



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
BEECHWOOD SACRED HEART SCHOOL**

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## Beechwood Sacred Heart School

Full Name of School	<b>Beechwood Sacred Heart School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>886/6011</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>325104</b>		
Address	<b>Pembury Road Tunbridge Wells Kent TN2 3QD</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01892 532747</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01892 536164</b>		
Email Address	<b>bsh@beechwood.org.uk</b>		
Headmaster	<b>Mr Aaron J Lennon</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Marie-France Mason</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>386</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (174 boys; 212 girls;)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>135</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>44</b>	11-18: <b>207</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>360</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>27</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Rachel Burton</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection Dates	<b>04 Feb 2014 to 07 Feb 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 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](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.

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 and vice-chair of the governing body, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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**

Dr Stephen Grounds	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Krystyna Derkacz	Team Inspector (Assessment Co-ordinator, IAPS school)
Miss Rosemary Walker	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)
Miss Joanna Parry	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, SoH school)
Mrs Roberta Georghiou	Team Inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Mr Stuart Higgins	Team Inspector (Principal, SoH school)
Mrs Linda Trevethick	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Ann Pelech	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Beechwood Sacred Heart School's mission is to be a vibrant, caring school, providing an education based on Catholic principles, affordable to parents and attractive to pupils, enabling all to achieve their full potential and equipping them to compete successfully in the outside world. In particular the school aims to be happy and friendly with a relaxed, welcoming atmosphere; where every pupil is known and valued personally, and can grow and develop with confidence. The school seeks to maintain traditional values, whilst keeping up with modern innovations and developments.
- 1.2 Since 1973 the school has been governed by a mainly lay governing body, having been founded in 1915 by the nuns of the Society of the Sacred Heart as a Catholic secondary boarding and day school for girls. The co-educational preparatory school was opened during the 1980s. Beginning just before the previous inspection in 2009 the school has become co-educational in all years. The school will offer boarding to boys from September 2014. The headmaster was appointed in 2013.
- 1.3 The school currently has 386 pupils; 207, aged from 11 to 18, are in the senior school; 135, aged from five to eleven are in the preparatory school, known as the prep; and 44 are in the Reception and Beechnuts Nursery in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There are 53 pupils in the sixth form. There are more girls than boys. The main entry points are into the Nursery, Reception, Year 3, Year 7, Year 9 and Year 12. Most pupils join the school at the ages of four, seven and eleven, but pupils can enter at any age if places are available. Twenty-seven girls board, most as weekly boarders. Most day pupils come from a radius of 10 to 15 miles around Tunbridge Wells and a significant proportion of the boarders are from overseas, most from the Far East and some from Africa, South America or Europe. The school welcomes pupils representing a wide range of abilities, primarily on the basis that they will fit the Beechwood ethos and benefit from what the school has to offer. In addition to government funding for pupils in the EYFS, the school offers some scholarships or bursaries.
- 1.4 In most years the ability profile of the school is above the national average. In the senior school over a half of pupils have ability that is above average, and over a quarter have ability that is in line with the national average.
- 1.5 The school has identified 85 pupils as having special educational needs and/or a disability (SEND) and provides extra support for them. Four pupils have a statement of special educational needs. In addition, there are 22 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) of whom 18 receive extra help.
- 1.6 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 All pupils from the EYFS through to the sixth form, and including those with SEND, achieve well and make good progress with their studies. Because of their additional success in acquiring English, pupils with EAL make better progress overall than their peers. Pupils' basic skills in literacy, numeracy and investigative science are good, again at all levels. Senior pupils have well-developed practical skills. Creativity is instanced by excellent work in art and drama. However, apart from in the EYFS and in the sixth form, pupils carry out relatively little independent work and the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in their work is limited. The academic curriculum is excellent: it is broad in scope and the range of subjects on offer in the sixth form is unusually large given its size. Equally broad is the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils respond successfully and enthusiastically to the sporting opportunities and to the wide range of visits, clubs, musical and dramatic opportunities. Teaching is good and the support for those with SEND and EAL is a strength of the school. The assessment and the tracking of pupils is good and leads to individual support for pupils who need it. The tracking of EAL pupils has improved since the previous inspection. The marking of work varies significantly: some seen was perfunctory whilst other marking was analytic with comments on how to improve. Pupils who are able, gifted and talented exceed the level of attainment of their peers. Whilst they are usefully recommended to tackle more stretching work, usually outside the classroom, in ordinary lessons they are generally given work at the same level as other pupils.
- 2.2 In all parts of the school the pupils' behaviour and attitudes are excellent and their personal development is a strength of the school. Pupils respond to the spiritual dimension of the school and appreciate non-material aspects of life. Mutual respect, tolerance and care for those less fortunate are strongly evident. Pupils of all ages have a palpably strong affection for the school community: its warm and friendly environment is appreciated. At all levels pupils benefit from the excellent systems of pastoral support and from secure procedures for health and safety and safeguarding. The arrangements for the support of boarders reflect the arrangements for day pupils and have developed since the previous inspection. The quality of the boarding accommodation is excellent.
- 2.3 Leadership, management and governance are excellent at all levels. There is a shared enthusiasm and zeal for the school's future and its improvement. Timely changes, involving staffing structures, the introduction of departmental reviews and academic initiatives are in the process of being introduced, and where changes have already been made improvement is evident. The school has responded to all the recommendations of the previous report although developments in the use of ICT, and the consistency of peer review, are not yet complete. Links with parents are excellent and in the pre-inspection questionnaire parents expressed overwhelming support for and appreciation of the school's care and provision.



## **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 meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

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

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the school's best practice in the marking of pupils' work is followed by all teachers.
  2. Ensure that pupils develop and use their ICT skills across the whole curriculum.
  3. Increase the level of challenge for, and the independent work carried out by, pupils on the able, gifted and talented register in timetabled lessons.

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

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

- 3.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 The school succeeds in its aim that each pupil should reach his or her potential.
- 3.3 Children in the EYFS, including those with SEND and EAL, express themselves clearly and show high levels of creativity, collaborative working and imagination. Nursery children are learning phonics and beginning to count with confidence whilst Reception children enjoy the challenges involving number sequencing and are starting to use phonics to help them with their reading. Reception children are beginning to write words and build sentences using cursive script. In both Nursery and Reception children work independently.
- 3.4 As they progress in the prep school, the pupils' basic skills in numeracy, speaking, listening, reading and writing become well developed as do their investigative skills in science. All these skills develop well in the senior school so that all pupils become extremely articulate and able to communicate with peers and adults alike. Presentation skills, both individually and in group settings, are good. Senior pupils have very well developed practical skills. They are able to apply mathematics in subjects such as geography and science. Many demonstrate critical thinking. Creativity is instanced by the excellent work in art throughout the school. Apart from this example, in the prep and senior school only a limited amount of independent work is evident except in the sixth form where for many pupils it is a real strength. These older pupils produce imaginative work, particularly in English, history and music. Sixth-form art shows the application of advanced technique and research. Across the school, with the exception of the EYFS, pupils seldom deploy their well-developed skills in ICT in their learning.
- 3.5 Pupils in the prep are successful in the examinations at age eleven for admittance to maintained selective schools. Sixth-form pupils enjoy successes in application to a wide range of universities.
- 3.6 Pupils succeed well in a wide range of extra-curricular activities throughout the school. They have had success at all levels in the UK Maths Challenges. The vast majority of those who enter instrumental and singing examinations are rewarded a merit or distinction and the school has had consistent success in LAMDA dramatic art examinations. Success is enjoyed at team and individual level in swimming, gymnastics, cricket, netball and skiing at all ages and levels. There are particular sporting successes in basketball, tag rugby and football. Many pupils are successful in the Duke of Edinburgh's (DofE) Award scheme.
- 3.7 In the analysis which follows, national data for the years 2010 to 2012 is used. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. By the end of Reception, many children exceed levels of the EYFS learning development plan. Results in National Curriculum tests at age seven and eleven have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools. GCSE results have been above the national average for maintained schools. Results in IGCSE ESL were higher than worldwide and UK norms. A-level results have been similar to the national average for maintained schools overall. Results in 2011 were similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. The results for 2013 show similar attainment at all ages. From this level of attainment

and from work scrutiny, interviews and classroom observations, inspectors judge that at all levels in the school the progress made by pupils is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Data from the school and case studies show that pupils with SEND make the same progress as other pupils and as a result of the support they receive. Given their success in additionally acquiring the English language, pupils with EAL make better progress than their peers.

- 3.8 Children in the EYFS enjoy their lessons and are excited and enthusiastic about their learning and achievements. They take some responsibility for choosing what they do. Pupils throughout the school have positive attitudes to their work and their involvement in activities. Largely self-motivated, they apply themselves to their work and study hard, and with enjoyment. Older pupils in particular manage the many activities they undertake well. All pupils work effectively and collaboratively, with their teachers and peers.

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

- 3.9 The curricular and extra-curricular provision of the school is excellent.
- 3.10 The curriculum successfully fulfils the school's aim of equipping all pupils to compete in the outside world.
- 3.11 In the EYFS careful planning and organisation promote creativity, problem solving and the children's thinking and learning. An effective balance of adult-led and child-initiated tasks enables children to respond very well to the expectations of staff and to be well prepared for the next stages in their learning. Good additional support is given to those children who need a little extra help, or have SEND or EAL.
- 3.12 In the prep school there is good continuity from the EYFS and its areas of learning. In the lower years of the prep the provision includes the National Curriculum subjects with the addition of religious education (RE), swimming, design and technology (DT) and cookery. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in physical education (PE), music and RE in both the EYFS and the lower years of the prep. French is started in the lower school and this, as well as other subjects, is taught increasingly by specialists from within the prep school or the senior school, enabling a smooth transition from one school to the next. Setting by ability takes place in mathematics and English from Year 3 onwards enabling progress to be well matched to individual capability.
- 3.13 In the senior school a 'Thinking Skills' programme has been introduced as a discrete subject in the lower years and some of its features are also used effectively in a number of subjects throughout the whole school. At GCSE pupils benefit from the offering of three separate sciences and three modern foreign languages as part of a wide choice of subjects. Similarly at A level every effort is made to provide pupils with the programme of their choice from a list of 22 subjects. In all parts of the school personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is carefully planned to help pupils prepare for later stages in life.
- 3.14 The school rightly recognises its need to continue to improve the use of ICT by pupils, which was a recommendation of the previous inspection. A recently appointed ICT co-ordinator is in the process of restructuring the planning, teaching and use of ICT in order to integrate it throughout the curriculum.
- 3.15 The support for pupils with SEND by the learning development department is a strength of the school. The department is staffed by an enthusiastic team of trained

specialists. On entrance to the school pupils are screened for special learning difficulties using information from all possible sources and the department identifies underlying difficulties with considerable success as a result. The department liaises with other teachers to facilitate support in the classroom. Staff visit pupils with SEND in classrooms to monitor provision. In addition they periodically provide appropriate in service training for teachers. All this enhances the pupils' success. Continuity of provision is ensured across the whole school.

- 3.16 The department also provides those with EAL with specialist support, again by specially trained teachers. Tracking of these pupils has been improved since the previous inspection. Around 20 pupils in the senior school attend special classes in English on a weekly basis, whilst a small number have supplementary support in their lessons. The support not only fosters skills to achieve examination success but also helps overseas students to cope with English in social situations and to learn about British culture and traditions.
- 3.17 Careers guidance provides pupils making future choices with appropriate support: Year 13 pupils praised the help they had been given in preparing their applications for university.
- 3.18 The main school curriculum is enriched by an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities, theme days, visitors and outings. There is an impressive range of lunchtime and after-school clubs with those indoors, such as chess, choir, ballet and jazz dance, matched by sporting choices. A full range of peripatetic tuition enhances the provision of music. The school is determined to respond to the pupils' needs and enthusiasms. In the senior school clubs such as those for foreign language conversation, mathematics and art support the curriculum while others such as speech and drama provide opportunity for further qualifications. Activities such as the Young Enterprise scheme and DofE Award allow pupils to interact with those from other schools.
- 3.19 Many visits to places of interest further enhance the curriculum. Older pupils particularly valued the opportunities afforded by the Sacred Heart Network Exchange Programme to carry out exchanges with students from a number of foreign countries. They enjoyed the opportunity to visit and play sport in Verona for which the school also provided a short introductory course in Italian. Links with the community are strong. Pupils may carry out service in the community for example by volunteering at a local adult learning centre.

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

- 3.20 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.21 Teaching effectively promotes the pupils' learning and positively supports the aims of the school. It is effective in enabling pupils of all abilities to make good progress relative to their abilities. Teachers know the pupils well and give plenty of praise and encouragement. The nurturing and purposeful relationships in the classroom between pupils and teachers and amongst pupils create an atmosphere conducive to learning.
- 3.22 In the EYFS teachers meet the children's needs extremely well. The highly effective and dedicated staff assess the children's progress and incorporate their needs and interests into planning, and are confident in helping children to learn. Staff work very much as a team; they are extremely enthusiastic, engaging and motivating the children to learn, to be curious and to be excited in all that they do.

- 3.23 Pupils are given clear expectations. The most effective lessons begin with a sharing of aims and objectives with pupils, who, as a result, know exactly the focus of the lesson. Younger pupils clearly feel comfortable and safe in expressing their views. However, although they are well focused in lessons and enjoy participating orally, they are inclined to be less willing to think and work independently or to take the initiative. In the senior school pupils are sometimes encouraged to take a more independent approach to their learning by being challenged to apply their knowledge in unfamiliar situations. Only in the sixth form is this approach extensive.
- 3.24 Teachers in the prep school demonstrate good subject knowledge. Teaching assistants are well deployed. Appropriate use of the available resources enables good progress to be made. Equally, in the senior school teachers have good knowledge and use resources well to engage pupils. For example in a Year 11 physics lesson use of an online customer service facility enabled pupils to find out how storage heaters functioned, knowledge that was then used to plan a practical session.
- 3.25 In the prep school lesson planning is thorough and consistent, with clear learning objectives and an understanding of individual pupils' needs, informed by successful use of a range of standardised tests and external benchmarks. This system of regular assessments allows every pupil's progress to be tracked meticulously. It provides full and accurate pupil profiles which are successfully used in order to identify and monitor pupils with strengths and weaknesses or those who might be under-achieving. In the senior school planning is well used to make the teaching accessible to all. The support of the learning development department is effective for those with SEND, including provision for those with statements of special educational need, and those with EAL. For example, EAL pupils are enabled to make good progress by being given textual material to read a week in advance under the guidance of specialist staff.
- 3.26 Throughout the school teachers encourage neat presentation and high standards in written work. However, there are inconsistencies in the volume of work produced across subjects and in the marking. In the prep school, some books contain high-quality comments giving encouragement and informing pupils how to improve, often with clear dialogue between teacher and pupil; however, at other times the marking lacks focus. All pupils acknowledge the feedback they receive from their teachers and appreciate recognition for effort. They confirm that they usually agree targets with their teachers orally and are aware of what they have to do to improve. Half-termly targets are recorded in the pupils' school diaries. In senior history and English there are clear benefits in the newly introduced active marking scheme. This promotes comment-based marking, setting of appropriate targets and encourages pupils to reflect on and then respond to teacher comments. However, in other subjects an inconsistent and variable approach is evident.
- 3.27 The learning development department maintains a register of able, gifted and talented pupils and usefully initiates suggestions for extension activities. However, the activities are not obligatory and for the most part take place outside taught lessons: in lessons pupils are generally asked to do the same work as other pupils. Although these pupils have higher attainment than their peers the classroom work scrutinised lacked evidence of them being given real challenge.
- 3.28 All teachers are strongly committed to the successful learning of their pupils and are willing to give their time outside lessons to pupils who need extra support or those who want to improve their grades. This is strongly appreciated by pupils.

## **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 It strongly supports the aims of the school. By the time they leave school pupils are articulate and mature young men and women.
- 4.3 The spiritual dimension of the school is one of the school's key strengths and the pupils appreciate non-material aspects of life. Assemblies led by the pupils reflect the school's values and the messages of faith-based assemblies delivered by staff. While the Catholic faith is ever present in the school and lends it much character, there is tolerance and understanding of those of other faiths and of those who have none. Pupils are aware of other cultures and beliefs, including other Christian traditions. Children in the EYFS leave well-prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 4.4 Pupils have a strong awareness of right and wrong. Pupils accept the need for rules if there is to be fairness and harmony both in school and society at large. Assemblies, RE classes and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) sessions provide many opportunities to discuss ethical issues and their applications to daily living.
- 4.5 The pupils' social awareness is outstanding; their very strong affection for their school community is palpable and was very strongly evident in the pupils' comments questionnaires, for example that they were drawn to the school as it felt like a family. Older pupils express very positive attitudes about the younger ones and take seriously their role in caring for them. Senior pupils help to solve petty issues between younger pupils. Pupils of all ages show a keen sense of fair play and appreciate the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves. This leads to very considerable charitable work throughout the school. For example, children in the prep school and the EYFS had recently supported the British Heart Foundation. Pupils annually hold a harvest festival the collection from which is donated to those in need in the local community through the local parish. In the senior school all pupils had been involved in a sponsored walk and further support charity through the house system. Pupils in the senior school engage in considerable service in their local community while in the EYFS and the prep school a link with a school in Nepal has been established.
- 4.6 The pupils' cultural development in all ways, whether in terms of art, music and drama, or of awareness of the cultural backgrounds of those from other parts of the world, is good. The former is evidenced by the high quality art which is on display throughout the school and the breadth of musical activity in the school. In drama pupils are able to explore moral and spiritual issues. Pupils benefit from visits to places of cultural interest. Relations between pupils in the multi-cultural setting of the school are harmonious. Activities such as Model United Nations and visits such as those by local councillors and magistrates and lessons taught within the PSHCE programme ensure that pupils of all ages gain understanding of the British constitution and institutions.

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

- 4.7 The quality of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The pastoral care provided by all the staff strongly supports the school's aim to ensure that each pupil is valued as an individual. Relationships between staff and pupils are warm and positive. In the EYFS excellent relationships are promoted throughout the setting so that children are well cared for and behave very well.
- 4.9 The tutor system is a particular strength which enables effective daily individual support and guidance. There is a weekly briefing to staff which includes 'Pupil Watch', a system which alerts all staff to pupils who need extra pastoral support. The introduction of two trained counsellors is a positive addition to the pastoral provision. An early intervention system introduced since the previous inspection has encouraged the pastoral team to identify pupils who need extra mentoring.
- 4.10 Strong communication between the EYFS, the prep and the senior school and different tutors helps facilitate smooth transition between phases of education. A number of events such as induction days for new Year 7 pupils, team-building exercises for the sixth form and an outdoor education programme for Years 3 and 4 pupils help to make the pupils feel confident as they move to the next stage of their schooling. In the EYFS confidence building is assisted by activities to promote independence and children learn to manage risks, learn by their mistakes and build confidence and self-esteem.
- 4.11 Arrangements to promote positive behaviour and the avoidance of harassment or bullying work well. In the pupil questionnaire a small minority of senior pupils expressed the view that teachers are inconsistent in the fairness of their rewards and sanctions. However, in interviews with pupils such views were not sustained. Pupils respect the school's system of giving rewards and sanctions and consider it fair; younger senior school pupils consider that detentions in school time are 'there just to let you put things right'. Similarly in the senior school teachers are deemed fair in their distribution of house awards. Pupils know what to do if they encounter any bullying. Through the school council, pupils have taken a lead in this aspect of the school and have discussed, agreed and rewritten the bullying policy in a pupil-friendly form which is displayed in all form rooms.
- 4.12 The school council is valued by the pupils and forms one of several methods used to elicit their views. In the pupil questionnaire a small minority of pupils were dissatisfied with opportunities to give their opinions. However, when interviewed, all pupils said that they had many opportunities to voice their views and they also confirmed that they would be listened to and appropriate changes would be made. In addition to the school council other opportunities to garner pupil views include the food council, boarding council and exit questionnaires.
- 4.13 In the EYFS children are taught how to keep themselves safe and staff actively encourage them to choose healthy snacks and meals, be physically active and follow good hygiene routines. Staff are good role models, support the children very well, and sit with them at lunch time, promoting good table manners and behaviour. Older pupils are also taught about the importance of healthy eating and taking regular exercise, in their cases through tutor-led PSHCE sessions and health lessons. Pupils confirm that all of these issues are approached with sensitivity. Tutors have an oversight of the activities their pupils choose and ensure a healthy

balance is achieved. The school offers a balanced and varied diet to the pupils through meal times and snacks.

- 4.14 The school has a suitable plan to increase access for those pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.15 The school's arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.

4.16 The governors pay particular attention to health and safety matters. One of the governors takes particular responsibility for health and safety matters and carries out an annual audit which covers accountability, procedures, including a checking of the quality of risk assessments, and a site inspection of potential hazards. This approach provides assurance that all necessary aspects of welfare, health and safety, including matters pertaining to the EYFS, are in good order.

4.17 Aside from these arrangements for the built environment, appropriate arrangements secure the health and safety of pupils and thorough attention is paid to child protection in all parts of the school. Designated staff have regular training to update their expertise in safeguarding. Termly events are held to train staff and these include supplementary training for externally employed catering staff. The school maintains good and productive links with local agencies. The governors take a close and direct interest in any child protection matters and a designated governor takes the lead in the oversight of policy and practice. The school's policy is particularly clear. The school operates safe recruitment procedures and there are strengths in the way it has improved systems for checking information on staff prior to their appointment.

4.18 Fire drills take place regularly and effective measures are taken regarding the pupils' safety in evacuating the school in case of fire or other hazards. Health and safety training for staff takes place annually. Admission and attendance records are maintained and stored at a very high standard.

4.19 The school has a well-appointed medical room for pupils who are sick or injured, including those with SEND. Accidents are rare but systematic records are kept when they occur. The first-aid policy is comprehensive and the school has an appropriate number of staff with first-aid qualifications.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.20 The quality of boarding is excellent.

4.21 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders are happy, confident and articulate. They have very positive attitudes to boarding life and appreciate the opportunity for independence that it offers. Boarders confirm they have a significant impact on decision making. Personal development is a crucial aspect and tolerance and understanding are the cornerstones of the boarding provision. Boarders are extremely well cared for as individuals. Relationships within boarding are warm and genuine; there is a real sense of community. Boarding prefects carry out numerous responsibilities. They often work in a supervisory capacity, both on and off site. They take this role, for which they are suitably trained, very seriously and enjoy supporting the staff and younger boarders. Boarders acknowledge that they like boarding. Behaviour in the boarding area is exemplary. Boarders celebrate cultural differences and help each other. They integrate well with each other and with day



pupils. They are well prepared for life beyond school and are encouraged to keep fit and healthy.

- 4.22 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Newly refurbished rooms are equipped to a very high standard. Rooms awaiting refurbishment have been redecorated to improve their appearance. All bedrooms are warm, comfortable and well maintained. Boarders have a lockable drawer for their valuables. Showers and toilets are plentiful. Each boarding area has an adequate kitchen for the preparation of drinks and snacks. Common room areas are attractive, well equipped and well furnished. There is a wide range of board games and DVDs available. Daily newspapers are delivered to the common rooms. On-site laundry facilities provide a quick and efficient service which is very much appreciated. The dining hall is a pleasant environment in which to eat. The boarders are very positive about the catering staff and their willingness to prepare dishes which are particular favourites. There is a salad bar available which complements the choice of main meals available. Food is plentiful, nutritious and well-cooked. Those with special dietary requirements are well catered for. Fresh fruit and water or juice is available at all meals. Themed nights are held and menus for these evenings enhance the dining experience and promote cultural appreciation.
- 4.23 There is a suitable range of activities in the evenings and weekends; boarders feel very positive about being able to suggest changes to the programme at short notice. Excursions are regularly organised to local towns, the cinema and the theatre. The facilities available for sport and recreation offer boarders wide choice and the site itself offers plentiful and attractive space for walking and running. New boarders follow a carefully constructed induction programme which supports them extremely well, easing their transition into boarding life. Boarders have a range of adults to whom they can turn for help and guidance. They confirm that they have access to a quiet place to be on their own. Boarding areas display comprehensive information and contact details for the two counsellors and outside agencies such as Childline and the Children's Rights Director. Parents and boarders can contact each other easily. Email and video are used frequently by boarders. Staff maintain good contact with parents and guardians.
- 4.24 The safety and welfare of boarders is ensured through effective communication between boarding staff and main school staff, parents and guardians. Boarders feel very safe and secure. The well-equipped Health Centre is open during the day and provides a confidential treatment room and in-patient accommodation in two twin bedded rooms, with a toilet nearby. There is a qualified nurse and pupils can attend the medical room at any time. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming. A doctor, with whom all boarders are registered on entry to the school, visits once a week. Boarders can request appointments. Medication is correctly and appropriately stored and dispensed. All necessary parental consents are in place. The arrangements for self-medication are effective and the confidentiality and rights of boarders are respected. Records are properly kept, including those for immunisation. There are regular fire drills and all extinguishers are checked annually. Fire drill logs are up to date and correctly stored. The excellent anti-bullying policy promotes an open and trusting atmosphere throughout boarding. Any incidents of bullying are reported quickly and robust systems are used to communicate and record relevant information so that issues can be resolved. The clear system of rewards and sanctions operates fairly. It underpins the aim of boarders taking responsibility for their actions and living together happily. Clear systems are in place for signing in and out and house staff are aware of boarders' whereabouts at all times. The missing child policy is clear and well understood.

Supervision of boarders is appropriate. Boarding staff are readily available overnight should the need arise. Mobile numbers are exchanged so that boarders can contact staff when they are out. Younger boarders are always accompanied when offsite and older boarders stay in pairs. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken for all activities and excursions; boarders are encouraged to take responsibility to minimise danger to themselves.

- 4.25 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent. This is reflected in the high quality interactions and positive relationships observed among the boarders and with staff. Systems and policies are effective. The boarding aims are clearly expressed and achieved without exception. The boarding staff bring a wide variety of appropriate training and experience to their roles. The boarding team meets at least weekly to review and discuss issues relating to individual boarders and take appropriate action. The collegiate management, which includes the headmaster and senior managers, ensures that policies are robust and fully implemented. The head of boarding reviews the performance and practice of her staff and meets with the deputy headmaster weekly to discuss concerns, issues, and staff training. There is effective self-evaluation which identifies clear priorities for development; these are fully shared. Responses of parents and boarders in pre-inspection questionnaires and in meetings were very positive about the boarding experience.

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

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

- 5.1 The governance of the school is excellent.
- 5.2 The governing body provides the school with a forward-looking sense of strategic direction and attention to the quality of its education, its income, resources and long-term viability. It carries out its role of critical friend generously and carefully. It has exercised over time a very clear strategic view of the school's future direction and its maintenance of a Catholic ethos. It is ambitious for the success of the school as exemplified by the time and energy spent on proposed site development.
- 5.3 It has a useful and very effective committee structure which includes scrutiny of academic and pastoral matters and which challenges the school on features of its provision. The relationship between the headmaster and the governing body is very effective. For example, the governing body is actively involved in creating and reviewing the school development plan.
- 5.4 The governors bring a wide range of experience to their work, including that of teaching, human resources, finance, law, the church and psychiatry. Governors are informed about the school through regular and full briefings by the headmaster and regular presentations by school staff. Governors attend performances and events throughout the school, for example, attending a French-themed day. Governors take a keen interest in both boarding and the EYFS setting and are actively involved in their development.
- 5.5 The governors understand very clearly their legal obligations with regard to statutory requirements. All governors have written guidance and draw on further advice from senior staff. As for other aspects such as health and safety, there is a particular governor with a responsibility for pupils' safeguarding. The process of reviewing documentation is very robust: the governor responsible for safeguarding reviews the actions of the school in an extensive report which is discussed and approved by the governing body as a whole.
- 5.6 The governing body has recently carried out both a self-audit of its effectiveness and an audit of the skills of individual governors. Training events and in-house support are provided for new governors. The headmaster is currently the subject of informal appraisal. Work to take this process forward in a more rigorous and formal way is currently in hand.

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

- 5.7 The quality of leadership and management including the school's links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent.
- 5.8 The leadership and management of the school exhibit a clear enthusiasm and zeal for the future and the improvement of the school. This approach is fully supported by the governing body.
- 5.9 The ethos and aims of the school are clearly defined and form the basis of the school's daily operation. The pupils' personal development and the quality of the

education provided remains central to senior leaders' thinking. Over the past twelve months, the senior management team (SMT), in conjunction with the governing body, has carried out a thorough review of all aspects of the school's work in order to ensure its aims and performance are aligned as fully as possible.

- 5.10 The highly dedicated staff in the EYFS work as a team. The head of the prep school effectively monitors the setting and evaluates the progress of each child in collaboration with the EYFS and other staff. Throughout the setting there is a very strong commitment to continuous improvement.
- 5.11 The school as a whole has effective systems and good lines of communication. Timely changes, involving staffing structures, the introduction of departmental reviews and academic initiatives such as the 'Thinking Skills' programme, are in the process of being introduced. This clear educational direction is based on a vision for future school improvement which is warmly welcomed by staff. Minutes of recent meetings indicate focused and rigorous thinking behind such changes and where initiatives such as departmental reviews have been implemented, noticeable improvements in teaching and learning are already evident.
- 5.12 More generally, the school is successful in helping pupils achieve good results while developing as independent, caring and articulate individuals. Strong leadership from the SMT and the heads of division provides good support to the tutor teams and hence the school's strong pastoral arrangements. In setting out change managers and leaders across the school are reported by staff and pupils alike, to be open, forward-thinking, approachable and communicative.
- 5.13 Leadership and management are successful in securing and supporting suitable staff. The arrangements for selecting and checking new staff are rigorous. The school ensures that all staff, including those in the EYFS, are aware of, and well trained in, their responsibilities in child protection, pastoral care, health and safety and boarding. The school very successfully engenders a true commitment amongst all staff to ensuring the well-being of its pupils. Staff appraisal is effectively used to support and monitor staff in the prep school. A new appraisal system has been devised for the senior school, but has yet to be fully implemented.
- 5.14 The school development plan is a clear working document which identifies the main priorities for continued improvement including in the EYFS. The EYFS setting has made good progress since its previous 2005 Ofsted report. The school has responded effectively to the recommendations of the previous ISI inspection report. Some peer observation and review now takes place, although the process still lacks consistency across all subjects and levels within the school. Some of the planned building and facilities development has taken place: the boarding area has been pleasantly refurbished, there is a new media suite and good improvements to the play area for the youngest children in the EYFS have been implemented. A powerful and effective ICT school management system is now fully operational. The system enables teaching and other staff to record positive achievements, as well as any learning problems or difficulties. A continuing programme of training ensures that staff are fully supported in their use of the system.
- 5.15 The school has excellent links with parents, including in the EYFS. The responses to the pre-inspection parental questionnaire were extremely positive with the overwhelming majority of parents expressing strong support and approval for the school. In particular parents indicated their considerable appreciation of the learning development department.

- 5.16 The school welcomes parents into the school and many opportunities exist for them to be actively involved in school life. They are invited to a varied programme of events throughout the year. The school sees their relationship with parents as a partnership and takes care to seek the views of parents, valuing their thoughts and opinions. A strong, active parents' association meets regularly and organise a wide programme of social and fund-raising events for the school.
- 5.17 Parents and prospective parents are provided with all the required information. The prospectus is relevant to parental needs and the weekly newsletter keeps parents up to date with events and activities involving their children. These are published on the website along with comprehensive information about the school. Highly informative, detailed parent handbooks assist parents and pupils to understand the day-to-day routines and workings of the school.
- 5.18 Effective communication is evident between pupils, tutors and parents. The successful introduction of tutor-parent meetings in the senior school has enabled fuller dialogue about each pupil and has strengthened these important pastoral relationships. Senior teachers are available to accompany pupils whose parents are unavailable for these meetings. These staff are then able to feed the information back to parents to ensure they are fully involved in their child's academic and personal development journey.
- 5.19 At the beginning of each new school year a special information evening is held for parents to meet the staff and learn about the curriculum, general routines and expectations for the year ahead. The pupil diary provides an excellent line of communication between home and school. At both formal and informal meetings parents can discuss their child's progress and achievements. Written reports are sent home twice a year which give parents a clear description of their child's progress and achievements. As pupils move through the school subject grades are increasingly and usefully used on the reports.
- 5.20 The school has clear and appropriate procedures for dealing with parental complaints. This has not had to be implemented with regard to any formal complaints recently.

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