



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ASHFOLD SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Ashfold School

Full Name of School	Ashfold School
DfE Number	825/6003
Registered Charity Number	272663
Address	Ashfold School Dorton House Dorton Aylesbury Buckinghamshire HP18 9NG
Telephone Number	01844 238237
Fax Number	01844 238505
Email Address	enquiries@ashfoldschool.co.uk
Head	Mr Michael Chitty
Chair of Governors	Mr Hugh Taylor
Age Range	2 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	270
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (166 boys; 104 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 42 5-13: 228
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 270
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Elaine Giliomee
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	10 Nov 2015 to 13 Nov 2015

PREFACE

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.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI interim inspection was in November 2009 and the previous ISI boarding inspection was in November 2012.

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

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

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 children aged under two), 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 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 accommodation 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 Christopher Sanderson	Reporting Inspector
Mr David Edwards	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Clive Holder	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mr Richard Gibbs	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Jenny Clayphan	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Ashfold School is a co-educational day and weekly boarding school, with pupils from the ages of 2 to 13. It was founded as a boys' preparatory school in Surrey in 1927 and has occupied its current site, situated in the village of Dorton in Buckinghamshire, since 1956. The school became a charitable trust, administered by its board of governors, in 1976 and has been fully co-educational since the 1980s. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) forms part of the Pre-Prep Department, which moved into its own purpose-built accommodation in 2006 and has full access to the school's grounds and facilities. The boarding accommodation occupies part of the first floor of the Jacobean mansion at the centre of the school. Boarding is available as a flexible option for up to 4 nights per week. Pupils can request to board from Year 5 onwards.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide the firmest possible grounding in the core academic subjects, drawing on the best of both traditional and innovative teaching. It seeks to develop pupils' wider interests through the breadth of its curriculum, and to ensure that they move on to their chosen senior schools with the skills, values and habits that will enable them to thrive there. It aims to make education fun for its pupils, to broaden their horizons, to give them confidence and self-esteem, and to celebrate their achievements, enabling them to grow up to be decent young people, tolerant of one another and with clear moral values.
- 1.3 The school is divided into three departments. The Pre-Prep caters for pupils from the Nursery to Year 2, the Junior Department for Years 3 to 5 and the Senior Department for Years 6 to 8. At the time of inspection 270 pupils were on roll, approximately three-fifths of whom are boys. Up to 48 pupils can board at a time; typically the number boarding is between 20 and 30 each night. Of the 42 children in the EYFS, 15 attend on a part-time basis. Pupils are largely from business or agricultural family backgrounds and most come from within a 12-mile radius of the school. The large majority are of British descent. A small minority, which has increased since the previous inspection, come from Asian or other backgrounds. The ability profile of the school is above the national average overall. The school has identified 29 pupils as requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan attend the school.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Pre-School	Nursery (Rising 3s)
Pre-Prep I	Kindergarten
Pre-Prep II	Reception
Pre-Prep III	Year 1
Transition	Year 2
Form I	Year 3
Form II	Year 4
Form III	Year 5
Form IV	Year 6
Form V	Year 7
Form VI	Year 8

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Throughout the school, pupils' achievements and learning are excellent. They enjoy their learning and make excellent progress due to the high quality of their attitudes and motivation. Pupils achieve high standards both in their academic studies and in the extensive range of extra-curricular pursuits. Such levels of achievement benefit strongly from the considerable breadth of curricular provision and high-quality teaching. From the EYFS onwards, pupils follow a rich and varied programme, and enjoy a wide range of facilities, resources and educational visits, matched well to their ages and stages of development. Teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' excellent progress. It demonstrates in-depth subject knowledge and a clear understanding of individual needs. Teaching also ensures that pupils understand the quality of their work and how they can improve it further. It draws successfully on the strong bond between teachers and pupils. Assessment is detailed and is used well to inform planning, but in the EYFS no standardised means are in place to measure children's progress from their starting points.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. They are confident and caring, and demonstrate high levels of self-esteem. From the EYFS onwards they play and work well together, and show a keen understanding of moral values and strong concern for others. They have excellent cultural awareness, demonstrating respect and tolerance to those of other faiths and cultures, and engage readily in creative pursuits of Western cultural tradition. Pastoral care is excellent; staff contribute actively to an atmosphere of tolerance, friendliness and mutual respect. Relationships are strong and behaviour is excellent. Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good. The school has excellent measures to safeguard pupils, ensure the safe recruitment of staff and to reduce the risk from fire. A small number of health and safety issues relating particularly to servicing equipment, the training of maintenance staff and developing more rigorous procedures, were resolved during the inspection. Safety in specialist classrooms is carefully managed and the school makes thorough provision for pupils who are ill or injured and those with SEND. Excellent arrangements for boarding enable many pupils to enjoy the boarding experience, which contributes strongly to their learning and their personal development.
- 2.3 Excellent governance provides well-informed support and challenge to the school's leadership and ensures that statutory requirements are met. Leadership and management are excellent and have taken prudent steps to ensure that the school has responded successfully to the recommendations of the previous interim and intermediate boarding inspections. Excellent self-review ensures detailed development planning, enabling the school to prioritise carefully and meet its aims. At all levels, leadership and management provide clear direction and are successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating staff. The school has excellent links with its parents, who are extremely positive about the school, particularly their children's progress and the quality of care provided.

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.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Further develop the monitoring of health and safety to ensure a more rigorous approach to procedures, servicing and training.
 2. In the EYFS, introduce a system of standardised assessment on entry to enable the closer measurement of pupils' progress from their starting points.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is highly successful in achieving its aim to provide its pupils the finest possible grounding in core academic subjects and broaden their horizons.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, children thoroughly enjoy their learning and achieve extremely well. They enter the Nursery or Kindergarten with attainment which is broadly at expected levels and make rapid progress, and by the end of Reception most attain all the Early Learning Goals and many work beyond them in some areas. From entry in the Nursery onwards, children learn to listen well and start to talk with increasing clarity. In both the Nursery and Kindergarten, they treat books in the library with respect, read them and enjoy listening to stories. They enjoy sharing books with staff and each other. In Reception, children are highly vocal, they recognise and use simple phonics to build words such as 'hop', while the more able correctly sound out words such as 'fold' and 'fang'. Mark-making in Kindergarten develops well into clear letters and words in Reception as children's writing skills improve. Those in Kindergarten are eager to count to five, before counting up to ten as a group, while even the youngest children in the Nursery can start to name colours. In Reception, children recognise both two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and can describe how many sides and corners each has. By the end of the year they write simple accounts and add and subtract single digit numbers. Children are physically agile and their fine-motor skills develop extremely well. The least able pupils, including those with SEND, make extremely good progress. Children become able to work independently and are creative from a young age.
- 3.4 Pupils demonstrate an excellent foundation of knowledge and a detailed understanding of a broad set of concepts in core subjects. They use their skills expertly across the curriculum, demonstrating especial strength in applying mathematical knowledge to other curricular areas, and show particular ability and enjoyment when solving problems. Pupils relish the creative opportunities available; skilled teaching in these areas enables them to gain scholarship success in subjects such as art and music. In extra-curricular activities, many participate to high levels in sports, music and the performing arts, and obtain high grades in external music and drama examinations. Pupils display highly developed speaking and listening skills. They read fluently and with confidence, and are particularly skilled at handwriting as evidenced by the pupils' success in national competitions. Their skills in information and communication technology (ICT) develop well and they use them fluently across the curriculum. Pupils demonstrate a clear ability to learn both independently and collaboratively. Due to the individual attention that they receive and their full inclusion in the life of the school, those with SEND enjoy high levels of achievement which are comparable to that of their peers.
- 3.5 Pupils' physical skills develop to a high level and strongly support their whole-hearted contribution to team games. Sports teams enjoy success in regional and national competitions; the under-13 girls' hockey team recently won a national championship. A clear strength of the school is the pupils' achievement in the excellent quality and diverse nature of activities offered.
- 3.6 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm, but on the evidence available it is judged to be excellent in

relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils follow a challenging and diverse curriculum. Observation of lessons, scrutiny of work and pupil interviews confirm this judgement. Approximately half of all recent leavers won scholarships from Year 8 to selective independent senior schools, gaining awards in areas such as academics, sport, music and art. In recent years all pupils have been successful in gaining a place at their first choice senior school.

- 3.7 The level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Their progress is enhanced by well-tailored levels of support and challenge, ensuring that those with SEND and the more able make strong progress in relation to their abilities and individual needs.
- 3.8 Pupils have excellent attitudes towards their work. They display a love of learning, genuine enthusiasm and clear enjoyment in lessons and activities. Pupils relish the opportunity to work independently and take great pride in the numerous displays showing their colourful and highly accomplished creative work in buildings around the school.

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 covers all essential areas of learning, enabling the school to fulfil its aim to provide the firmest grounding in core subjects. It is richly supported by an extensive programme of extra-curricular activities, which is accessible to all pupils.
- 3.11 The educational programmes for children in the EYFS follow the seven areas of learning and provide a rich and varied range of exciting activities, with a well-judged balance between adult-led and child-initiated tasks. This, together with improved monitoring of assessment records, fulfils a recommendation from the previous inspection to extend profile monitoring and ensure that all part-time pupils cover all the areas of learning. Children regularly work both indoors and outside, in well-equipped secure areas and with staff in the extensive grounds. Interesting activities encourage children to think and work independently. In the Nursery and Kindergarten, children smelled a range of coloured paints seasoned with cinnamon, thyme and rosemary, discussed which they preferred and then used them to paint. Sustained emphasis on ensuring that individuals are challenged appropriately ensures that each child's needs are met so that, by the end of their year in Reception, most reach the expected levels of development. Specialist music teaching provides exciting programmes carefully adapted to the needs of very young children. Lunchtime clubs, such as one specialising in card games, welcome EYFS children to take part, which helps to develop counting and observational skills as well as giving them the experience of taking turns with older children.
- 3.12 As they move up through the school, pupils benefit from increasing provision of specialist teaching in subjects such as music, French, drama and physical education. All study Latin from Year 5. Pupils enjoy lessons in well-resourced specialist classrooms, including laboratories for science and ICT. Computing and ICT resources enrich the curriculum through cross-curricular exercises involving the creative use of technology.
- 3.13 The curriculum is well matched to pupils' ages and stages of development. It enables them to achieve high standards and contributes strongly to their personal development. The excellent balance and content of the curriculum are assured through regular review by academic committees. Provision for those with SEND is

excellent. They are supported well, both within the classrooms and with individual education plans when assessment data identifies that these would be beneficial. Excellent measures identify the more able pupils and their abilities are documented well. Through well-focused tasks and challenge exercises, excellent provision is made to meet the needs of the range of abilities in the school. Currently no pupils require support for EAL. A published policy prepares for appropriate provision should the need arise in the future.

- 3.14 An excellent extra-curricular programme is provided to all pupils. The carefully structured and well-organised timetable provides a comprehensive range of activities as diverse as clay pigeon shooting, equestrian events and drama. The programme caters for all interests and abilities, and stimulates and supports pupils' personal and social development. Pupils attend these activities with great enthusiasm. They participate in the extensive games programme and compete for their school in a particularly broad range of individual and team sports. Pupils' social engagement and sense of community benefit from participation in a significant number of local sporting and musical events and competitions, often hosted at the school or at local preparatory and senior schools. Music ensembles and choir rehearsals throughout the week make excellent provision for all ability groups, from beginners' violin and recorder groups to challenging ensembles for the more able musicians.
- 3.15 An exciting range of educational day trips and residential visits, closely linked to the curriculum, include a Year 7 visit to France and opportunities for pupils to join with other schools in concerts. The post Common Entrance extension programme for Year 8 includes enrichment topics such as politics and leadership. Visitors to the school enhance the extra-curricular enrichment programme, fostering interests in creative, physical and intellectual pursuits. Pupils engage with the wider community through their support for a school in Zimbabwe, raising funds through pupil-led incentives to provide educational assistance for pupils who are less fortunate than themselves. Staff take great care to ensure balance in the coverage of political issues.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 Teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' excellent progress and firmly supports the school's aim both to make education inspirational and fun, and to ensure that pupils move on to their chosen senior schools with the skills, values and habits that will enable them to thrive.
- 3.18 The contribution of teaching is excellent in the EYFS. Experienced and highly skilled staff have high expectations and work as a close-knit team to motivate the children. Teachers and assistants work together to create a warm, welcoming environment and to devise challenging activities. For example, judicious praise was employed to help children in Kindergarten gain the confidence to speak in front of others, when they described what would make them happy or sad. Teaching provides a well-judged balance between activities that children choose, in which they receive subtle support to further their learning, and activities led by the staff. Staff use the outside environment imaginatively; children in Reception went into the grounds and, after a discussion led by their teacher, found fallen leaves to make a large fireworks picture. Frequent assessment and detailed, well-focused planning for individuals ensure that each child's learning is reinforced and extended appropriately. At present, however, no standardised means are in place to measure children's progress from their

starting points. The school aims to rectify this shortcoming as part of a school development plan, set for implementation in September 2016. Children who need additional help are supported well so that they are fully included in all activities, while the more able receive well-focused challenges. A good range of resources is used extremely well.

- 3.19 From Year 1, teaching and support staff combine highly effectively to provide well-paced lessons which enthuse and motivate the pupils. The involvement of all staff in curricular review, development and improvement ensures excellent planning, and underpins lessons which inspire and challenge the pupils. Teaching makes excellent use of a wide range of high-quality resources in specialist areas such as design and technology (DT) and art, general classrooms and extra-curricular activities. Skilful teaching, founded on in-depth subject knowledge, enables excellent progress which is consistent at all levels of the school. Lessons are firmly based on a secure prior knowledge of pupils' aptitudes and needs, ensuring successful learning outcomes.
- 3.20 A clear marking policy ensures a consistent approach across subjects and year groups. Highly effective marking enables pupils to have a clear idea of the quality of their work and how it can be improved. Working towards clear goals, which are shared with the pupils, teaching strongly fosters independent learning. Support for those with SEND, both through one-to-one teaching and well-directed teaching assistants in class, enables such pupils to work with considerable success. Well-planned teaching in personal, social, and health education lessons, assemblies and tutor periods strongly promotes tolerance and respect. Throughout the curriculum, extra-curriculum and the enrichment programme after the Common Entrance examination, any coverage of political views is studiously non-partisan in its approach.
- 3.21 A strength of the teaching is the clear and strong bond between staff and pupils. Teaching and support staff demonstrate a warm, caring and firm rapport with the pupils, which creates a positive atmosphere for learning, both in class and in the broad range of additional activities. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses and in discussions with inspectors, pupils reported a great pride in their school and considerable affection for its staff.
- 3.22 The recommendation at the previous inspection to increase the use of assessment to plan to meet the needs of all pupils more consistently has been fully addressed; the school has a comprehensive and effective assessment system which enables the close tracking and monitoring of pupils' learning, facilitating adjustments to teaching when required. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very small minority of pupils commented that they did not feel that homework helps them to learn. The inspection judgement is that homework is reasonable in quantity and well matched to the curriculum, a view upheld by parents in their questionnaire responses.

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 the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' high standards of personal development reflect strongly the school's aim to give them confidence and self-esteem so that they develop into polite, caring and responsible young people.
- 4.3 The children's personal development in the EYFS is excellent. From the start of the Nursery they learn to play together, to share, to take turns and to be patient. All but the youngest children play with those in Year 1 at break, and children are used to moving around the school with their teachers and visiting the classrooms of older pupils. Together with taking part in whole-school events such as the Service of Remembrance, and the warm sense of community throughout the setting, this ensures that the transition from one year group to the next is smooth and easy. Children have a keen sense of awe and wonder; as was demonstrated when they described Bonfire Night celebrations in partner discussions. They take turns with small responsibilities, such as taking messages on behalf of members of staff. Children are also responsible for the tidiness of their rooms. All of these add strongly to their self-esteem. Children have a growing understanding of the values inherent in British society, such as fairness and kindness. They celebrate other cultures' traditions such as Diwali, and greatly appreciated a display of Indian dancing and discussion of Indian customs.
- 4.4 From Year 1, pupils have a highly developed sense of spirituality, which reflects the school's Christian ethos. They share a deep appreciation of non-material aspects of school life, for example in the sensitive use of ICT to enhance the background atmospheric effects of a performance. Pupils speak confidently about their views and beliefs, for example regarding the dangers of taking drugs, and are confident to express ideas that with which others may not agree. They have high self-esteem, which is encouraged by the effective system of rewards, the celebration of success and the justified praise that they receive. Pupils know they are valued as individuals and they are aware of their own abilities.
- 4.5 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They have a well-tuned sense of right and wrong. They willingly follow the school's code of values and rules, which are modelled effectively by the staff. Pupils usually demonstrate kindness and thoughtfulness to everyone in the school community. They understand the importance of honesty and their behaviour is frequently excellent. Pupils recognise the dangers of discrimination and understand the importance of freedom and mutual respect. They have an appropriate sense of the civil and criminal law of England and make well-informed contributions to discussions on justice and current affairs. Pupils show keen awareness of ethical issues, for example in their participation in the eco-committee which works to help to preserve the environment.
- 4.6 Pupils' social awareness and sense of responsibility are excellent. A strong team spirit develops through the house system and participation in team games. Pupils are proud to take positions of responsibility and take their roles seriously. They show an excellent appreciation of those less fortunate than themselves. Older pupils organise fundraising efficiently by creating and running stalls for the charity of their choice, while the school community raises money to help the disadvantaged in Eastern Europe. Pupils learn how to react to difficult situations and display a sense

of fairness when competing in sports and in house competitions. Their personal development is enriched by their knowledge of public institutions and services. Pupils can recognise and understand the roles of the Queen and Prime Minister. Their clear understanding of democracy and individual liberty and the responsibilities that these bring demonstrate the school's effective promotion of fundamental British values. Pupils show their own support for the democratic process through elections to the school council.

- 4.7 Pupils have an excellent cultural awareness and acceptance of cultural diversity; they develop harmonious relations with those from backgrounds different from their own. They show healthy respect for other faiths, beliefs and cultures, valuing, for example, their visits to different places of worship and appreciating the way in which food and customs differ between countries. Pupils develop a strong understanding of Western cultural traditions; they demonstrate high levels of creativity and imagination in art and music, and listen attentively to recordings of poetry. They demonstrate a sincere respect for others both within and beyond their community, irrespective of background and personal characteristics.
- 4.8 The pupils' excellent personal development ensures that by the time they leave the school all pupils, including those with SEND and the more able, are confident, understand clearly the needs of others and are thoroughly prepared for the next stage of their education.

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

- 4.9 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 Committed staff provide caring support and guidance for pupils, fulfilling the school's aim to foster positive and trusting relationships so that pupils can confidently make the most of the opportunities on offer.
- 4.11 Arrangements for pastoral care in the EYFS are excellent. Teachers give high priority to fulfilling their role as key people, and staff build warm, trusting relationships with the children, ensuring that their needs are met and that they feel safe, happy and confident to try new experiences. Staff promote thoughtfulness and friendships among the children. Simple rules with high expectations of good behaviour are well understood by all children. They learn about healthy eating and enjoy the lunches and nutritious snacks. Children readily and regularly take exercise, both outside and in timetabled physical education sessions.
- 4.12 Staff contribute actively to an atmosphere of tolerance, friendliness and mutual respect. Relationships between staff and pupils, and between the pupils themselves, are strong. A small minority of pupils did not agree in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses that staff show concern for them as individuals, but almost all pupils say that they enjoy attending the school and know to whom they can turn for help and advice. The inspection deemed staff to monitor individual pastoral needs effectively, particularly through the efficient tutorial system. All parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their children are well cared for.
- 4.13 Games afternoons, fixtures and activities throughout the school week ensure that pupils take frequent exercise and help them to keep fit. In discussion groups pupils stated that they like the food that is provided, though a very small minority had indicated some dissatisfaction in their questionnaire responses. Inspection evidence revealed that menus are nutritious and well balanced. Meals are home cooked with

locally sourced produce as far as possible and staff monitor pupils' healthy eating. Dietary needs are fully met and catering staff are happy to meet personal requests.

- 4.14 The school successfully promotes respect and positive behaviour and guards against bullying, including cyberbullying. In their questionnaire responses the overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school achieves high standards of behaviour. A small minority of pupils, in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, expressed a view that teachers are not always fair in administering sanctions. They acknowledged in discussion groups that if bullying were to occur it would be dealt with effectively by staff, and that sanctions were fair. An examination of school records confirms that school policies and procedures are followed in an even-handed, sensitive way.
- 4.15 A small minority of pupils indicated in their questionnaire responses that the school does not seek their opinions or respond to them. Inspection evidence found that they are able to contribute their views in many ways including in class, formally through the school and eco-councils, and informally in numerous other ways. Daily tutor time and the good relationships between all staff and pupils ensure that pupils can share any concerns that they may have.
- 4.16 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.17 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.18 Provision in the EYFS for children's well-being is excellent. Staff have all received appropriate training and place high emphasis on ensuring that health and safety and the latest safeguarding procedures are followed rigorously. They are aware of the additional needs of vulnerable children and school attendance is monitored closely. Older children manage their own hygiene effectively and the younger start to understand the need to wash their hands before eating. Risk assessments are carried out regularly, both in school and for trips.
- 4.19 Thorough and effective measures to safeguard pupils have due regard to official guidance. Those with safeguarding responsibilities are diligent in ensuring that staff keep abreast of recent updates in guidance, including developing a familiarity with the recent Prevent strategy, in relation to extremism and radicalisation. Staff and other adults who live on the premises are appropriately trained in safeguarding and have been provided with necessary documentation.
- 4.20 The school is careful to ensure the health and safety of its pupils. Great care is taken to reduce the risk from fire. A recently renewed fire risk assessment provides clear guidance. Fire prevention and protection equipment is well maintained. Fire drills are efficient and systems are reviewed regularly. Care is taken to reduce the risk from other hazards, and the school has begun to act on the recommendations of a specialist water-management report. A few health and safety issues relating particularly to servicing equipment, training of maintenance staff and developing more rigorous procedures, were resolved during the inspection.
- 4.21 The school takes great care to ensure that risks in specialist facilities such as for sport, science and DT, including the storage of supplies and the management of equipment, are appropriately managed. Electrical equipment is tested appropriately. A health and safety committee has been recently redefined, and its roles in monitoring and in communication with governors are developing.

- 4.22 The school makes thorough provision for pupils who are ill or injured and those with SEND, and the medical room is appropriately equipped. A comprehensive policy includes detailed guidance relating to particular medical conditions and communication with parents. A high proportion of staff have first-aid qualifications.
- 4.23 Attendance registers are completed and monitored appropriately, enabling staff to identify any attendance issues quickly. The admission register includes all of the necessary information, and storage of such registers meets requirements.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.24 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.25 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarding meets its published aim to offer an opportunity for pupils to learn to take responsibility for themselves and to become more independent. Three-quarters of all pupils in Years 5 to 8 participate in the boarding experience, some staying for three or four nights every week. Relationships are excellent across the community and new boarders feel immediately welcome. Boarders who acted as guides and met with inspectors showed confidence, courtesy and tolerance. A choice of appropriate adults are available for boarders to turn to over personal issues, from houseparents to the school medical staff, and an independent listener who is known to pupils. Through the boarders' council, as well as through informal discussion, boarders feel that they can contribute their views. Boarders are articulate, polite and sociable. They maintain a high standard of behaviour; when inappropriate behaviour does arise it is dealt with swiftly and effectively, according to the school's published procedures. Sanctions such as early bedtime are infrequently needed, and incidents such as misplaced items of clothing or misguided joking are dealt with appropriately and sensitively. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses a small minority of pupils, some of whom were not boarders, expressed doubt as to the safety of their possessions, but inspection evidence found this to relate to misplacement rather than misappropriation.
- 4.26 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. A boarding handbook is available on the school website and the induction process is thorough, using current boarders as 'buddies' to look after newcomers during boarding time. Boarding familiarisation evenings during the summer term for pupils in Year 4 and their parents strongly support their induction into boarding. The promotion of boarders' well-being and health is effective and arrangements for medical care through the school matrons are good. The school surgery is an efficient resource; boarders report that they are well looked after if they feel unwell or are injured. Those who may be sick overnight can be accommodated if their parents are not available to collect them quickly. Medication is stored appropriately and confidentiality is duly respected. The provision has a sufficient number of toilets and showers, which afford suitable privacy. Fire drills are practised in boarding time and all new boarders experience emergency evacuation procedures. The recommendation from the previous ISI boarding welfare intermediate inspection, that the school should develop a more comprehensive system for the monitoring and recording of fire drills to ensure that all boarders have had experience of a boarding fire drill, has been fully met. Risk assessments are thorough.
- 4.27 Boarders report that they are comfortably accommodated though, due to the flexible nature of boarding, they are limited in how they can personalise their rooms. Accommodation is carefully maintained to ensure the health, welfare and safety of

the boarders. It is generally spacious and comfortable, and an ongoing refurbishment programme fulfils the boarding development plans to enhance both personal and communal decoration. Maintenance issues are attended to swiftly. Drinking water is available in the boarding areas. The catering department provides nutritious meals for all, including those on special diets, and attention is paid to those who may be subject to allergies. A central laundry facility provides suitably for bedding and, as necessary, sports' kit. Boarders can contact their families through landlines, though they may not bring mobile telephones to school. Suitable complaints procedures for pupils and parents are in place and health and safety requirements are met.

- 4.28 Boarders have sufficient free time and plentiful extra-curricular activities in the evenings such as cookery, art, music, tennis, shooting and climbing, all of which may be shared with day pupils who opt to stay in the evenings. Visitors are checked appropriately and sign in; access to the boarding house is restricted, with entrances secured overnight. Parents of boarders can contact the school staff easily; the inspection identified regular telephone, email and in-person communication to and from boarding staff and matrons on day-to-day matters pertaining to their children or to matters concerning health. In addition, the school regularly communicates with families on pastoral and academic matters. Pupils with SEND are attended to appropriately.
- 4.29 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent. The school meets requirements and follows guidance with respect to safeguarding and recruitment checks for boarding staff. An anti-bullying policy strongly supports the prevention and tackling of bullying, and behaviour is excellent. Boarding staff and adults associated with boarding, such as cleaners and catering staff, are up to date in their safeguarding training and know whom to contact should they have concerns. Staff are familiar with the missing person policy and, through regular roll calls and attendance registers, know and monitor the whereabouts of boarders. Suitably trained members of staff take responsibility for boarders in boarding time and adults are on call at night in the boarding house. In discussion groups, all boarders stated that they feel safe in their boarding houses. The school does not appoint guardians.
- 4.30 The leadership and management of the boarding provision are excellent. Up-to-date boarding documentation and policies are well known to staff, ensuring familiarity with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Recent changes of role within the boarding leadership have been accomplished smoothly. The management of boarding has been strengthened since the last inspection through the appointment of the leadership of boarding to the school's senior leadership team. Staff have job descriptions relating to their roles in boarding. A cycle of professional development review includes appraisal of these roles and negotiated targets, as appropriate. Boarding staff are encouraged to attend external training courses. Comprehensive records are properly kept, and information about boarders is shared with medical and academic staff as needed through email, the school database, staff briefings and personal contact. Following recent changes in leadership, the aims and priorities for boarding are in the process of redevelopment, and future planning is co-ordinated to embrace partnership with those who live and work in boarding.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors provide high-quality and well-focused support to the school, including the EYFS, in the pursuit of its aims. Through committees which report to the main board and governors who take individual responsibility for particular aspects of school life, including boarding, the EYFS, academic matters and safeguarding, governors gain a detailed oversight of the work of the school. This is supplemented by regular reports from the school's leadership and presentations from members of staff, enabling governors to discharge successfully their responsibilities for educational standards and to ensure well-informed financial planning, and prudent investment in staff, accommodation and resources.
- 5.3 The governing body appoints new governors after careful consideration of their skills in order for it to provide a broad range of experience, ensuring knowledgeable insight into the school's provision of education and welfare. A recently identified need to provide the governing body with a greater understanding of health and safety requirements has been addressed through the appointment of a new governor with appropriate experience. New governors undergo a process of induction which includes both in-house and externally sourced training. The school has responded successfully to a recommendation of the previous inspection to increase governors' training so that all recognise their responsibilities for monitoring the schools' provision. Its training log demonstrates that governors undertake training in areas pertinent to their responsibilities, ensuring that they are proficient in their monitoring and evaluation of the work of the school. Through regular communication between the leaderships of the governors and the school, governors provide excellent support and challenge to the school, and a strong stimulus for growth and improvement.
- 5.4 Through frequent meetings between those in the school and on the governing body with responsibilities for safeguarding and health and safety, governors are effective in undertaking their responsibilities for statutory requirements. They undertake a careful annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures, which are discussed and approved by the full governing body.

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 Leadership and management have enabled the school to prioritise areas for development. Senior leaders work co-operatively and oversee a broad curriculum, which ensures a high level of success in examinations. An excellent range of activities and extra-curricular clubs promote the pupils' high levels of personal development.
- 5.7 The leadership and management of the EYFS are excellent and ensure that policies and procedures, including safeguarding, meet requirements and are implemented fully in a warm, community environment where children feel safe and confident. The

leadership of the EYFS has secured many prudent improvements since the previous inspection, including better communications with parents and improved planning and documentation. The new leadership and management team is dynamic and demonstrates clear knowledge of the strengths of the setting. Educational programmes are monitored closely. Together with staff discussion and rigorous self-analysis, this has identified areas for development including improving outside facilities further, strengthening assessment records by introducing standardised testing against national norms, and organising an information evening for parents about supporting their children's learning at home. Staff receive regular professional training, which they value highly and discuss at staff meetings. This fulfils a recommendation of the previous inspection to develop training to increase flexibility in staffing and to keep pace with change. Staff discuss any concerns in staff meetings and greatly appreciate the help that they receive from their colleagues. Training on the latest safety and welfare requirements has ensured that they are alert to any changes in children's behaviour or unexplained absences, and they actively promote equality, diversity and British values. Staff regularly reinforce the children's understanding of the school's ethos.

- 5.8 At all levels, those with leadership and management responsibilities have a shared vision and provide clear direction and enthusiasm to ensure that the school's aims are successfully met. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents agreed that the school is led and managed efficiently. It has clearly planned and accessible procedures which ensure that it fulfils its aim for pupils to feel happy and secure. Senior leaders, managers and members of staff are approachable and have in-depth academic and pastoral knowledge of the pupils.
- 5.9 The school regularly reviews and improves whole-school policies and procedures. The management of the safeguarding of pupils throughout the school is assured and well informed, with due emphasis attributed to training in child protection, safer recruitment, welfare, health and safety, and risk management. New staff are appointed with careful observation of the principles of safer recruitment and details are recorded in accordance with requirements. The recently-strengthened management of health and safety has prioritised its agenda prudently and attends systematically to matters of health and safety. A small number of issues, relating largely to servicing equipment and training maintenance staff, were resolved during the inspection. Thorough induction arrangements ensure that new members of staff are well informed of school routines and understand safeguarding and whistleblowing arrangements.
- 5.10 Leadership and management provide clear educational direction, which results in the high quality of the pupils' learning and personal development. Development planning is comprehensive; a five-year strategic plan includes improvements in academic areas and the physical environment of the school. The vision is well supported through the collegiate approach of key staff members, who work within a two-tier leadership structure. Leaders have recently realised an art, design and food technology building project at the centre of the school site, due to open shortly after the inspection. The development plan also identifies required outcomes, actions, timescales and roles of responsibility. Sections of the school have clearly documented their specific needs, which are monitored and evaluated annually.
- 5.11 The evaluation by middle management of strengths and areas for development is perceptive and informative, enabling leadership and management to set priorities prudently and ensure that they are achieved. Staff with subject responsibilities,

under guidance from the senior leadership team, carry out thorough audits and review departmental resources. At all levels management is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating staff. Staff are able to undertake training, notably in academic, pastoral, welfare and boarding matters, enabling them to fulfil their roles in meeting the pupils' needs. An effective new appraisal system includes lesson observations and peer mentoring to evaluate the attainment of the core school academic principles. These strategies have resulted in improved teaching provision and have addressed the recommendation from the previous inspection to improve the quality of teaching by disseminating outstanding practice and introducing target setting. The careful promotion of the school's aims and values ensures the pupils' development of sincere respect for others and for democracy.

- 5.12 The school has close relationships with its parents. In questionnaire responses and in discussions, parents replied extremely positively about the support and care their children receive. All parents who responded to the questionnaire noted that their children are happy and feel safe, and a very large majority are pleased with their children's progress.
- 5.13 The EYFS has further improved its excellent partnership with parents by encouraging them to access information about their children's progress and achievements online. If the need arises, the school links well with external agencies to provide strong support for children needing additional help. Parents are kept fully informed at every step.
- 5.14 The senior management team has enhanced further the high quality of the school's communication with parents. Recent improvements have consolidated and improved methods of sharing school information. Weekly electronic newsletters and updates to the school calendar are shared on the school website. Coffee mornings, organised by an active parents' committee, facilitate improved collaboration between the school and parents. Many school events welcome attendance from parents, including, for example, matches, concerts, drama productions and assemblies. Parents value meeting with teachers at regular consultation evenings and are positive about the regular written reports. They provide clear information about their children's achievements and progress, and targets for areas in need of development, enabling parents to be actively involved in their children's work and progress.
- 5.15 The school has an effective and appropriate procedure to deal with complaints, which meets requirements. Parents with concerns may contact the school at any time. The school maintains thorough records of concerns and takes appropriate steps to resolve them, in accordance with its published procedure. Its prospectus and website provide parents and prospective parents with details of school policies and all other information as required.

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