



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BEDFORD MODERN SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Bedford Modern School

Full Name of School	Bedford Modern School
DfE Number	822/6011
Registered Charity Number	204817
Address	Bedford Modern School Manton Lane Bedford Bedfordshire MK41 7NT
Telephone Number	01234 332500
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Email Address	info@bedmod.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Michael Hall
Chairman of Governors	Dr Ian McEwen
Age Range	7 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	1199
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (765 boys; 434 girls)
Numbers by Age	7-11: 243 11-18: 956
Inspection dates	19 Nov 2013 to 22 Nov 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2007.

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman and deputy chairman 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

Mr Paul Spillane	Reporting Inspector
Mr Duncan Byrne	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr John Greathead	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Dr John Guntrip	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Mark Heywood	Team Inspector (Headmaster, Society of Heads school)
Mr Stephen Holroyd	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mrs Susan Hooker	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Nicholas Campbell Martin	Team Inspector (Assistant Head, HMC school)
Mr Michael Punt	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Vivien Sergeant	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bedford Modern School is one of four schools in the Harpur Trust whose origins date back to the will of Sir William Harpur in 1566. The school was a direct grant boys' grammar school which became independent in 1976 and co-educational in 2003. It is now a day school for boys and girls aged from 7 to 18. The school is governed by a board of governors nominated by the trust. The present headmaster took up his position in 2010 and the head of the junior school took up hers in 2012.
- 1.2 There are 243 pupils in the junior school and 956 in the senior school. Twelve pupils speak English as an additional language, but none receives specialist support for his or her English. The school has identified 103 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to 69 of whom it gives specialist support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Pupils come mainly from business and professional families in Bedford and the surrounding area. Most pupils are of white British origin, and some pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 1.3 The school aims to maximise the potential of every pupil within a creative and harmonious learning environment. It also seeks to promote and encourage a sense of well-being, respect, tolerance, service, care and self-confidence within a community where everyone is treated equally and given every opportunity to flourish. The school sets out to provide outstanding pastoral care, to offer a broad, balanced, innovative and rigorous curriculum, and to maintain an extensive extra-curricular programme which allows all pupils to participate and be encouraged to excel in their chosen field.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the junior school is above the national average, with at least a third of the pupils having well above average ability and few having ability that is below average. The ability profile of the senior school is above the national average, with few pupils in Years 7 to 11 having ability that is less than above average, and a notable proportion having ability that is well above average. In the sixth form there is a wider spread of abilities, with around a quarter of pupils having average ability and a few pupils having below average ability.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school successfully meets its stated aims. The pupils' positive approach to their studies, exemplary classroom behaviour and high quality committed teaching are reflected in good, and often rapid, progress and substantial academic achievement at all levels. In their response to the questionnaire the pupils affirmed that they are very pleased with their progress. Throughout the school, pupils display secure knowledge and understanding of the material covered in their syllabuses. Teaching is excellent, although the marking of pupils' work and the awarding of reward points are inconsistent in the senior school. Pupils with SEND and the ablest pupils are extremely well catered for, though provision for the most gifted and talented is not centrally co-ordinated and consequently no single member of staff has oversight of all the provision being made for an individual pupil. Pupils throughout the school reach high standards of personal fulfilment across a wide range of activities. The extra-curricular programme is extensive and many successes, from local to national level, are achieved in a variety of fields. The broad overall provision enriches the pupils' educational experience and enables them to develop their talents and aptitudes enjoyably and fruitfully.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent, with highly effective emphasis on their welfare, safeguarding and well-being. The caring and supportive example set by the staff is mirrored in the way pupils behave towards one another. They grow strongly in self-awareness and self-esteem. Relationships are excellent throughout the school, which is a lively and purposeful place; the pupils are very proud of it and feel a strong sense of belonging. They benefit from the many opportunities for leadership and service and take their responsibilities seriously. Parents commend the high standards of behaviour, and inspection evidence fully supported this judgement.
- 2.3 That the school's aims are being successfully realised is a strong testimony to excellent governance, leadership and management. The commitment of governance is wholehearted and they exercise effective oversight. Energetic leadership is clear sighted and sensitive, accommodating both the wider picture and the needs of the individual. Efficient management ensures that the school runs smoothly. The school has met all the recommendations from the previous inspection. Staff are committed to providing an excellent all-round education. The school enjoys very good relations with parents, who express great satisfaction with the education that their children are receiving and the way in which the school is being run.

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. Introduce central co-ordination of provision for the ablest pupils in the senior school.
2. Ensure that all of the marking of pupils' work in the senior school is brought up to the standard of the best.
3. Seek greater consistency in the giving of reward points to senior school pupils.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is highly successful in its aim to maximise the potential of every pupil and many excel in their chosen interests. At every stage, the pupils are articulate and demonstrate a high standard of literacy and numeracy. Written work is clearly and accurately presented and pupils' contributions in class confirm their high level of logical thinking and analytical ability. The overall academic performance of pupils throughout the school shows a secure mastery of the material covered in their syllabuses. Pupils demonstrate high levels of knowledge and understanding, with skilful practical application of what they have been taught.
- 3.3 Pupils demonstrate high levels of achievement in music, drama and dance, and in art and design technology. Highly accomplished performances by the jazz band and the senior choir were observed during the inspection. Pupils across the school taking external dance, drama and music examinations achieve high levels of success, the majority passing with distinction or merit. The school joined the Arkwright Scholarships Trust engineering scheme in 2012 and has since had a small number of successful applicants. Pupils attain equally high levels of achievement in team and individual sports. The many examples throughout the school of representation at regional and national level in sports range from hockey and rowing to table tennis, skiing and equestrian events. In the senior school nearly 50 pupils are currently working towards The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) at gold level.
- 3.4 The school does not enter pupils for national tests. Consequently, the pupils' attainment in the junior school cannot be measured in relation to a fixed national average, but on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. Inspection evidence from observation of lessons, scrutiny of samples of pupils' work and discussions with individual pupils confirms this judgement. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make a high rate of progress in relation to pupils of similar ability.
- 3.5 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 are well above the national average for maintained schools and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. In the GCSE examinations of 2013, almost all the grades awarded were A* to C, with 70 per cent being at A* or A. Results in International GCSE subjects are higher than worldwide norms. A-level results are well above the national average for maintained schools, and above the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2013, almost all the A-level grades awarded were A* to C, with 20 per cent being at A*, the school's best return to date. The level of attainment at GCSE, and standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that pupils make progress in the senior school that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The level of attainment at A level, and standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that pupils make progress in the sixth form that is at least good and sometimes high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. These results, interpreted in the light of inspection evidence of a high proportion of excellent teaching and the pupils' very positive attitude to their studies, indicate a high rate of academic progress. In recent years, almost all Year 13 leavers have proceeded to degree courses, the great majority to their first choice of university.

- 3.6 At all levels, pupils with SEND achieve in line with their peers. Throughout the school, the ablest pupils fulfil their potential, as confirmed by their results. Gifted and talented pupils in the junior school extend their skills through participation in enrichment activities. In the senior school, pupils achieve significant success in the Higher Project Qualification (HPQ) and the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).
- 3.7 The pupils demonstrate a spirited and purposeful approach to everything that they undertake. They are highly motivated, see learning as a collaborative process and are eager to make the most of their opportunities. Pupils are rewarded by seeing their achievements celebrated in assemblies and on the school website.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The school fully meets its aim to provide a broad, balanced and rigorous curriculum suitable for all ages, abilities and needs, with innovation remaining an aspiration; and to offer an extensive range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.10 Pupils study a broad curriculum that provides suitable opportunities to develop their interests. In Years 6 and 7 pupils study French, German and Spanish and in Year 8 pupils choose two of these, together with Latin; Year 9 pupils select four optional subjects from eight. At GCSE, all pupils study a core of English language and literature, mathematics and dual or triple award science, in addition to at least one humanity subject and a modern foreign language. At AS level, pupils normally select four from twenty-nine subjects, including two introduced since the previous inspection: psychology and film studies. Information and communication technology is taught from Year 3, with computing offered at GCSE and A level. Subject selection programmes are rigorous and very flexible. Pupils and parents are extremely positive about the comprehensive range of subjects at all levels.
- 3.11 The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is well planned, with dedicated sessions and outside speakers. It provides good opportunities for considering and developing a wide range of issues and life skills; for instance, Year 6 pupils have a thorough understanding of the two Houses of Parliament.
- 3.12 Provision for pupils with SEND is excellent. A dedicated academic support department provides for requirements known prior to entry and conducts screening tests after pupils enter the school in order to identify any learning needs. Pupils benefit from one-to-one or group support sessions outside the curriculum. Class teachers are supported by a range of strategies, including detailed and useful individual education plans.
- 3.13 Academically gifted pupils, highlighted through aptitude tests and departmental scrutiny or teacher referral, are challenged in many lessons and benefit from the school's full range of academic enrichment activities and also some specific programmes, but provision for the ablest pupils in the senior school is not centrally co-ordinated. As a result, no single member of staff has a full picture of the provision made for an individual pupil. Many pupils undertake the HPQ and EPQ; these projects challenge pupils intellectually and allow them to research topics through guided independent learning.
- 3.14 The careers and higher education guidance, led by specialist staff, is greatly appreciated by the pupils. Pupils benefit from the well-appointed libraries which,

together with the sixth-form centre, provide pleasant, stimulating environments in which to learn.

- 3.15 Teachers give significant academic support on an individual basis or through clubs, and sixth-form pupils receive further support at study sessions and from sixth-form learning mentors who help individuals and groups. The curriculum is enhanced by an extensive programme of academic enrichment activities, for instance subject-specific clubs, competitions, trips out of school, year group enrichment days and guest speakers. Sixth-form pupils benefit greatly from sessions offering activities such as Mandarin, Western art and leadership skills.
- 3.16 Provision for the performing arts flourishes. There is a high level of participation in the regular, inclusive large-scale musicals, as well as numerous other music, drama and dance activities, with frequent performances by all age groups. Many pupils engage very effectively in the Combined Cadet Force, the DofE and several other service activities, together with a broad range of charity and outreach work, including overseas expeditions. Provision for sport is an extremely strong feature of the school and participation levels are high. An extensive range of sports includes rowing, table tennis and skiing. Pupils from Year 6 upwards experience sports tours in this country and abroad; high performing pupils benefit from individually tailored programmes. Pupils and parents are very appreciative of the range and quality of the extra-curricular provision.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.17 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.18 The teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, and their approach is often scholarly. Their high levels of enthusiasm promote considerable application from pupils of all ages. Lessons benefit from a wide variety of methods, and are characterised by extremely positive relationships between pupils and staff, which enable the school to fulfil its stated aim to nurture intellectual development and maximise the potential of every pupil. Teachers frequently give pupils the chance to collaborate over their work, which proves beneficial to pupils across the ability range.
- 3.19 Lessons in all areas of the school show excellent and imaginative planning, and graded tasks cater extremely well for pupils of all abilities. Provision by teachers for the most able pupils is very good, although it is not centrally co-ordinated. Teachers promote academic rigour through challenging extension tasks. The vast majority of teaching demonstrates a fast pace that stretches pupils by moving quickly on to tasks that require higher order thinking. Such lessons feature open-ended questioning, where pupils are challenged to justify and make links between complex ideas. A very small proportion of teaching lacks pace and ambition, which restricts pupils' progress.
- 3.20 Subject teachers give excellent support to pupils who have difficulties in their lessons. Pupils speak warmly of how much time teachers give up during lunchtimes and after classes for individual or group help. Two sixth-form learning mentors provide sensitive support to enhance the independent study skills of A-level pupils. The academic support department caters for pupils with SEND both during the regular timetable and outside lesson time. There is excellent liaison between the department and all teachers, who receive the individual education plans, detailing how they can help specific pupils. Provision within lessons for pupils with SEND is thus excellent, as teachers respond appropriately to each individual's needs.

- 3.21 Assessment is a strength of the teaching. Teachers throughout both junior and senior schools make use of regular tests to assess their pupils' understanding and to inform future teaching. Pupils appreciate the feedback that tests provide, and feel that regular testing helps them to understand their progress and gives them confidence to face subsequent examinations. Recent focus on assessment of any gaps in learning in the junior school has led to a strong approach to self-assessment. Teachers set appropriate and challenging targets for individual junior school pupils, and, as a consequence, pupils understand how they are assessed.
- 3.22 At its best, marking is outstanding, with teachers giving detailed comments on how to improve as well as specific individual targets. The quality of such marking in the senior school is, however, inconsistent. Formal reporting procedures are excellent, and have been honed through widespread consultation. Teachers, pupils and parents consider the grading systems to be extremely clear. Pupils find that the award of reward points for good work in the senior school lacks consistency. The tracking of pupil progress was a recommendation of the previous inspection, and has been implemented throughout the junior school. The development of a coherent approach to monitoring throughout the school has made good progress. Detailed analysis of pupils' grades identifies any underperformance, and staff act quickly to assist these pupils. Tracking information is used helpfully to give pupils advice regarding subject choices at GCSE and A level.

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 successfully fulfils its aims to promote a sense of well-being, respect, tolerance, service, care and self-confidence, where everyone is treated equally and given every opportunity to flourish. Pupils demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills, are kind, articulate, self-assured young people and show great pride in their school. There is a true sense of identity and cohesion within the school; pupils' loyalty to their houses and support of their peers are strong. They express themselves very clearly, communicating highly enthusiastically about learning, teaching, drama, music, sport and other various activities. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The ethos in the school community encourages pupils to flourish and grow into self-confident, well-informed young people with a strong sense of who they are and what they believe in. This is achieved in part through curricular work, PSHE, and trips and visits. Pupils benefit from creative prayer spaces established by each year group in the junior school, which encourage personal reflection. Assemblies, often led by pupils, celebrate the successes of pupils across a wide range of activities, including the popular house competitions.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is excellent. A well-organised PSHE scheme contributes valuably to the pupils' development of a strong moral code and sense of right and wrong, which pervades the culture of the school. The involvement of pupils in the school's outreach programme and their generosity in supporting a diverse range of charitable ventures reflect a high level of moral awareness within the school; pupils show great sensitivity to the needs of those less fortunate than themselves. For example, pupils support initiatives such as a Save the Children Christmas jumper appeal, a Philippines typhoon appeal and fund raising for the homeless in Bedford.
- 4.5 The social development of pupils is excellent, and they acquire a high level of social, political and economic awareness. Collaborative relationships contribute to the pupils developing a high level of emotional maturity. Throughout the junior and senior schools they are active members of their community and assume roles of responsibility and service, such as house captains and monitors, with enthusiasm and sincerity. The excellent monitor system is valued equally by those receiving support and by the monitors themselves as an effective way of providing additional care for the individual at key points in their school career and as an opportunity to take responsibility. The school councils are an effective forum where pupils demonstrate their considerable listening and debating skills, with the clear intention of benefiting the school and the wider community.
- 4.6 The school demonstrates harmonious co-existence, in which pupils understand and respect the range of backgrounds, cultures and faiths represented, which helps to develop a strong cultural awareness and positive relationships. Pupils also have a clear understanding of Western cultural traditions. They understand the realities of other cultures through, for example, the many foreign trips organised by the languages department, or further afield on expeditions to remote Ethiopia.

- 4.7 Pupils are mature, articulate and eager to benefit from the many opportunities presented to them. They realise their responsibilities to others and, extremely well prepared for the next stage of their lives, they are ready to meet the challenges of the future.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The pastoral structure is effective in providing support and guidance in accordance with the school's aims. Throughout the school, staff responsible for pastoral leadership ably support heads of year, tutors and class teachers in providing a pastoral system that is clearly focused on providing holistic care for every pupil. Their approach is conscientious, caring and compassionate.
- 4.10 Positive relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are evident throughout the school. Pupils have very good access to staff, including the school nurses and counsellors, to whom they can bring matters of concern.
- 4.11 Nutritious meals, with good choice and provision for particular dietary needs, encourage healthy eating, and pupils benefit from extensive opportunities for physical activity.
- 4.12 The school is very successful in promoting good behaviour, and excellent standards were observed throughout the inspection, confirming the opinion of the parents in their response to the questionnaire. In the junior school the clear behaviour plan builds the foundations for success in this respect. A structured policy sets a framework for promoting good and discouraging unacceptable behaviour. Pupils' strong house identity encourages support for one another as well as competition across a broad range of activities. Pupils say that bullying is not a significant issue and they are confident that any instances would be dealt with fairly and effectively. The school has a suitable access plan for pupils with SEND.
- 4.13 In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils said that the school does not ask for their opinions or respond to them. Inspection evidence did not support this view. Inspectors judge that pupils' opinions are heard through the junior school council, senior school year council and the student government: all of these bodies have achieved changes and improvements to the school.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 Arrangements to ensure the health, safety and welfare of pupils throughout the school are taken very seriously. The sensitive and effective management of welfare matters fulfils the school's assertion that all pupils' well-being is of paramount importance. Policies are detailed and wide ranging. Clear procedures for safeguarding children and eliminating discrimination are implemented highly effectively. The required checks on new staff are carried out and recorded correctly, as part of a rigorous recruitment process. All staff receive appropriate training in child protection at the prescribed intervals.
- 4.16 The school has made considerable progress since the previous inspection, with the creation of a committee to monitor regulatory compliance and establishing specific oversight of health and safety matters by a named governor. It has also appointed trips and registration administrators, and road crossing and site supervisors. The number of trained first aiders has increased to 80, with 23 of these qualified at the higher level.
- 4.17 The school has a well-equipped and welcoming medical centre, staffed by qualified nurses, and a valued counselling service. Communication between the nurses and the pastoral teams is very good. The school provides very well for sick and injured pupils and those with SEND.
- 4.18 Pupils are comprehensively educated in e-safety and appropriate use of the internet; their access to the internet is filtered. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. The school is inspected by the local fire officer, a service provider carries out biannual tests on all equipment for fire prevention and fire fighting, and fire practices are held regularly. Risk assessments are comprehensive and thorough for relevant activities in and out of school.
- 4.19 The admission and attendance registers are accurately completed and kept for the required period. Attendance is closely monitored, with a system of immediate response to pupil absence.

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 board of governors exercises effective oversight and is wholeheartedly committed to the school's aims and ethos. The governors conscientiously discharge their responsibilities for educational standards, and for investment in staff, accommodation and resources. They monitor all financial matters very closely and take forward-thinking initiatives to promote the success of the school. Governors contribute a wide range of experience and expertise. They are diligent and effective in discharging their responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety: the whole governing body regularly reviews safeguarding policies and practices, and the efficiency with which the related duties are implemented.
- 5.3 The governors give valued support to senior leadership, with whom they have frequent informal communication in addition to the annual schedule of formal meetings. As well as these regular meetings of the main governing body and its committees, every governor is attached to one of the academic faculties and several have specific areas of responsibility, such as safeguarding or the junior school. The governors regularly attend school events. Two governors are elected by the staff and the parent body respectively, and a number of governors are parents of current or former pupils. The governors have a well-informed appreciation and close understanding of the life of the school, and are fully involved.
- 5.4 The Harpur Trust operates an induction process for all new governors, and enables all governors to keep abreast of current good practice by organising training courses that cover defined areas of governance duties and responsibilities.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 Leadership and management amply satisfy the objective to strive for excellence in all areas of school life. Since the previous inspection, strong leadership has enabled the school to make further progress against its ambitious strategic objectives. Clear educational direction is accompanied by a distinct focus on improvement in educational provision in the broadest sense. This emanates from the determined and dedicated leadership team as well as the junior school executive team, who work collaboratively and in consultation with a supportive staff team to implement initiatives. In response to the recommendation of the previous inspection to review the responsibilities of the leadership team, the team has been restructured and includes an additional deputy head. The commitment of all staff to fulfilling the school's aims is clearly reflected in the excellent teaching, extra-curricular opportunities and pastoral care provided for pupils.
- 5.7 Management systems are clearly defined, well understood and highly effective. Comprehensive, well-structured arrangements for pastoral care, the academic programme and extra-curricular opportunities extend throughout the school; strong and supportive working relationships benefit pupils' educational development. The

recommendation of the previous inspection to provide clearly written procedures for monitoring and evaluation by junior school subject co-ordinators has been achieved and they are leading their subjects effectively.

- 5.8 Leaders delegate responsibilities effectively to middle managers who are accountable for the performance of their pastoral or academic area. Communication across the school is excellent. The leadership team and junior school executive team have established detailed policies and procedures that ensure that this busy school runs smoothly and efficiently whilst maintaining a warm community in which the contribution made by individuals is recognised and their views can be heard. Strong, co-operative and caring relationships between staff and pupils are evident at all times, and the sense of inclusion and opportunity pervades every area of the school community.
- 5.9 In response to the recommendation made at the previous inspection, monitoring of pupil performance in all areas has been developed well. Increasingly effective use of the school's information management systems ensures that pupils are making the very most of their talents and opportunities, and careful monitoring of extra-curricular participation reveals the excellent take-up of activities by pupils at all stages.
- 5.10 Ambitious planning for capital projects is guided by educational priorities. In response to the recommendation made at the previous inspection, there is now a detailed development plan for the junior school which is incorporated into the whole-school development plan. The shared school priorities for each academic year ensure clear focus and are reflected in planning throughout the school. A culture of review and evaluation is exemplified by the rolling cycle of detailed subject and faculty reviews and the establishment of assessing gaps in learning to inform planning in the junior school.
- 5.11 The highly effective leadership of strong teams of support staff, with responsibility for the estate, finance, catering, domestic and administrative areas of the school, ensures successful provision of a holistic educational experience. The buildings and grounds are extremely well maintained and presented, and provide a setting conducive to learning and development. Pupils speak proudly of the facilities from which they benefit.
- 5.12 The school has a rigorous procedure for the recruitment and appointment of staff, and maintains an accurate record of all required checks carried out. It is also successful in maintaining high quality personnel in teaching and support roles. A thorough programme for the induction of staff includes appropriate training in safeguarding the pupils' welfare, health and safety. The school and the Harpur Trust ensure that all staff are well trained for their roles. The school has effective, nationally recognised systems to ensure that teachers new to the profession can progress to newly qualified and qualified teacher status.
- 5.13 The school is fully committed to the development and support of its staff. Clear leadership of the rigorous performance management system is valued by staff. Contributions made by individuals are reviewed in line with the school's aim to maintain and develop committed, forward-thinking and well-qualified staff, able to offer effective support to all pupils. Productive development targets are agreed and reviewed annually; the programme of staff professional development provides realistic targets and encouragement to achieve performance management goals. Peer observation and reflective observation of classroom teaching are well established, fostering the sharing of good practice.

- 5.14 Links with parents across the school are excellent. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents reported very high levels of satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children. No areas of concern were raised by significant numbers of parents. An appropriate complaints procedure is maintained and appropriately implemented on the very rare occasions its use has been necessary.
- 5.15 The school provides the required information for parents of both current and prospective pupils. This includes detailed guidance for both pupils and parents new to the school, and helpful information about subject choices at appropriate stages, as well as news through the website and social media channels. Parents receive regular and helpful reports about the progress that their children are making, and full written reports contain useful feedback as to how pupils can make further progress.
- 5.16 A small minority of parents expressed in responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire dissatisfaction with opportunity to be involved with the school. Inspectors judge that parents have good opportunities to be involved in the school's life and work. For example, parent helpers assist junior pupils with their reading, accompany trips and support themed days. All parents are encouraged to become involved with the parents' association, which works to bring families together as well as to raise funds for items such as a new external clock and junior school playground equipment. Junior school parents, for example, are very pleased with the leadership's weekly blogs that review the previous week and inform them of matters arising in the next. The parents' forum, initiated by the junior school leadership, gives them a constructive voice in the school. This has led to reflections on school procedures, supported by parents' questionnaires, which have resulted in further development of communication between home and school, updated information booklets and refinement of now strong induction procedures for new pupils.

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