



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ASHFORD SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Ashford School

Full Name of School	Ashford School		
DfE Number	886/6000		
EYFS Number	EY344143		
Registered Charity Number	1016538		
Address	Ashford School		
	East Hill		
	Ashford		
	Kent		
	TN24 8PB		
Telephone Number	01233 625171		
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Email Address	buchananm@ashfordschool.co.uk		
Head	Mr Michael Buchanan		
Chair of Governors	Mr Peregrine Massey		
Age Range	0 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	957		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (495 boys; 462 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	122	5-11: 238
	3-5 (EYFS):	121	11-18: 476
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	807	
Number of Boarders	Total:	150	
	Full:	150	Weekly: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Sue Yeates		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection Dates	04 Mar 2014 to 07 Mar 2014		

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 February 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report,

inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', '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 chair of governors and another governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Ian Newton	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Annabelle Hancock	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Gough	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Gillian Proctor	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Sue Saunders	Team Inspector (Head of Pre-Prep, GSA school)
Mrs Frances Willacy	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Miss Jenny Butler	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Philip Capes	Team Inspector (Former Head, HMC school)
Mr Anthony Duffield	Team Inspector (Director of Teaching and Learning, HMC school)
Mrs Fiona Hallworth	Team Inspector (Director of Heritage, HMC school)
Mr James Kazi	Team Inspector (Assistant Head, HMC school)
Mr Thomas James	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Penny Oates	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Ashford School was founded in 1898 as a day school for girls. In 2005 it merged with Friars School to create a prep school up to the age of 11 and co-education was extended throughout the senior school. At the same time, the prep school moved to a new site in the village of Great Chart about three miles from the main site on East Hill. Bridge, a nursery for children up to the age of three, is situated at the senior school on East Hill; other children in the Early Years Foundations Stage (EYFS) are within the prep school at Great Chart. Since the previous inspection, the pre-prep department has moved to join the rest of the prep school at Great Chart, the school has become more fully co-educational, and a new sports centre has been built.
- 1.2 In 1999, the school became part of the United Church Schools Trust (UCST), a group which now comprises 13 independent schools and 34 state-funded academies, and is known as United Learning. Trust officers provide central administration. Responsibility for governance lies with the United Learning trustees, who are supported by the local governing body which has many delegated responsibilities.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 957 pupils of whom 462 were girls and 495 boys. Of these, 243 children were in EYFS, 122 at Bridge and 121 within the prep school. In addition, the prep school housed 238 pupils aged five to eleven, and the senior school had 476 pupils aged 11 to 19. In total there were 150 boarders, aged between 12 and 19, accommodated in three houses on the senior school site; one boarder lives in lodgings with a local family.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the school is in line with the national average. There are 76 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), of whom 33 receive support; 140 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), almost all of them in the senior school, of whom 130 receive support.
- 1.5 Day pupils are drawn mainly from business and professional families in Kent and east Sussex; they have a mixture of ethnic backgrounds. Most boarders come from countries in Africa, the Far East and Eastern Europe. About three-quarters of prep school pupils move to the senior school, the remainder largely moving to maintained selective schools. Senior school pupils come in roughly equal proportions from the prep school and local maintained primary schools. Most pupils remain into the sixth form.
- 1.6 The school aims to develop in every pupil self-reliance, determination, responsibility, compassion and boldness, and to foster respect, teamwork, the intellectual freedom to be creative, the confidence and enterprise to initiate, and the resilience to cope with adversity. It aims to promote academic achievement through adventurous learning.
- 1.7 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 in EYFS is shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Ducklings	Nursery (3 to 14 months)
Dragonflies	Nursery (14 months to 2 years)
Frogs	Nursery (2 to 2½ years)
Turtles	Nursery (2½ to 3 years)
Butterflies	Nursery (3 to 3½ years)
Nursery	Nursery (3½ to 4 years)
Reception	Reception

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Throughout the school, pupils achieve excellent standards; results at A level have been above the national average for maintained selective schools. They are excellent learners, whose approach to their work is always enthusiastic and collaborative. Pupils with SEND and EAL progress well as a result of the support they receive. Pupils achieve many significant successes in activities outside the classroom. From the youngest age, pupils express themselves clearly and argue cogently. By the sixth form, they show an excellent grasp of concepts and theories. Their creativity is exceptional. The pupils' excellent progress is supported by excellent curricular arrangements and teaching, both in EYFS and in the prep and senior schools. The cross-curricular approach, taught largely by specialists in the prep school, promotes the pupils' enthusiasm and learning particularly well, and information and communications technology (ICT) is well integrated across the curriculum. In the senior school, the use of ICT is much developed since the previous inspection, but not yet fully integrated into other learning. Throughout the school, the pupils' experience is considerably enriched and challenged by a wide range of trips, activities and special events, though at times day-to-day work in the senior school does not reflect this level of stimulus. Classroom teaching is characterised by thorough assessment and planning, a good variety of activities and excellent relationships.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. In all parts of the school, including the EYFS, they relate well to those around them, are confident without being arrogant, are aware of the needs of others and enjoy excellent relationships with other pupils and adults. The high quality of the pupils' personal development is underpinned by excellent pastoral care and concern for their welfare. Pupils are very well known to staff. The quality of boarding and the outcomes for boarding pupils are excellent; boarders form an important part of the school community and are well integrated with day pupils. They enjoy excellent provision and care, and strong arrangements for their welfare, although the regular discussions that take place about pupils' lodgings are not recorded. Both boarding and whole school pastoral care are extremely well led and managed.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent. The oversight of the United Learning trustees combined with that of the local governing body enables extremely effective monitoring of welfare and education, strategic management and stimulus for further development. Within the school, leadership and management are strong, giving a clear sense of purpose and vision that underlies the school's constant search for improvement. The different sections of the school work extremely well together and within each section effective structures provide a robust approach to development planning. The school has successfully addressed the recommendations of the previous EYFS and boarding inspections, and made very good progress in addressing previous whole-school recommendations.

2.(b) Action points**(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013, and therefore it must:
- ensure that when there are boarders living in lodgings, a member of staff records the termly discussion with the boarder of the arrangements in writing [National Minimum Standard 20.7, under Lodgings (long-stay)].
- 2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.7 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the high level of challenge and exploration seen in the best learning experiences, are extended more fully, especially in the senior school.
 2. Extend the use of electronic assessment and record keeping to all children in the EYFS.

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' achievement and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 In many areas, but not universally, the school is successful in developing adventurous learners. Standards have improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- 3.3 Throughout the school, pupils achieve extremely well in relation to their abilities and needs. They have very good subject knowledge and understanding, and show considerable creative and physical skill. They speak fluently and listen carefully, and read with animation and understanding. Pupils of all ages think logically, argue cogently and, in general, they ask relevant and penetrating questions. Many pupils are able to build on existing knowledge and apply it to new situations. High levels of physical skill in games are represented by considerable success by both teams and individuals in matches; in addition, pupils taking specialist courses develop an excellent understanding of sports theory. Art-work shows exceptional creativity and technique, using a wide variety of media. The oldest pupils show an excellent grasp of concepts and theories, ranging from experimental design in biology to ways of investigating stress in psychology. Numeracy skills are well developed, and well applied in other subjects. Pupils develop good ICT skills, but do not use these consistently in the senior school.
- 3.4 Pupils also achieve high standards in activities. Prep pupils swim with a good style and speed, perform to a high standard in singing and drama, and produce outstanding work in textiles. Older pupils master difficult techniques in making jewellery, perform confidently in both rock band and wind band, as well as developing advanced computer programming skills. Individual pupils achieve high standards, for example in composition. The school is successful in a wide range of county and regional sports competitions, and a good number of individual pupils perform well nationally.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses data for the years 2010-2012, the most recent three years for which comparative data is available. Results in national tests at ages 7 and 11 have been above the national average for maintained primary schools. Results in GCSE were above the national average for maintained schools, with about four-fifths of grades achieved at A* or A. These results were in line with those for maintained selective schools in 2011. Results in EAL at IGCSE were higher than the overall average, and those in Chinese as a first language were in line. A-level results were well above the national average for maintained schools, and above the average for selective schools. Around four-fifths of grades achieved were in the range A* to B. Pupils are successful in gaining admission to a wide range of competitive universities.
- 3.6 These results, together with inspection evidence, show that pupils make excellent progress in relation to their abilities and needs. In the senior school, this is confirmed by standardised measures of progress. Pupils with EAL generally acquire a good grasp of English, enabling them to access the rest of the curriculum well. Pupils with SEND progress extremely well, especially in literacy, as a result of the support they receive, both in class and through specialist support. The most able prep school pupils develop exceptional vocabulary, comprehension and enjoyment of reading as a result of the accelerated reading programme and other enrichment

activities. In the senior school, extension activities in some subjects enable pupils to achieve well, particularly in mathematics, music, and computer animation. Throughout all parts of the school, an overwhelming majority of parents and pupils are pleased with the progress that pupils make.

- 3.7 Pupils are excellent learners, who enjoy their work. Nearly always they are very enthusiastic and focussed on the task. Most pupils, of all ages, demonstrate perseverance and commitment when challenged; occasionally older pupils lose focus. Pupils work extremely well together, seeking to extend each other's understanding and often evaluating each other's progress. Many pupils work well independently.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 Throughout the school, pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum, which is well matched to their abilities and needs. The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with the curriculum, and a very large majority of both pupils and parents are positive about the range of activities.
- 3.10 The way the prep school curriculum supports the pupils' enthusiasm and places creativity at its heart contributes much to their enjoyment of learning and to the excellent standards they achieve. Opportunities for cross-curricular learning are strong. The use of ICT is well integrated across the curriculum; for example, younger pupils enjoyed creating digital books to support their work on Mexico. Specialist teaching, which starts in music, French, physical education (PE) and games in Years 1 and 2 provides additional challenge. The range of sporting and creative activities is very good.
- 3.11 The well-balanced senior school curriculum provides the pupils with a rounded education in Years 7 to 9 and, as they start GCSE courses, meets their examination needs well. The provision of three languages, separate or combined sciences, and subjects such as computer science, enables pupils to choose a balanced combination. The good range of sixth-form choices includes photography, psychology and economics or business studies, alongside other subjects. In some areas, but not in all, schemes of work take pupils beyond examination requirements; for example when they promote lively and challenging discussion, which reflects the school's aim to provide adventurous learning. Research skills are developed through projects in art, history and science, for example investigating the social behaviour of ants.
- 3.12 The use of ICT has developed considerably since the previous inspection, but still varies significantly. It is embedded in the curriculum, for example through extensive use in design and technology, music, and mathematics, and is taught as a discrete subject.
- 3.13 An extremely well-planned, flexible and wide-ranging personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme plays a most significant role in all aspects of the pupils' personal development throughout the school. Careers guidance in the senior school is exceptional. The advice and monitoring provided is a significant pastoral strength; the careers day which took place during the Inspection provided a wide range of opportunities for pupils of all ages to explore careers.

- 3.14 Pupils with SEND, including older pupils in the prep school, receive excellent support through specialist programmes, communicated effectively to staff, including careful transition as pupils move between sections of the school. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. In addition, good classroom support is provided in many lessons by teaching assistants. Pupils speak extremely highly of the support they receive.
- 3.15 Appropriate support is given to the small number of prep pupils with EAL. In the senior school, significant pastoral and linguistic support is provided for a wide range of pupils with EAL. A number of older pupils are carefully prepared for International English Language Teaching System (IELTS) examinations. Support within the classroom helps pupils to access the curriculum, but individual language support, whilst sometimes very good, does not consistently support written and oral fluency.
- 3.16 Since the previous inspection, the school has developed its provision for the most able pupils considerably. In the prep school, curriculum materials provide additional challenge and the pupils benefit from the way that staff match tasks to their abilities. In the senior school, provision is improved, although not yet consistent. The choice of science and language courses offered at GCSE, and the provision of more advanced courses such as further mathematics in the sixth form, enable the most able pupils to choose challenging options, as do the setting arrangements and a range of academic clubs and activities.
- 3.17 Throughout the school, there is an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities. The wide and diverse range includes varied sports, recorder group and yoga for younger pupils, and bell ringing and robotics for older ones. This well-managed programme significantly promotes the pupils' educational and intellectual development.
- 3.18 Trips outside school promote the pupils' academic, and personal and social development well. An overseas ski-ing trip for Years 5 and 6 is well supported and Year 5 pupils enjoy a life skills residential experience. Senior pupils enjoy language exchanges, and visits to scientific centres and galleries abroad.
- 3.19 Well-established links with the local and wider community, including support for a variety of charities, help raise the pupils' awareness of others. Visiting speakers and expert workshops are regular features of school life.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.20 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.21 In the prep school, excellent relationships between staff and pupils encourage active and enthusiastic learning. Throughout this part of the school, the most successful teaching employs a wide variety of challenging and well-paced learning tasks and activities to stimulate the pupils' interest and curiosity. Teaching employs a variety of resources, including ICT to good effect, a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Lessons are planned very carefully with the learning needs of each individual pupil paramount, especially those with SEND or EAL. All pupils receive appropriate challenge and they respond by thoroughly enjoying their lessons and making rapid progress. This gives strong support to the school's aim to promote adventurous learning. Staff are enthusiastic about trying new activities, for example, teachers of academic subjects sometimes act as classroom assistants in practical sessions. Teaching is constantly evaluated to try to ensure the very best educational experience for all pupils. An excellent variety of teaching strategies is

employed; just occasionally, poor organisation and over-reliance on worksheets limit independent learning.

- 3.22 Most senior school teaching is very well planned and shows good subject knowledge. It makes use of a suitable variety of methods, some of which are very imaginative and engage pupils very well. For example, a game was used well in geography to help pupils understand issues to do with crime, and sixth-form pupils mentored Year 7 pupils in dissection. Excellent use of open-ended questions stimulates the pupils' thinking. Discussion is focused on key issues to enable the pupils to tackle new problems with confidence. As a result, teaching fosters higher-level thinking and application, enabling pupils to progress rapidly. In such teaching the pupils' varying abilities and needs are provided for well, challenging the most able and supporting those for whom work is more difficult. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. In a small amount of teaching, work is not well adapted to individual pupils' needs, and pupils are occasionally allowed to lose focus. In most lessons, the pace is brisk and resources are generally used well. The library provides a good setting for individual work. The virtual learning environment is a good resource and also a forum for discussion between pupils and teachers. Other ICT is used extremely well in some lessons, but it is not yet used consistently across the whole curriculum, as the school is aware. Relationships with pupils are excellent. A range of opportunities for lesson observation encourages staff to reflect on their practice.
- 3.23 Marking is generally of a very high standard, with only a very few inconsistencies. It shows pupils how to improve and, occasionally, demonstrates a true dialogue between teacher and pupils. This demonstrates improvement since the previous inspection. A carefully designed system for assessment of pupils is followed throughout the school, enabling the pupils' needs to be understood and progress to be monitored carefully. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. Transition meetings are held regularly so that assessment data can be discussed with the next teacher. The assessment co-ordinators in the prep and senior schools liaise carefully to ensure that the transition for pupils is smooth.
- 3.24 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire a very large majority of pupils and parents were pleased with the impact teaching has on the pupils' progress. Pupils are very positive about the support and help they receive. A small minority of both pupils and parents criticised the amount of homework but inspection evidence shows that the amount given is reasonable. The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the previous inspection.

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's aims are met very successfully. All pupils develop their self-knowledge and self-esteem, and are active and caring members of the school community. The Christian ethos enshrines tolerance, respect, forgiveness and care for others. These values are evidenced in the pupils' excellent behaviour in response to the consistent models provided by staff. The popular and fiercely fought house competitions, particularly in drama, music and sport, meet the school's aims of building confidence, teamwork and resilience extremely well.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Younger pupils are happy and confident, with a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses; they welcome challenge and show emotional maturity. Older pupils express their feelings when considering the non-material aspects of life, and show outstanding spiritual development when discussing work in art or performing in drama. The pupils' growing understanding of faith and value are supported by prep assemblies, for example, on forgiveness, which reflected on the parable of the prodigal son, and through senior assemblies on wisdom and humility. Pupils develop a system of beliefs and a good understanding of other faiths through religious education (RE).
- 4.4 Pupils show an excellent moral awareness. They are sensitive to the views of others. Younger pupils gain a good understanding of ethical issues, for example in a thought-provoking debate of good and bad character traits in a Year 4 literacy lesson. Older pupils reflect on moral and ethical values in RE and PSHE; for example, Year 10 pupils challenged each other's philosophical ideas on human rights successfully. Standards of behaviour are excellent; the pupils are considerate and courteous, and show that they understand the need for rules in school council discussions. Pupils show great concern for those less fortunate than themselves through a very well planned charity programme; they support communities in Africa, the local food bank, and a range of charitable initiatives. For example, younger pupils were proud of the funds they raised for cancer charities in memory of a pupil. Older pupils have raised money for an epileptic charity and for a school in Uganda.
- 4.5 The pupils' social awareness is extremely well developed, reflected by the mutual respect evident within the school. Pupils enjoy being on the school councils and representing the views of their peers; prep pupils, for example, show how well they can listen to the views of others. Pupils throughout the school have good opportunities to take responsibility, for example, taking their roles as prefects very seriously. Older pupils have a high level of political and economic awareness; some join the Young Enterprise scheme while others contribute leadership to charity activities.
- 4.6 The pupils' cultural awareness is very good. Pupils of many different faiths, cultures and nationalities integrate happily together showing respect for each others' faiths and cultures. The well-planned schemes of work in PSHE and RE promote reflection and the ability to empathise. Visitors to the school, including parents, enhance the pupils' understanding of different cultures, and festivals such as the Chinese New Year are celebrated. The pupils gain cultural understanding through music, art and drama. For older pupils, school trips to Borneo, China, USA and Europe have further supported their cultural awareness.

- 4.7 Throughout the school, pupils' personal development is excellent. They are compassionate, self-reliant, confident, articulate and respectful. By the time they leave, pupils are well equipped to play a positive and active part in society.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent
- 4.9 The pupils are supported effectively in all aspects of school life, in accordance with the school's aims. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent throughout the school. In the prep school, class teachers provide key pastoral support. Younger pupils are keen to share their experiences with staff and feel valued. They are also happy to talk to older pupils, many of whom act as prefects or mentors. In the senior school, the main support comes from house staff, with additional support from year heads. This highly effective pastoral structure ensures that every pupil is known well, monitored carefully and receives responsive pastoral support. This is achieved by excellent communication between all those responsible for a pupil's welfare.
- 4.10 Pupils take regular exercise in games lessons, activities and after-school clubs, thus taking good advantage of the school's promotion of a healthy lifestyle. Nutritious lunches, with a good balance of all food groups, are served and younger pupils are encouraged to try new foods and develop healthy eating habits. Although in response to the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaires, there were critical comments on the quality of food, inspectors found that the recent change in caterers had made a positive impact, resulting in food of good quality.
- 4.11 The school promotes good behaviour well, through clearly defined systems for rewards and sanctions, which have been updated recently, ensuring that every pupil is aware of the consequences of unacceptable behaviour. The view of a minority of pupils in questionnaires that sanctions and rewards are used inconsistently was not borne out by inspection evidence. The school has effective measures to guard against bullying. The pupils know who to talk to if they have a problem and how to raise concerns. Although pre-inspection questionnaire responses indicated that a few pupils and parents feel that bullying is not well handled, this view was not borne out in discussions with pupils and staff. Internet safety was well promoted in a house poster competition and bullying was covered very well in a video made by Year 7 pupils.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.13 The school has a variety of ways in which it seeks the pupils' views. In addition to regular, detailed questionnaires, both sections of the school have effective school councils. A minority of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their views are not taken into account. Inspectors found a number of examples where school policy and practice has changed following discussion with pupils, including food, hairstyles, sanctions and rewards.
- 4.14 The overwhelming majority of parents say their children are happy at school and well cared for. Almost all pupils said they like being at school.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.16 The school has a comprehensive and helpful safeguarding policy, which is implemented effectively. Child protection training is carried out regularly for all teaching and non-teaching staff, and all are fully aware of safeguarding issues. These procedures are overseen by local governors, some with considerable expertise in this area, and reviewed by the trustees. The school has excellent relationships with local authority staff and other agencies. Arrangements for recruiting teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers and local governors, are robust.
- 4.17 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risks from fire and other hazards. Detailed risk assessments are accurately maintained. All the required documentation to promote the pupils' health and safety is implemented efficiently and effectively. Logs of testing and checks are meticulous.
- 4.18 Provision for pupils who are ill or injured is good; they are well treated in appropriate accommodation and any measures taken are meticulously recorded. A new computerised record system means each pupil's medical history is available should an emergency arise. The school takes all possible measures to promote and safeguard pupils with particular needs.
- 4.19 The school maintains accurate records of admissions and attendance, using electronic methods for registering pupils, which are stored as required.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.20 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.21 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. They mature into self-confident, open-minded, articulate young people with high levels of self-reliance, integrity and tolerance. The relationships between boarders of all backgrounds, and between boarders and adults, are open and mutually respectful. Although, in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a minority of boarders disagreed with the statement that they enjoy boarding, in discussions boarders said that they enjoy being part of their community. This confirms the very positive views expressed by parents. Boarders, including those with particular needs, are fully integrated into school life.
- 4.22 Boarders are well represented on the school prefect body, and boarding issues are raised at both the school and boarding councils. There are a number of other ways for boarders to express their views. Houses have suggestion boxes and comment books, and the school uses boarding and school-wide questionnaires. The prefects have well-defined responsibilities. Boarders have good access to information about the world around them through the internet.
- 4.23 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders benefit from a thorough and thoughtful induction programme which helps them to settle quickly. They have a good range of adults to turn to and peers who are keen to provide support when needed. Access to advice lines outside school is well advertised and an independent listener is available. The medical centre is run by highly committed staff, some with specialist expertise, and provides good accommodation for boarders who are ill. It acts as a haven when problems arise. There are good links with other

local medical services and the boarders can choose to be accompanied, or not, to outside appointments. There are also systems to enable boarders deemed suitable to do so to hold their own medication. The medical centre uses sophisticated software to record all medication and track boarders, thereby swiftly identifying problems and ensuring they receive correct treatment.

- 4.24 The quality of food is good, considerably improved since the introduction of new caterers, although in the questionnaires a majority of boarders said they remain dissatisfied. Menus show the school provides a balanced diet with special care taken over supper. The houses have large, well-equipped kitchens, enabling the boarders to prepare snacks or cook meals for each other. The kitchens are clean and hygienic; this meets the recommendation of the previous boarding inspection.
- 4.25 The boarding accommodation is spacious, warm, clean and well-ventilated. The junior boarders share large studies and communal washrooms, with private showers. While there were a number of comments from boarders about the cool temperature of some showers, the school has tried hard to rectify the problem. The senior boarders benefit from having their own studies with en-suite facilities. Common rooms are well furnished, enabling boarders to relax with their friends. Many pupils choose to personalise the space in which they live. Health and safety is well managed, with risk assessments in place for the houses. Fire checks are carried out at suitable intervals and fire drills carried out when the boarders are asleep.
- 4.26 There is adequate laundry provision. Items can be sent, once a week, to an outside laundry. Alternatively, boarders can do their own washing using house washing machines. A large number of boarders share these and at times they do not meet boarders' expectations; the school is currently reviewing this provision. While the majority of questionnaire responses suggested that boarders feel their possessions are not safe, this was not confirmed by inspection evidence. All studies have lockable wardrobes.
- 4.27 One boarder lodges with a host family. The school has taken great care to monitor the arrangements with sensitivity and compassion, though it has not kept written records, as required, of its termly reviews with the boarder.
- 4.28 Supervised evening activities have recently been improved in range and quality by engaging a number of professional coaches to run activities such as basketball, volleyball and indoor football. Members of staff supervise the generously resourced music school to enable practice. At weekends, there are organised trips and a range of activities. Boarders value these opportunities, along with access to the town at appropriate times, where items they may need can be purchased. They can also purchase items from the school's shop. Usually, pupils can easily contact home using their mobiles, internet phones or email, though a recent change in software was creating difficulties at the time of the inspection. The school was aware of the problem and steps were being taken to rectify the situation. The school maintains good contact with parents.
- 4.29 Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent. The school has meticulous staff recruitment procedures. The boarders benefit from having a number of staff living in the boarding houses in self-contained accommodation. There are suitable arrangements to protect boarders from any visitors. The school does not appoint guardians, but does monitor the arrangements made.

- 4.30 Boarders report that bullying is rare and effectively dealt with. Sanctions are used appropriately. School prefects are suitably trained in safeguarding and are alert to anti-social behaviour around the school. Effective procedures enable the school to know the boarders' whereabouts, with sensibly timed registration arranged. Supervision levels are excellent. Pupils report that it is easy to contact an adult, if necessary, at night.
- 4.31 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent. There is a clear statement of boarding principles and practice, which is implemented well. The school is keen to develop boarding and significant progress has been made over the past few years; the annual review forms an effective basis for further development. Excellent systems create effective links between the academic and boarding staff. Any concerns are shared appropriately between house-staff, heads of houses and form tutors. Consequently, boarders are well supported. Recent key changes to the boarding staff roles and responsibilities have resulted in significantly improved supervision and guidance. Records are meticulously kept and monitored. Staff are effectively appraised, and professional development encourages and motivates them to enrich the lives of the boarders and results in strong commitment to the boarders' well-being.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The trustees are well informed about the school, and exercise legal oversight well. They receive full reports on matters such as safeguarding and welfare from the local governing body, enabling them to carry out the necessary annual reviews. The trust officers provide considerable administrative and practical support. The trust provides good strategic leadership. It has set up appropriate arrangements, which enable the school to make investments in its own development, as well as contributing to capital developments across the group as a whole. The school has benefited considerably from recent developments, and is generally well resourced and well staffed. It fulfils its aims well.
- 5.3 The local governing body provides more direct stimulus to the school, creating an effective forum in which educational and other matters can be discussed between governors and senior leaders, who are well represented at their meetings. Governors bring a broad range of relevant experience to their work and are aware of ways in which that can be further enhanced. They are well aware of the school's strengths and areas for future development, and careful to maintain a suitable level of challenge and support for further improvement. They have a good knowledge of the school, taking care to talk with a number of senior staff and to hear directly from middle managers, for example about the work of departments; they visit the school to experience its work at first hand. They bring considerable expertise to their discussion of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety enabling them to support the trust's effective annual review of work in this area well.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent.
- 5.5 Strong leadership and a clear vision enable all parts of the school to work together well with a shared sense of purpose in the successful pursuit of its aims. The aim to promote adventurous learning is very well implemented in the prep school and implemented in much of the pupils' experience in the senior school. The executive leadership team provide the framework for strategic planning which reflects the school's strengths and areas for development in a frank, realistic and ambitious way. The high quality of analysis in the school's self-evaluation highlights clearly what needs to be done, and sets a framework with clear targets for moving forward. Progress is carefully monitored by regular questionnaires in all parts of the school, and by frequent observation. The overwhelming majority of parents were pleased with the school's leadership and management, which has improved since the previous inspection.
- 5.6 Liaison between the sections of the school is strong, at curricular, pastoral and practical levels. Shared initiatives, such as in staff development and the sharing of good practice, help to develop a common approach to achieving high quality and implementing policies. Professional development and constant improvement are at the heart of the school's work. Staff speak highly of the support they receive and of

opportunities for development. The school recruits and trains high quality staff who are appropriately checked for their suitability. It ensures they are suitably trained for their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Highly effective leadership of strong teams of support staff aids the school's work well. Throughout all parts of the school, teaching and non-teaching staff alike show a strong commitment to the school and its ideals. The programme to develop outstanding teachers is one example of the many ways in which the school develops staff expertise and pupils' education.

- 5.7 Within each part of the school, strong, consultative and caring leadership at all levels is reflected in the clear sense of direction, excellent teaching, learning, and personal development of the pupils; middle management, in particular, has been strengthened since the previous inspection. As a result, the pupils experience a challenging curriculum, a wide range of extra-curricular activities and excellent provision for pastoral care and boarding. Both senior and middle leadership supports the day-to-day work of the school well, provides good guidance to the staff for whose work they are responsible and monitors both policies and procedures carefully. A wide variety of strategies is used to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, resulting in significant improvement since the previous inspection, though it is not yet entirely consistent. Strong links are maintained between academic and pastoral leadership, and between prep and senior schools, to provide pupils with an integrated experience. Good use is made of curricular reviews in the prep school, and of regular departmental meetings in the senior school to continue to improve the quality of education. Staff contribute effectively to subject and school development plans.
- 5.8 The school maintains a strong commitment to effective links with parents, carers and guardians. The vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of the education provided by the school. There were no issues raised by significant numbers of parents.
- 5.9 Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school, assisting in the library, accompanying out of school visits and running the used-uniform shop. An active parents' association holds many events throughout the year, which are well supported.
- 5.10 Communication with parents is comprehensive. Current and prospective parents have access to all the required information about the school. A weekly electronic bulletin keeps parents briefed on forthcoming events. The annual school magazine includes reviews and items of news. The excellent school intranet provides a wealth of current and helpful information, including weekly activities and arrangements for special events and sporting fixtures.
- 5.11 Parents are provided with regular assessment information and termly reports. These reports are thorough and informative, with most offering guidance on what pupils need to do next to improve. Parent evenings, taking place termly in the junior school and annually in the senior school, inform parents about progress.
- 5.12 The complaints policy is suitable and readily available to parents. The efficient and courteous school office answers parents' queries with consideration and due attention. The sample of complaints scrutinised during the inspection had been appropriately managed, in accordance with the school's procedures.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 6.1 The provision is outstanding in meeting the needs of the children who attend. The school very successfully meets its aim to ensure that each child has the opportunity to explore, to know, to do, to share and to be. Plentiful opportunities for adventurous learning arise through a well-managed balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. These are tailored to the individual needs of all children, including those who are more able, have SEND or have EAL. All children, regardless of their starting points, make significant progress across all areas of learning and have a secure foundation for the future. By the end of the EYFS, the vast majority meet the early learning goals and many exceed them, in response to high expectations. Every opportunity is taken to awaken children's curiosity and stimulate enquiry, for example, the under-threes experimented with musical instruments to see what sounds they could make, and the over-threes weighed and mixed ingredients to make pancakes. Partnerships with parents are extremely strong. Regular feedback on their children's progress is provided at handovers, at parents' meetings and through written reports. Parents are encouraged to contribute to developmental records. Those who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire made their strong support for, and appreciation of, both settings very clear. They particularly value the care and personal attention which their children receive.

6.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 6.2 Provision for children's well-being is outstanding. The highly effective key person system underpins the extremely positive, secure and caring relationships which are formed between the adults and all children. As a result, children in both settings are happy and there is an underlying atmosphere of calm and gentle support. Staff act as excellent role models, giving positive feedback to each other as well as to the children. The emphasis is on celebrating positives rather than highlighting misguided choices. Meticulous attention is paid to all safety procedures. High standards of behaviour are promoted, and courtesy and respect for others are constantly encouraged through immediate praise. Babies and children under three gain increasing independence, for example when toddlers played on climbing equipment and watered spring flowers, and over-threes developed further when controlling a ball in a fast-moving football session. They understand that running about helps to give them lots of energy. Lunch-time for the younger children is used to reinforce healthy eating habits. The food is tasty and well balanced, and encourages children to try different foods and flavours. From an early age, good hygiene is reinforced and, by the end of EYFS, all manage personal hygiene independently. Both settings provide extremely well-resourced, stimulating environments and full use is made of the outdoor space. This contributes significantly to children's all-round development. Children are very well prepared for the next stage of their learning, either within the settings or in transition between the two sites.

6.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 6.3 Leadership and management in EYFS are outstanding. Governors demonstrate a good knowledge of EYFS requirements, and staff welcome the involvement of a link governor. The management structure ensures that highly effective monitoring of both settings takes place continuously, and that oversight of all aspects of the provision is both exacting and cohesive. Safer recruitment is practised meticulously. Training in child protection and welfare is rigorous, and staff adhere conscientiously to the required procedures. Comprehensive risk assessments are supplemented by daily checks to ensure that potential hazards are minimised. The atmosphere in both settings is highly positive, stimulating and conducive to learning. On-going self-evaluation is a hallmark. The two managers liaise regularly, identifying both shared and setting-specific targets for improvement, so that there is an overarching vision for continuous development. Regular reviews of the child-based planning and assessment take place, and identifying personalised next steps is a high priority. Meticulous record keeping is further enhanced for the over-threes by the use of electronic profiling, enabling staff to capture significant moments of a child's development, though this is not yet used for under-threes. These records are shared with parents. Induction for new staff is thorough and staff feel extremely well supported. Best practice is shared, and an effective system of appraisal and supervision supports all staff in their on-going professional development. Communication between parents and staff is excellent. Productive relationships with parents have a positive impact on children's learning and development. Any concerns are dealt with promptly. When necessary, input is sought from the local authority and other external agencies, to support children and their parents.

6.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 6.4 The overall quality and standards in both settings are outstanding. All children, including those needing additional support, are happy, enjoy their learning and make substantial progress from a wide range of starting points. The progress of some children is outstanding. They become confident speakers and have an excellent grasp of concepts such as capacity. This is largely due to the exceptional care afforded to each child individually, and to the breadth, creativity and flair provided by the learning environment. Children under the age of three reach the expected levels of development, as reflected in the progress checks for two-year olds; assessment data shows that, by the end of the EYFS, many children are at a level beyond that expected for their age. Babies were seen exploring the sensory wall independently and with considerable perseverance, whilst over-threes worked as a group, using puppets, to devise and act out a complex plot to release a captive prince and princess from a tower. The children's excellent behaviour reflects their outstanding personal and social development. They make friends readily, relate extremely well to their peers, share willingly and show genuine care and respect for each other. Their confidence with visitors is notable, particularly so for the very youngest children, reflecting the fact that they feel comfortable and supported. All staff are thoroughly conversant with the safeguarding and welfare requirements, which are implemented meticulously. Regular and searching evaluation by both managers takes place to discuss how the settings could improve further. Future plans are both challenging and realistic, and are focused on achieving the best for the children. The recommendation from the previous inspection concerning refining the development planning has been met in full.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

6.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.