



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**BABLAKE SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Bablake School

The junior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Full Name of School       | <b>Bablake School</b>   |
| DfE Number                | <b>331/6017</b>   |
| Registered Charity Number | <b>528961</b>   |
| Address                   | <b>Bablake School<br/>Coundon Road<br/>Coventry<br/>West Midlands<br/>CV1 4AU</b> |
| Telephone Number          | <b>024 7627 1200</b>  |
| Fax Number                | <b>024 7627 1290</b>  |
| Email Address             | <b>hmsec@bablake.coventry.sch.uk</b>  |
| Head                      | <b>Mr John Watson</b>   |
| Chair of Governors        | <b>Mr Richard Atkins QC</b>   |
| Age Range                 | <b>11 to 18</b>   |
| Total Number of Pupils    | <b>772</b>  |
| Gender of Pupils          | <b>Mixed (423 boys; 349 girls)</b>  |
| Inspection Dates          | <b>11 Mar 2014 to 14 Mar 2014</b>   |

## 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 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, 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](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

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

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

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

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

### Inspectors

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Mrs Susan Marks     | Reporting Inspector                                |
| Mrs Diana Dodd      | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)           |
| Mr David Elstone    | Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)                  |
| Mrs Susan Jones     | Team Inspector<br>(Former Deputy Head, GSA school) |
| Mrs Hilary Moriarty | Team Inspector (Former Head, GSA school)           |
| Mr Bill Rogers      | Deputy Head (Academic), HMC school)                |
| Mrs Catherine Sams  | Team Inspector (Vice-Principal, GSA school)        |
| Dr Andrew Storey    | Team Inspector<br>(Head of Department, HMC school) |
| Ms Helen Wren       | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)           |

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bablake School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged 11 to 18. It is one of four schools in the Coventry School Foundation, which has a single governing body. Founded in 1344, Bablake was re-founded in 1580 and moved from the city centre to its present 11-acre site in 1890. It became co-educational in 1975, and has shared the site with its junior school since the latter's foundation in 1991. The schools have an additional forty acres of playing fields about one mile from the main site. Bablake has a Christian foundation, and welcomes pupils of diverse beliefs and backgrounds.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection there were 772 pupils on roll: 423 boys and 349 girls. There were 223 pupils in the sixth form. Approximately two-thirds of pupils live in Coventry or its immediate vicinity. Pupils come from diverse economic and ethnic backgrounds. Just over a quarter come from backgrounds other than white British. Most pupils enter the school at the age of eleven, with about two-thirds coming from the maintained sector and about one-third entering from the junior school. Most pupils stay on into the sixth form, where they are joined by pupils from other local schools who have met the entry criteria.
- 1.3 The school aims to: provide an excellent and stimulating education for boys and girls, by developing character, intellect and physical well-being within a happy, scholarly and caring community; encourage the growth of reflection, intellectual curiosity and creativity, within a spirit of independent and co-operative learning; offer a wide range of activities and opportunities for enrichment; and value and support each individual, nurturing self-esteem and mutual respect, in partnership with parents.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the school is above the national average. In Years 7 to 11, almost all pupils have ability that is at least above average, and a third have ability that is well above average. There is a wider spread of abilities in the sixth form, with fewer pupils being of well above average ability, and the remainder being of average or below average ability.
- 1.5 The school has 87 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL); most are fully bilingual and 7 receive extra support for their English. Seventy-five pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Ninety-four pupils receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.6 Since the previous inspection the senior management has been restructured and a chaplaincy established. Facilities for sport have been developed and some science laboratories refurbished. A wireless information and communications technology (ICT) network has been installed, and access arrangements for individuals with physical disabilities have been developed.

- 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 and its NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

| School      | NC name |
|-------------|---------|
| Shells      | Year 7  |
| Seconds     | Year 8  |
| Thirds      | Year 9  |
| Fourths     | Year 10 |
| Fifths      | Year 11 |
| Lower Sixth | Year 12 |
| Upper Sixth | Year 13 |

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The pupils' achievement and learning are excellent across the age range. Pupils with SEND, those with EAL and the most able pupils reach the same high levels of achievement in relation to their abilities as their peers. Pupils are very well educated in accordance with the school's ambitious aims; they develop strong learning skills and work hard to take full advantage of the school's wide-ranging curriculum and highly effective teaching. In less effective lessons, teacher-led approaches predominate and insufficient material offers challenge for the most able pupils. Pupils take great pride in their work and are particularly successful at collaborative learning. The school's extensive range of extra-curricular activities is a key factor in the development of pupils' outstanding personal qualities.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils develop self-confidence and resilience within a culture of care and consideration for others. They are reflective, self-aware, and responsive to aesthetic and spiritual experience. Pupils show respect and sensitivity towards the different perspectives reflected in their diverse cultural and religious backgrounds, and they have a strong sense of fair play. The pupils are extremely proud of their school. They relish the responsibilities they are given and many help to organise charitable fund-raising activities. Pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care. Teachers know their pupils extremely well, and relationships between staff and pupils are supportive and mutually respectful. Excellent systems are in place to ensure the pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 2.3 Governors promote the school's aims well by offering their expertise and encouragement. They exercise highly effective oversight over strategic planning, financial control and budgeting, and academic standards. Governors lack an effective structure to keep up to date with regulatory requirements and to ensure rigorous monitoring and evaluation, by the full governing body, of policies and procedures in matters of child protection, recruitment and health and safety. The success of the leadership and management is reflected in the pupils' high achievements and in their excellent personal development. The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection, underpinned by a culture of self-reflection and the desire for continuous improvement. The senior leadership team provides strong, purposeful direction, and pastoral management is excellent at all levels. There has been some difficulty adjusting to the pace of change at academic middle management level and new initiatives are not consistently implemented across all subject areas. Support from senior management is not always sufficient to remedy this. The school maintains excellent relationships with parents, who expressed a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of its provision in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire.



## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Strengthen support for academic middle management and enhance staff training to ensure consistent implementation of new teaching and learning initiatives across all academic departments.
2. Ensure that governors keep abreast of regulatory requirements to enable more rigorous monitoring of arrangements for pupils' welfare.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils show high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects across the full age range, which successfully fulfils the school's aims. They are articulate in written and spoken English. Pupils have strong mathematical skills and are able to express ideas in mathematical language. They show excellent understanding in science, and are able to apply their knowledge to unfamiliar situations. Pupils reason logically and methodically, and they enjoy bringing these skills to bear when problem solving in many subjects. In modern foreign languages (MFL) the pupils' understanding is good although their progress is sometimes inhibited by a reluctance to speak in the language concerned. Pupils with SEND reach the same high levels of achievement in relation to their abilities as those of their peers, supported by work tailored to their requirements, and strong support in and outside lessons. Pupils with EAL are helped to develop a good degree of proficiency in language, which enables them to take part fully in lessons and to make the same level of progress as their peers. Highly able pupils achieve excellent levels in activities, essays to extend their understanding and research projects. Pupils reach very high standards in relation to their abilities in creative subjects, technology and sport.
- 3.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 to 2012. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been well above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Results in 2011 to 2012 were better than in 2010. A-level results have been above the national average for maintained schools, and also above the national average for maintained selective schools. Boys' results in 2011 to 2012 were stronger than girls', being well above the national average for boys in maintained schools. Pupils are highly successful in gaining entry to the university or higher education college of their choice. These levels of attainment at GCSE and A level, together with inspection evidence of the pupils' extremely positive attitudes to learning, indicates that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities.
- 3.4 Pupils reach excellent levels of achievement in the school's extensive range of extra-curricular activities, which is a key factor in the development of their outstanding personal qualities. These levels are typified by success locally, regionally and nationally in sports, the creative and performing arts, and competitions of all types. In recent years, teams have been national finalists in netball and girls' indoor hockey, and pupils have won national representative honours in hockey and rugby. In drama, pupils participate in the National Theatre and Shakespeare Schools festivals, and have performed at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe every year since 1988. Numerous pupils play musical instruments in the county youth orchestra and in the past four years, individual pupils have played in the National Children's Orchestras of Great Britain and the National Youth Orchestra. Pupils show high levels of commitment and initiative in activities such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and charitable fund raising.
- 3.5 Pupils take great pride in their work and achievements. They are enthusiastic learners who are keen to support each other. Pupils listen attentively to teachers

and to their peers, and they are particularly successful at collaborative learning. Pupils strive to derive full benefit from the school's wide-ranging curriculum and the excellent teaching.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 The school offers a stimulating education, enabling pupils to develop character, intellect and physical well-being, in line with its aims. The curriculum is well balanced and wide ranging for pupils of all ages and is highly flexible in meeting their individual needs.
- 3.8 The school has responded to the recommendation of the previous inspection and has implemented a thorough and well-planned personal, social, health and cultural education (PSHCE) programme for all years. Staff have received further training in teaching PSHCE lessons and some topics are taught by specialist teachers.
- 3.9 Since the previous inspection the curriculum in Years 7, 8 and 9 has been adapted to offer greater provision of English and physical education, and parity of provision across the humanities and creative subjects. Setting by ability has been introduced in mathematics in Year 8.
- 3.10 In Years 10 and 11 most pupils study towards GCSE in 10 subjects, including English, mathematics, the sciences, a modern foreign language and a humanities subject. Since the previous inspection International GCSE science and GCSE Spanish have been introduced. A small number of the most able linguists study an additional language at GCSE, and the more able mathematicians have the option of sitting the GCSE examination in Year 10. The sixth form offers a comprehensive range of A-level subjects, to which Spanish has recently been added.
- 3.11 Pupils use ICT well in a range of subjects, such as using mobile 'apps' for homework in MFL, and giving presentations in history and geography. The library is used very effectively as a learning resource. In Years 7 to 9, pupils have allocated reading time in the library and pupils throughout the school use it extensively for work and leisure.
- 3.12 Pupils with SEND are particularly well catered for. The school screens all pupils, and those who require extra support receive it at times outside their regular lessons. The needs of any pupils with a statement of special educational needs are met.
- 3.13 Good progress has been made on the provision for highly able pupils since the previous inspection. They have access to an enrichment programme that includes the Extended Project Qualification, an award for achievement in science, technology, engineering and mathematics projects, and a local university's international social network for gifted children. 'Symposium' is a selected group of Year 8 to 11 pupils who debate current topics and ethical issues. Helpful advice on subject choices, careers and university applications is offered to pupils, and those in Year 13 learn new skills such as survival cookery and home maintenance.
- 3.14 Pupils gain broader experience through a very extensive range of extra-curricular activities, from a group to support prisoners of conscience to 'Funky Knitting'. Many older pupils take part in the DofE and over 50 pupils in Years 9, 10 and 13 learn new skills in the CCF. The vibrant house system engages pupils of all ages in an exciting range of inter-house competitions. Opportunities abound for pupils to gain wider

experience of the world beyond school through educational visits and tours, many overseas. Sports tours have taken place to Sri Lanka and South Africa, as have a World Challenge expedition to Malaysia and a visit to a linked township school in South Africa.

- 3.15 Links with the community are very strong. The excellent relationships with other organisations and institutions within the local area and further afield are exemplified by the support given to local primary schools in areas such as music, drama and sport. A number of pupils act as classroom assistants in the junior school on a weekly basis. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to be involved in fund-raising projects, including support of the linked school in South Africa. The school has recently gained externally accredited status in recognition of its commitment to peace and reconciliation, both within school and the local and wider community.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 The high quality of teaching enables pupils to make good progress in relation to their abilities. This reflects the school's aims to encourage the growth of reflection, intellectual curiosity and creativity, within the spirit of independent and co-operative learning. Teaching is well planned, with much making very good use of a variety of strategies and resources. In response to a recommendation of the previous inspection, steps have been taken to provide still greater intellectual challenge to pupils through more frequently ambitious teaching, although this is not fully developed.
- 3.18 In the most successful lessons, teaching is delivered with pace and enjoyment so that pupils are fully engaged and progress is brisk. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and a clear enthusiasm, which inspires the pupils. In less effective lessons, teacher-led approaches predominate and there is over-use of closed questions. This inhibits the pupils' sense of excitement and results in an absence of challenge, particularly for the most able pupils. Much of the teaching provides pupils with excellent opportunities to work together and support each other, and this is a strength of the school. Most teaching is challenging, allowing pupils to engage in sophisticated discussion and open-ended debate. In a religious studies lesson, younger pupils demonstrated excellent debating skills, successfully articulating their reasons for identifying distinctions between terrorists and freedom fighters. Often material which offers extended levels of challenge is made available for the most able but this is not the case in all lessons.
- 3.19 An excellent rapport is established between teachers and pupils. Pupils feel well supported and know that help will be readily available both inside and outside lesson times when they encounter difficulties. Appropriate homework is set on a regular basis although the published timetable is not always followed by teachers. Pupils are offered opportunities for independent learning, such as the research homework on Bob Smith's artistic style, in an art lesson for younger pupils.
- 3.20 The learning support department supplies detailed information that makes staff aware of the particular needs of pupils with SEND, and indicates how to provide suitable support. Staff follow this guidance well. Pupils with EAL are well integrated into lessons. Younger pupils with EAL were fully able to participate in answering questions about the newly introduced topic of the dative case in Latin.

- 3.21 The quality of marking varies across departments. At its best, marking is thorough and includes constructive and supportive comments, and indications to pupils as to how they can make further progress. Some marking is cursory and there is little evidence in some subjects that teachers' suggestions are acted upon by pupils. Oral feedback is often given in lessons and pupils appreciate this.
- 3.22 In the most effective teaching, pupils' progress is constantly assessed through frequent, focused questioning and regular testing. More widely, the school uses standardised data relating to pupils' abilities and achievements to enable both academic and pastoral staff to monitor pupils' progress effectively. Any pupils who are under performing are identified and strategies are put in place to improve their performance.

## **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 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims to develop character, encourage the growth of reflection, and nurture self-esteem and mutual respect. This is reflected in the high levels of personal development evident in pupils by the time they leave the school. Pupils value the PSHCE programme and many commented favourably on the wide variety of topics it covers and their relevance to them as young people.
- 4.3 Pupils have strong spiritual awareness. They show tolerance and respect towards those of other faiths and of none. Pupils value the opportunity to come together in shared exploration and worship through faith groups. They warmly appreciate the memorial garden which commemorates lost loved ones and provides a place for quiet reflection. In interviews, pupils acknowledged the importance to them of the introduction of a chaplaincy.
- 4.4 The pupils' excellent moral development is reflected in many school events. They reflect regularly on right and wrong in house assemblies and have a very strong sense of fair play. Work prominently displayed around the school thoughtfully addresses issues such as prisoners of conscience around the world, the threat to the world's natural environment and homophobia.
- 4.5 Pupils show high degrees of social development. They are kind and thoughtful; they have a warm acceptance of each other and develop positive relationships with staff. Pupils are notably happy and co-operative when working in groups during lessons; they listen well to each other's views and negotiate collective responses with care and sensitivity. Pupils with particular physical needs have been very well assimilated and new pupils feel especially welcomed into the school community. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they are given in the wide-ranging community service volunteer programme to play a role in their local community, for example by helping at a centre for people who are blind and local charity shops, and by visiting and hosting events for the elderly. Charitable fund raising is a particular strength. The introduction of a peer mentoring scheme has helped to develop strong bonds between pupils in Years 7 and 10, while supportive relationships are formed by Year 12 form prefects with younger pupils.
- 4.6 The pupils' sense of the aesthetic is stimulated by exposure to a wide variety of high quality cultural events. Pupils enthuse about cultural activities and events they have attended; younger pupils shared their teacher's excitement when discussing art galleries that they knew locally and nationally. Pupils develop understanding and tolerance of their diverse backgrounds through learning about the major festivals of the major world religions, and their written work in several subjects demonstrates sympathetic exploration of a range of faiths. They learn about different cultures through the exchange with a township school in South Africa. Their reflections on places they have visited such as Warwick Castle and Beth Shalom, a Holocaust memorial centre, are mature and insightful.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The school meets its aims of valuing and supporting each individual, in partnership with parents. Parents refer to the school as a happy community. Pastoral care has been strengthened since the previous inspection by the introduction of a chaplaincy and counselling staff to offer specialist support to pupils. Revised pastoral arrangements provide a consistent framework through which pastoral matters are shared across the whole staff. Form tutors work closely with year heads, who, together with medical staff, report directly to senior management.
- 4.9 Excellent relationships between staff and pupils prevail throughout the school. Older pupils support younger ones by acting as form prefects and peer mentors, and are seen as role models. The school has taken exemplary measures to ensure educational and social access for and integration of pupils with SEND.
- 4.10 The school takes effective measures to promote good discipline and behaviour. A suitable anti-bullying policy is implemented effectively. The system of rewards and sanctions emphasises self-discipline and responsibility for one's own actions. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a minority of pupils felt that the application of rewards and sanctions was inconsistent. Evidence from conversations with pupils and inspection of records does not support this view.
- 4.11 School lunches are nutritious and popular, and pupils take full advantage of the extensive exercise opportunities on offer. Both of these promote a healthy lifestyle.
- 4.12 In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire a minority of pupils expressed concern that their opinions are not listened to. Inspectors found that the school councils are effective in putting forward the views of pupils. In conversation with inspectors, pupils were readily able to identify changes made to their school experience in response to requests from peers.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The school fully meets its aims of developing character, intellect and physical well-being within a happy, scholarly and caring community. Up-to-date child protection policies are now securely in place and procedures for safeguarding pupils are exemplary. Appropriate training of key staff in child protection measures is well organised and undertaken in accordance with statutory guidance. The school liaises closely with other agencies whenever necessary. It has robust arrangements for checking the suitability of staff to work with children and the requisite checks are now correctly recorded.
- 4.15 Comprehensive arrangements are in place to manage the risk of fire and other hazards. Appropriate fire risk assessments are completed and suitable attention given to any areas of concern. Fire drills are carried out at appropriate intervals, taking careful account of pupils with particular physical needs, and equipment is regularly checked. Detailed risk assessments are carried out and documented for activities, including trips and visits. Careful consideration is given to road safety in the vicinity of the school. Appropriate staff supervision is in place before and after school, at break and at lunchtime. A supervised safe place is provided for pupils unable to leave school before 5.30 pm.

- 4.16 Two trained nurses share the role of providing first aid and immediate medical attention throughout the working week, and they also attend weekend rugby matches. In addition, numerous staff have completed formal first-aid training. The counselling service enhances the medical provision.
- 4.17 Admission and attendance records are regularly completed electronically and the whereabouts of any absent pupils are promptly checked. Electronic records are backed up appropriately.
- 4.18 Pupils with SEND are well catered for. The school goes to considerable lengths, including adjusting timetables at short notice, to make it possible for pupils with particular physical needs to attend, with the fullest possible wheelchair access to facilities and activities, including sport.



## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governance strongly supports the aims and ethos of the school. All members of the governing body are strongly committed to the school's continued success. They come from a range of careers and professional backgrounds, and their collective expertise and experience contribute significantly to the school's development. Many governors have previous links with the school, either as former pupils, or as parents of current or former pupils, and this helps to consolidate the links between the governing body, the school and parents.
- 5.3 The full governing body's oversight of four varied schools brings with it the benefits of a broad educational perspective. The academic and resources committee ensures that the school receives individual day-to-day support within the structure of the foundation. Governors provide a strong degree of challenge and support to leadership and management, producing resources for the school's continuous development and improvement.
- 5.4 Governors exercise highly effective oversight over strategic planning, financial control and budgeting, and academic standards. However, they lack an effective structure to keep up to date with statutory requirements and to ensure rigorous monitoring and evaluation, by the full governing body, of policies and procedures in matters of child protection, recruitment, and health and safety. The annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements is carried out appropriately, but minutes of the review lack sufficient detail to reflect the required rigour and depth of discussion.
- 5.5 New governors receive formal induction training on appointment and there are regular opportunities for further training.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.7 The senior leadership team successfully communicates its overall direction for the school and effectively ensures that the school meets its aims of providing an excellent and stimulating education. Senior management works closely with the governors and others in a thorough annual review of the school's performance in relation to its development plan, and to establish a set of well-defined priorities for the future in order to meet its ambitious aims.
- 5.8 The school development plan identifies numerous areas for further improvement over a rolling three-year period and is subject to regular review by senior staff and middle managers. Staff development and training are varied and well supported by external speakers on relevant topics such as working with able and talented pupils, strategies to cope with dyslexia in the classroom and how to be an effective form tutor. Not all members of staff take full advantage of the useful in-house training opportunities, such as those on the effective use of the virtual learning environment, which is at a relatively early stage of development.

- 5.9 The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection, in particular in the successful integration of PSHCE within the curriculum. Monitoring by many middle managers supports excellent practice in much teaching in response to developments in teaching and learning, but this is not consistent across all subject areas. At academic middle management level there has been some difficulty in adjusting to the pace of change, and new initiatives are not consistently implemented across departments. In this area support for subject leaders is not yet sufficient to ensure that the quality of education offered to pupils, especially those who are very able, is consistently high. The school is aware of this and plans are in place to provide it, together with additional staff training.
- 5.10 A biennial appraisal system is linked to departmental review and formal lesson observations by members of the senior leadership team, and by interim lesson observations by academic middle managers. Mutual lesson observation within and across departments is valued by many members of staff but the contribution of lesson observation and peer review to ensuring consistent quality in teaching and marking is not universally acknowledged. This results in inconsistent standards within and across departments.
- 5.11 The excellent leadership and management of pastoral care ensure that all pupils can develop and grow in a diverse and mutually supportive community where each can freely follow his or her interests. Policies are clear and implemented well. All staff receive training in welfare, health and safety; its quality is evaluated regularly and accurate training records are kept.
- 5.12 The quality of the school's links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. The school has strongly developed the excellent relationship with parents noted at the previous inspection, and has further enhanced its communication with parents through a weekly mailing, an expanded website and the use of social media.
- 5.13 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with all required information. The complaints policy and its procedures are clear and comprehensive, and are implemented effectively. The school provides comprehensive handbooks and informative publications for parents, and close communication is maintained through email, text messages and telephone calls. The written reports to parents about their children's achievements and academic progress are of a high quality and provide useful guidance on what pupils need to do to improve the standard of their work.
- 5.14 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents expressed extremely high levels of satisfaction about all aspects of their children's education. Parents were most satisfied with the breadth of the curriculum, the variety of extra-curricular activities and the quality of communication from the school.
- 5.15 Parents appreciate the many opportunities they receive to be involved with the life of the school. There are numerous parents' evenings during the year, ranging from key discussions of their children's academic progress to more social occasions where parents of new pupils are warmly welcomed into the school community. Parent ambassadors are available at these evenings and on open days, and they provide essential support to parents of new and current pupils, which is greatly appreciated.
- 5.16 A strong and active parents' association helps with fund raising for the school and organises a number of social events for parents to meet each other, and the staff. Parents offer pupils opportunities for work experience, assist professionally with

sixth-form interviews and provide support at careers conventions. A recent development is the establishment of an alumni committee, central to which are former pupils who are now parents of current pupils. Parents provide strong support at school plays, concerts, sports fixtures and social events.

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