



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

APPLEFORD SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Appleford School

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| Full Name of School | Appleford School | | |
| DfE Number | 865/6008 | | |
| Address | Appleford School Elston Lane Shrewton Salisbury Wiltshire SP3 4HL England | | |
| Telephone Number | 01980 621020 | | |
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| Email Address | secretary@appleford.wilts.sch.uk | | |
| Head | Mr David King | | |
| Proprietor | Dr Peter Gardner | | |
| Age Range | 7 to 19 | | |
| Total Number of Pupils | 127 | | |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (90 boys; 37 girls) | | |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): | 0 | 7-12: 40 |
| | 3-5 (EYFS): | 0 | 12-18: 87 |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: | 49 | |
| Number of Boarders | Total: | 78 | |
| | Full: | 63 | Weekly: 15 |
| Inspection Dates | 13 to 16 Oct 2015 | | |

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 October 2012. Boarding is inspected separately under the Residential Special School arrangements. The latest Ofsted boarding report was in February 2015. These reports can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk.

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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations 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.

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', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. 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 Desmond Dunne

Reporting Inspector

Mrs Patricia Guy

Team Inspector (Specialist SEN Teacher, HMC)

Mrs Helen Wainwright

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, Society of Heads School)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Appleford is a co-educational boarding and day school, founded in 1988 and located on an eight-acre rural site near Salisbury. The school has a Christian character and close links with the local church. The school is accepting of pupils of other faiths. Pupils may be referred from local authorities or private sources. It provides for pupils from the age of seven to nineteen who have dyslexia and associated language difficulties, dyscalculia, dyspraxia and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).
- 1.2 The school's aims are outlined through the annual statement of purpose and ten key characteristics. The focus of these is to rebuild and maintain the pupils' self-confidence, to alleviate any negative feeling of failure and to encourage each pupil to achieve their potential in academic, personal and social development. The proprietor undertakes the required proprietorial responsibilities and directs the financial and budgetary aspects. He is advised by an advisory board.
- 1.3 The school has doubled in size since the previous inspection and the extension to include the upper age limit of 19 has taken place and now includes Year 12. An on-going building programme has taken place to accommodate this increase in size. The headmaster was new in post at the previous inspection and has since appointed a new senior leadership team.
- 1.4 The pupils are drawn from a wide area with just over a third from forces families. At the time of the inspection there were 127 pupils on roll, 78 of whom board. Forty are members of the lower school (28 boys and 12 girls in Years 4 to 7) and 87 are in the upper school (62 boys and 25 girls in Years 8 to 12). Most are White British. A few are from a range of other ethnicities. No pupil speaks English as an additional language (EAL); all have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND).
- 1.5 Forty-six pupils have a statement of special educational needs and/or an educational health care (EHC) plan. The pupils' ability profile is below the national norms. Their prior attainment levels and personal development skills on entry are below average.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report, and by the school, to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school is extremely successful in fulfilling its aim for each pupil to have confidence in their own ability and develop a desire to do well in their learning. Pupils' achievements from their various starting points are excellent. An effective partnership between leaders, teachers and therapists across the school succeeds well in nurturing academic, creative and sporting skills by helping pupils to develop to their maximum potential. Very soon after their arrival into the school, pupils become highly committed learners, and demonstrate excellent behaviour in lessons. The curriculum covers all the requisite areas of learning and is highly effective at meeting the needs of the pupils. Adaptations to lessons arise from effective advice and guidance from therapists which accounts for the specific needs and aptitudes of the pupils. An extensive range of extra-curricular activities and opportunities provides an environment where pupils' personal qualities can flourish. Pupils' individual talents are developed in a mutually supportive community, because they are comfortable in each other's company and are accepting of their individual differences. Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the school and place high value on the work of the staff. Teaching is excellent, particularly in the way it is flexibly adjusted to support the emotional development of the pupils alongside academic achievement. Teachers need more help in supporting older pupils in their new courses. Recent developments in planning and using assessment to track pupil progress have successfully improved pupil achievement.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development and the school's pastoral care are both excellent. This can be seen in the pupils' strong social awareness of each other's individual differences, tolerance of these and a celebration together, of personal or group achievement. Pupils are particularly well cared for as individuals. Procedures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are rigorous, creating a safe learning environment for their well-being.
- 2.3 The proprietor fulfils all legal responsibilities extremely well across all sections of the school and ensures that pupils are effectively safeguarded. He is guided by an appointed advisory board that plays an active part in the school's development. The quality of leadership and management provided by the senior leadership team is excellent and this has led to a significant improvement to the quality of education provided. Subject leaders are not always consistent in how they monitor teaching, including planning and assessment. The school has responded very effectively to the recommendations of the previous inspection: the learning support department has a significant influence on teaching and learning across the school; the quality of teaching is consistently high, and systems for recording have been reviewed so information across several areas of the school can be used more effectively. There is an excellent partnership with parents, who are positive about how well the school looks after its pupils. Parents are involved closely with their child's development.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

(i) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that each subject leader's responsibilities to monitor planning, teaching and assessment are applied consistently across all year groups.
 2. Develop expertise in how to prepare pupils for success in the new courses that have been adopted for the older pupils in the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school meets its strategic aim of providing a high quality of education for children aged 7 to 19 with dyslexia and associated learning difficulties. This enables the pupils to realise their full potential. Almost all pupils arrive with attainment levels lower than expected for their chronological age and many have experienced low levels of confidence or difficulties with education prior to arrival.
- 3.3 In the lower school, the pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy grow as they move from Year 4 to Year 7, developed successfully through creative cross-curricular topics. Learning has a focus on multi-sensory sessions, phonics processing and high level mathematics work for very able pupils. Pupils use computers confidently to research, for example in Year 7, when they produced work about the different eating habits during Victorian times compared to present day diets. They talk enthusiastically about the way they are helped by speech and language therapists and how this supports their ability to describe and explain topics, such as the way that batteries are made of a cathode and anode separated by an electrolyte.
- 3.4 Pupils in the senior school are articulate, listen well, and apply these skills across a range of areas, including technological subjects. Excellent examples of design and technology work, using a combination of tiles and wooden shelves, are on display around the school. The impact of the focus on systematic communication and on writing skills is evident in the improved writing as they move through the school. Reading skills are enhanced because of accelerated reading sessions; pupils enjoy the competitive element of this work. Skills in numeracy are very good. For example, pupils apply their understanding of accuracy in measurement, calculation and graphical work in subjects, such as science when plotting the amount of alkali used to neutralise an acid. The pupils' creative skills can be seen in their experience of Victorian life through the production of their own limericks popularised by Edward Lear in the 19th century, as well as, models and images from that time, such as traditional silhouette portraits of classmates typical of the late 18th century. Problem solving is evident in mathematics lessons when pupils are asked to find the difference between numbers and the sum of a sequence of numbers.
- 3.5 Pupils are very successful in their extra-curricular activities and sports teams achieve high levels of success, particularly in netball and football. Pupils who show particular talent in sport or music activities, receive support and encouragement to reach very high levels of performance. More than sixty pupils are involved in the annual challenge of adventurous pursuits, including the Three Peaks Challenge, and many pupils gain a bronze award in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award amongst the older pupils in the upper school.
- 3.6 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests and examinations but, on the evidence from the inspection, it is judged to be below national age-related expectations. This represents high progress in relation to their starting points by the time they complete lower school and is evident from observation of their work in lessons, scrutiny of written work

and of the school's records and discussions with pupils and staff. Progress is excellent in relation to the targets set in their EHC plan or statement.

- 3.7 In the upper school, attainment is below age-related expectations. At entry level at the end of Year 9, pupils achieved high levels of success in examinations across eight subjects, including English and mathematics. Pupils in Year 11 were entered for GCSE examinations for the first time in 2015 and almost all obtained five GCSEs alongside the completion of Bronze Duke of Edinburgh's Award. In relation to their EHCs, the support older pupils receive during occupational and speech and language therapy sessions makes a significant contribution to both academic and social and emotional development.
- 3.8 Throughout the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. This is a considerable achievement given their starting points on arrival at the school. Pupils settle quickly at the start of lessons and work effectively with others. Evidence of rapid progress, particularly in reading is linked to the pupils' enthusiasm to learn. During interviews a significant majority said that they were keen to do well, regardless of the personal difficulties some of them experience. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents said that the progress their children made was very good, particularly those with children requiring support through occupational or speech and language therapy.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The curriculum successfully fulfils the school's aims of providing a distinctive and inclusive educational experience, making the most of pupils' talents and contributing to their feelings of success and achievement. Adaptation to meet the very specific needs and access to the curriculum is provided by alternatives to the written word, for example via recording systems using the latest technologies.
- 3.11 Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy in the lower school are developed over a four year cycle of creative cross-curricular topics. For example, story writing, letter writing and performance poetry are taught in a 'Prehistoric Wiltshire' topic that includes history, geography and science subjects. The inclusion of Year 7 into the lower school helps support pupils to make a smooth transition into the upper school. This was supported during pupil interviews; pupils are settled in Year 8 ready for the demands of secondary education.
- 3.12 The team of on-site specialist therapists plays a vital role in curriculum provision. They interact well with teaching staff, offering professional advice and targeted support to tailor the curriculum to the individual. The nurturing aspect of the curriculum ensures that an equal emphasis is placed on providing for the pupils' emotional development as well as academic success. Small class sizes and additional support from learning support assistants leave teaching staff free to respond to pupils' needs swiftly during lessons.
- 3.13 The personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme effectively promotes their social and cultural awareness, self-esteem and confidence. The pupils are provided with appropriate opportunities for research, to discuss and debate topical issues, problems and events. For example, the school has good links with local military bases that are enlisted to help with the annual 'Appleford Challenge', and all pupils are engaged in two days of voluntary work with a locally based charity that co-ordinates a nationwide network of food

banks. Pupils are taught how to lead healthy, safe lifestyles, including the importance of positive relationships and respect for the differences between people. There are international links with a small school in Northern India that older pupils visit to undertake voluntary work each year.

- 3.14 In the senior school entry-level pathways are available in English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and PSHEE alongside vocational subjects such as food technology. Option choices are tailored to individuals' needs with GCSEs, vocational qualifications and award scheme development, and accreditation certification (ASDAN) that help pupils develop skills for employment and later life. Regular reviews by subject leaders and thorough subject audits ensure the curriculum is constantly updated and improved to meet pupils' needs. The community service aspect of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme for all of Year 10 allows pupils opportunities to become actively involved locally. The new sixth-form pupils are able to move onto Level 2 certification and re-take GCSEs. In addition to the demands of sixth form academic work, students participate in an array of sporting choices both outdoors and indoors. Choice of activities enhances their decision making skills, informs them about the importance of being active and the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle.
- 3.15 Pupils of all abilities have a good range of extra-curricular activities and sports clubs, with boys and girls mixing together for netball and football practice. Regular after-school clubs for pupils also include homework clubs operated on a rotational basis with sports activities. Additional electives, such as horse riding, judo and a craft club take place for smaller groups of pupils. There are also opportunities for pupils with specific personal interests to develop individual talents, be they musical, sporting or creative. Many pupils participate in county and national sporting events, such as horse riding.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 Teaching is highly effective in allowing the pupils to make excellent progress from low starting points and supports the school's aims to develop the individual abilities of each child in a secure, caring environment where they are happy and motivated to learn.
- 3.18 The pupils are well supported through an effective partnership between leaders, teachers and therapists across the school. The seamless integration of teaching, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and psychotherapy places each individual at the forefront. This means class teachers have an excellent knowledge of the emotional and educational needs of each pupil that enables them to develop their personal and learning skills rapidly. Teachers take account of different viewpoints pupils may make in lessons and encourage tolerance of others ideas and suggestions.
- 3.19 In the lower school, teaching is flexible, with planning frequently adjusted during the course of a lesson to meet the emerging individual needs of learners. Many examples of exemplary practice were seen, such as well-timed activities with appropriately judged pace that allowed all pupils to be engaged purposefully. The pupils feel extremely well supported and are able to seek help with their work. Excellent relationships ensure that they quickly gain in confidence and social skills.

- 3.20 In the upper school, teachers demonstrate secure knowledge of their subjects, and have high expectations of all pupils. Imaginative planning and an in depth understanding of the pupils ensure that activities are well suited to their abilities and needs. Teachers' allow pupils to experiment and explore ideas as they arise. The result of this is that pupils are suitably challenged at all times. Teachers provide frequent praise and encouragement to good effect and the pupils respond well to this. Teaching in the sixth form is excellent with an overarching commitment to the needs of each pupil. Pupils are encouraged to work both collaboratively and independently in both lessons and recreational time.
- 3.21 Teaching makes good use of appropriate resources, particularly the opportunity for the pupils to use their competent ICT skills. The excellent provision of computers across the school fosters independence and allows pupils to show their learning more effectively. Learning support assistants often provide good help for individual pupils, but are not always deployed well enough by teachers to support identified groups or individual pupils in a targeted manner. Pupils, in their responses to the questionnaire, were critical of the value of homework but evidence seen by inspectors did not support this view. All pupils have prep time twice a week with a large number of staff available to support them with homework set. During observations of these activities pupils were purposefully engaged and spoke positively about the help they receive.
- 3.22 The school has recently introduced assessment systems to guide lesson planning, particularly in relation to prior learning, and to also enable pupils to understand subject assessment criteria. This development, in response to the previous inspection recommendation to streamline recording and use of information, has led to improvements in marking comments and enabled teachers to more effectively track pupils' progress. Even so, older pupils do not receive sufficient information on how to achieve the ambitious grades they have been set in GCSE subjects, and teaching staff lack expertise in the new courses adopted by the school to ensure that the pupils can achieve success. At all ages the provision set out in statements of special educational needs or EHC plans are met. Regular reviews of individual education plans (IEPs) and inter-departmental liaison enables staff to provide work well matched to ability and individual needs.
- 3.23 All staff make sure pupils are set challenging and demanding social and emotional targets alongside subject targets. As a result pupils' behaviour is excellent because focused questioning strategies and discussion support the pupils' understanding in small group work. In the parental questionnaire, value was placed on the work of the staff; and the pupils are very positive in their comments about the support they receive.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school takes active steps to promote the personal development of the pupils, including British values such as the rule of law, individual freedom and democracy. In doing so it reflects its aims of developing their self-respect, self-reliance and self-discipline.
- 4.3 Spiritual awareness is excellent. Pupils develop a respect for each other and have a strong respect for individual personalities and differences amongst their peers. The pupils' spiritual awareness and sense of self is excellent. They are happy to discuss their own areas of weakness and are non-judgemental about the strengths and weaknesses of others. This has taught pupils to enjoy relating with their peers and to treat adults with respect, thus preparing them well for life in modern Britain. They demonstrate development towards intrinsic motivation and have an appreciation of their responsibility of care towards others. This can be seen, for example, in their careful attention to each other during games and sporting activities and in the way they show empathy for each other regardless of their expertise or talent. Pupils are supported in this by the school's *Reflection* programme.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral awareness is excellent. They have a well-developed understanding of the difference between right and wrong, which is strongly helped by the positive guidance they receive from staff. This helps pupils to develop the communication skills necessary to express their opinions in a clear and appropriate manner. Pupils appreciate the working of the English legal system within society. Pupils are active in supporting a number of local charities and regularly organise charity fund raising events as individuals and groups. The strong school links with the military and the experience of military families in areas of conflict was very evident in the school council meeting when they decided that 'Help for Heroes' would be the main chosen charity for 2015/16. Older pupils are involved in international charity work through links with a school in Northern India.
- 4.5 The social development of pupils is excellent. They are polite, courteous and engage in respectful interactions with adults. Throughout the school, the pupils are keen to take up positions of responsibility and trust. They represent their peers in formal ways and experience responsibility within the school through the opportunities offered by the prefect system, the school council, house and sports captains. Their views are listened to and generally supported by both the pupils and staff. Pupils demonstrate considerable kindness and thoughtfulness towards their peers during lessons and support each other willingly in the completion of work and practical tasks. Pupils enjoy and value the company of children of different ages. They develop an appropriate knowledge of and respect for the main public institutions and services of England. Pupils engage in a range of local community activities, such as the annual citizenship day, regular performances by the school choir and voluntary services as part of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The school develops wider community cohesion through regular pupil communication with the small school in Northern India with Year 11 visiting the school to undertake voluntary work each year.
- 4.6 The cultural development of pupils is excellent. The lower school consciously promotes younger pupils' awareness of the wider world through geographical map

work topics and the opportunity for pupils to share their experience of travel to Western and Eastern countries. Pupils in the senior school are unassumingly confident and self-aware, as a result of the many opportunities to learn about who they are and what they can possibly achieve. They have a secure level of understanding about their community of boarders and day students, including where they live or have travelled from, which enriches their knowledge of British values. Pupils openly respect and value difference. Discrimination is not tolerated.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Compassionate and empathetic staff provide excellent support and guidance for the pupils in accordance with the schools aims. Clear pastoral structures and policies ensure that the needs of all pupils are met fully. Monitoring and evaluation of pastoral matters are thorough and highly effective. Excellent communication and regular checking ensure early identification of concerns is backed up by effective and timely intervention.
- 4.9 The school supports the belief that pupils need to be secure emotionally before they can learn effectively. All staff support this and ensure that the pastoral support and care for the pupils allows them to develop and learn. The pupils are encouraged to try new things and take advantage of what the school can offer. The staff know the pupils well and the relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are very positive. Pupils particularly value having small numbers of classmates, which ensure that they receive individual attention. They are comfortable in each other's company and are accepting of their individual differences. The school has suitable plans for current and future construction around the school to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.10 In the lower school, the strong mixed year class system recognizes individual differences and maturity and allows pupils to develop quickly. Throughout the school staff make every effort to quickly resolve any personal concerns the pupil may have. There is a strong emphasis placed on looking after each other and supporting each other within the school. The anti-bullying policy is well understood and pupils report that bullying is rare and if any incident were to occur they are confident that it would be swiftly dealt with.
- 4.11 The school has a suitable policy and procedures to promote good behaviour. It has responded positively to a recommendation from the previous inspection to improve record keeping in matters of behaviour. New systems and record keeping procedures allow for patterns of behaviour to be identified and plans put in place to support individual pupils. The school effectively promotes good behaviour through positive reinforcement and encouragement; appropriate sanctions are also employed where necessary. As a result, pupils learn about each other and make informed choices. Incidents are dealt with on an individual basis and the use of the reflection system encourages pupils to think about their behaviour and the options available to them in the future. In their pre-inspection responses, a minority of pupils said that staff were inconsistent in how they apply rewards and sanctions. Staff, through consultation with the school council, have introduced a new system related to agreed behaviour targets, for both individual pupils and for each class in the school. These have only been introduced this term and although welcomed by the pupils have not been in place long enough for them to comment positively or negatively about how they work. Analysis of behaviour incidents in the school has

decreased since the beginning of term compared to last term. The school encourages pupils to lead healthy lifestyles. Pupils take full advantage of the games and physical activities on offer and the high adult to pupil ratio encourages full pupil participation in sport. Lunches are prepared on site and offer a good healthy choice of nutritious food which is colour coded to enable those with dietary needs to make the right choices.

- 4.12 In the pupil questionnaire there was some concern expressed by pupils that their views were not taken into consideration. No evidence for this was found during the inspection. From their discussions with pupils and staff, inspectors found that the school council provides excellent opportunities to express their opinions and have a voice in influencing the school. For example the recent change in the rewards and sanctions system was discussed thoroughly and has been welcomed by the pupils.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The well-being of all pupils is promoted extremely well and staff deployment during lessons, break-times, lunch and after school ensures that children are appropriately supervised at all times. Two members of staff are trained as designated safeguarding officers who ensure all staff receive regular training with an induction programme for new members of staff that includes regular updates on the requirements of *Keeping Children Safe in Education*.
- 4.15 The safeguarding policy meets requirements and its provisions are accurately reflected in current practice, rigorously reviewed on an annual basis by the proprietor, who is provided with advice and guidance from external agencies and the advisory board. This includes a local educational consultant who provides excellent monitoring guidance. All required checks on staff, supply staff and volunteers are conducted in a timely manner. The school has recently carried out extensive improvements to its maintenance of the single central register of appointments.
- 4.16 Suitable systems are in place to reduce risk from fire and other hazards and these are reviewed regularly. Equipment is regularly checked and appropriate training of staff takes place. The school grounds are well maintained and due consideration is given to the safety of the pupils as they move around the school. Clear signs in buildings and around the school indicate emergency exits and the location of safety equipment. Thorough and wide ranging health and safety procedures are in place around the school. Comprehensive risk assessments are carried out for activities undertaken by the pupils or in relation to buildings or equipment they may use. Any deficiencies identified are swiftly put right.
- 4.17 Arrangements to ensure pupils' health and safety when they are ill are very good. Pupils who need regular medical attention or feel unwell during the day are cared for in a well-equipped and conveniently located medical room. The security of medicines is appropriately managed and meticulous records kept. The school has very effective provision for first aid.
- 4.18 Admission and attendance registers are suitably and conscientiously maintained and stored for the previous three years. Registration of pupils is undertaken electronically in an efficient manner and any absences are followed up quickly with efficient procedures.

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 is a real strength of the school. The proprietor provides very effective oversight of all aspects for the school. He has combined the best elements of the governance characteristics of charitable schools and the corporate business world by establishing an advisory board. The board advises the proprietor in all matters of strategic importance of the school and ensures strict supervision of compliance with legislative and regulatory standards.
- 5.3 Members of the advisory board are experienced, with an extensive range of expertise, well trained and effective. They are well informed by the proprietor and headteacher, senior management team and understand the school's strengths and weaknesses, contributing strongly to the school's improvement and future plans. Development plans are debated effectively at both advisory board and senior leadership team meetings to ensure that the direction of school growth is appropriate and effective. The proprietor, advisory board and senior leaders ensure that the school has adequate staffing, accommodation, and learning resources and has regard to safeguarding matters.
- 5.4 The proprietor, well advised by the advisory board, has high expectations of school leaders and staff, using good systems to check the performance of staff. Firm financial control ensures the school has sustained an extensive development programme that has provided for the recent construction of high quality accommodation for the older pupils. He discharges his responsibilities for the oversight of regulatory compliance, by conducting a thorough annual review of the school's policies, procedures for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, ensuring that these are implemented effectively. Associated risk assessments are carefully monitored along with the centralised register of appointments.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 The leadership ensures that the school is a harmonious community where staff, parents, carers and pupils work together well. Parents and pupils confirm this view. Since the previous inspection a new senior leadership team has been appointed. Clearly defined roles and effective discharge of responsibilities has supported the recent developments of the school. The leadership articulates a clear vision for the school's development, demonstrating a clear commitment towards ensuring that the pastoral and academic experiences of each pupil in the school are positive.
- 5.7 Processes of self-evaluation are reflective and development planning has been effective. The systems in place have significant influence on moving the school forward. The senior leadership team strives to improve the quality of the pupils' learning. Monitoring of teaching and learning is thorough and the strong pastoral system is reflected in the pupils' standards of personal development. The school has addressed the recommendations from the previous inspection about consistency in

teaching. Rigorous systems now link staff performance to the positive attitudes of learners and the progress they make from their starting points. The leadership is not afraid to tackle underperformance in the classroom. Future plans are focused on ensuring that staff are well trained to carry out their role, particularly in areas of specialist educational needs.

- 5.8 The headteacher has empowered staff to lead on various aspects of the school's work. This has led to the development of strong teams responsible for significant improvements to the way staff work well in partnership for the benefit of the pupils. The development of learning support and the teamwork of therapists across the school is a significant improvement since the last inspection and makes a very important impact on pupil social and emotional development, as well as, their confidence to tackle academic courses.
- 5.9 School leadership is successful in securing, supporting and developing high quality staff. Specific learning difficulties training for all staff takes place each year and extended training opportunities ensure staff are able to develop professionally. The thorough annual appraisal system for staff helps identify professional development needs. All new staff undergo rigorous induction, which makes sure that staff are fully aware of all their safeguarding responsibilities. The new subject leaders in the school have provided informative subject documentation and effective support and challenge for initiatives introduced into the upper school. However, they have not yet had sufficient time to monitor in depth the quality of planning, teaching and assessment across all year groups.
- 5.10 The school keeps accurate data on pupils' progress in a range of initiatives across the school and can show particularly strong impact in recent programmes, such as the introduction of the accelerated reading programme. Leaders carefully monitor one-to-one and small-group teaching to evaluate how effective these are on filling the gaps in education for the vast majority of pupils who have complex behavioural, emotional and social needs. As a consequence, pupils with complex social and emotional difficulties are making excellent progress. The school works closely with several external agencies to ensure that it promotes equal opportunities for all its pupils to feel safe and do as well as they can.
- 5.11 The school has excellent relationships with parents, carers and guardians. In response to questionnaires, and when inspectors spoke to them, they expressed their overwhelming appreciation of the open and welcoming atmosphere in the school. Parents and carers confirmed that they were impressed with the way the school filled the gaps in pupils' learning caused by their difficulties.
- 5.12 Parents receive the required information on the school. They are kept well informed about their child's progress through half termly grade reports, detailed reports in December and July, as well as, annual review meetings for pupils with EHC plans. The termly newsletter and the school web site ensure everyone is well informed about school events and achievements.
- 5.13 A very small minority of parents raised concerns about extracurricular activities and the progress that their children make at school. The inspectors found that extra-curricular activities are well organised for the pupils, offering a suitable range of activities. The school is aware of parents' concerns about the progress of their children and new approaches in the collection of information about pupil progress are being introduced so that pupils and parents receive detailed information.

- 5.14 Parents are provided with many opportunities to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children. This includes accompanying their children on trips and visits organised by the school. There is a very active parents association who work to enrich the resources of the school, help fundraise for charities and provide 'hands on' support at many special events and functions.
- 5.15 Parents are very well informed about their children and parental concerns are always dealt with swiftly. On the few occasions when incidents have occurred and parents were not initially satisfied, documentation shows that the school has followed its procedures to consult all involved, and matters have been resolved to full satisfaction.

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