of both sections of the school provide the full body with high quality information about the school's activities. Many governors are regular visitors to school.
- 5.3 Governors give effective support to the school through prudent and resourceful financial management. They provide a rigorous strategic direction to support the school's development planning. The incorporation of a second school into the Aldenham Foundation has been accomplished with clear awareness of the potential benefit to Aldenham. Governors provide good oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review welfare, staff recruitment, and health and safety arrangements regularly, including an annual review of safeguarding measures where regular additional support is provided to excellent effect. The school buildings are maintained effectively and recent new building has contributed much, particularly to the development of a stimulating environment for learning in the sixth form.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.5 Strong leadership and highly effective management by senior leadership figures ensure that the school's educational provision is excellent in its support of the pupils' academic achievement and personal development throughout the school. The school's ethos of nurturing pupils within a community where the individual is valued is promoted strongly by all teaching and non-teaching staff. This is reflected in careful and conscientious fulfilment of responsibilities for safeguarding pupils. All pupils, including children in the EYFS, are given equal opportunities to thrive.
- 5.6 Since the previous inspection the school has made significant progress in its provision for the curriculum and activities and the pupils' achievement has been considerably enhanced thereby, as well as through improvements in the quality of teaching. Teaching and learning have been developed to include a wider range of approaches, particularly with regard to assessment, target-setting and promoting independent thinking. These have been implemented and monitored well by middle

managers, including through scrutiny of the pupils' work and incipient schemes for peer mentoring amongst teachers which meet the demands of the previous report, but practice is not yet consistent across all subject areas. The management of provision for those with particular learning needs is excellent, although strategies identified to meet the needs of the gifted and talented remain to be fully realised. Pastoral care continues to be a strength of the school, including in its carefully balanced provision for varied forms of boarding. This owes much to strong support systems, and focused leadership in this area at all levels.

- 5.7 The leadership and management of the EYFS is outstanding. A comprehensive range of appropriate and up-to-date policies and practices exists which ensure that the necessary safeguarding procedures designed to promote children's welfare are in place. These are monitored regularly and all staff recognise and understand their responsibility to implement them fully.
- 5.8 The school reviews its provision and practice to excellent effect, and this results in well-focused policy making. Development planning is ambitious and forward looking, and is regularly assessed for success and adjusted accordingly. Additional plans for the prep school, including the EYFS, and senior school departments and houses inform larger-scale planning effectively. There is a well-documented drive in the EYFS to strongly improve or maintain the highest levels of achievement for all children over time. Rigorous self-evaluation underpins the setting's pursuit of excellence and informs continuous improvement.
- 5.9 Appropriate delegation of responsibility achieves a positive working balance in the senior school between the roles and responsibilities of pastoral and academic middle managers. Senior leaders carry heavy responsibilities which they fulfil with much success. In the prep school, the responsibilities of some senior staff in areas such as staff appraisal are problematic given the level of monitoring that is now needed. Clearly-defined posts with financial and estates responsibilities provide strong support as does highly efficient work in human resources. This provision, together with clear budgeting systems, ensures that pastoral and academic areas of school life, including the EYFS, receive good human and material resources.
- 5.10 The school appoints well-qualified staff, both teaching and non-teaching, throughout the school. Recent senior appointments have ensured that change and development are managed very successfully. Staff training needs are identified effectively throughout the school. These meet well the demands of the development plan and reflect areas identified for individual professional development during the three-year cycle of appraisal. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. Arrangements to train staff in their roles to ensure the pupils' welfare, and for health and safety, are implemented effectively, including the training of all staff in safeguarding procedures. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are secure. All staff, including efficient secretarial, administrative, medical and other non-teaching staff work very hard to ensure the success of the school.
- 5.11 The quality of links between the school and parents is excellent, and strongly support the school's aims. Relationships with parents are outstanding. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire parents, including those in the EYFS, expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school's provision. Inspection findings confirm this view. Parents feel that the staff are accessible, frequently in person in the 'drop-in' opportunity each morning in the prep school, or by telephone and email throughout the school. At every level, parents are encouraged to make immediate

- contact if concerns arise. They feel that these concerns are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- 5.12 The school has a clear and appropriate complaints procedure. Its 'open door' policy, ensures that most issues are dealt with informally, speedily and to the parents' satisfaction.
- 5.13 Parents are kept well informed of their child's academic and social progress. Every term parents either receive a written report or are invited to a parents' evening. Reports are detailed and informative and often make clear suggestions for improvement. They form an effective dialogue between home and school, fostering the pupils' academic and personal development well. The partnership with parents in the EYFS is strong and parents are very happy with the outcomes of the children's learning and welfare. Highly successful strategies engage parents in their children's learning and the recently introduced 'WOW' slips, which document children's achievements and milestones, are a source of considerable pride for parents, staff and pupils alike. Outside agencies are involved appropriately to support and enhance children's learning where necessary.
- 5.14 There is a clear desire on the school's part to ensure a free flow of regular information to parents. Information provided to parents of pupils and prospective pupils about the school is extensive and available through the prospectus and website, as well as other regular publications, such as the well-produced magazine and newsletters. Regular, emailed newsletters ensure that parents of pupils throughout the school are given details of the events, achievements and plans relevant to their child. The parents' internet portal also gives access to information that helps foster the collaborative approach that characterises the relationship between parents and the school. The recent establishment of a parents' suggestion committee exemplifies the open communication encouraged and has already resulted in some adjustments to the timing and format of reports, in response to parental suggestion.
- 5.15 The school encourages the support of ASPA, the parents' association, and their hard work and dedication in organising major social events, such as the Summer Ball, where parents, staff and Year 13 leavers enjoy a formal social occasion or the annual firework event, which caters more for the younger pupils and their families. The school's recognition and appreciation of the contribution of parents' support is evident in the ASPA stall regularly provided at open days and recruiting events, where prospective parents' questions can be answered by members of the current parent body.

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