



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**BIRKDALE SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Birkdale School

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

Full Name of School	<b>Birkdale School</b>
DfE Number	<b>373/6005</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1018973</b>
Address	<b>Birkdale School Oakholme Road Sheffield South Yorkshire S10 3DH England</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0114 266 8408</b>
Fax Number	<b>0114 267 1947</b>
Email Address	<b>headmaster@birkdalschool.org.uk</b>
Head	<b>Dr Paul Owen</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Dr John R Goepel</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>560</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (491 boys; 69 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	11-15: <b>327</b> 16-18: <b>233</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>560</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>23 Feb 2016 to 26 Feb 2016</b>

## PREFACE

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](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.

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

The previous ISI integrated inspection was in February 2010.

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.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

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

### **Inspectors**

Ms Margaret Burnet	Reporting Inspector
Mr Alan Cooper	Team Inspector (Senior Leader, HMC school)
Mrs Susan Goff	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Sean Hamill	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Susan Hincks	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Anne Price	Team Inspector (Former Senior Leader)
Mr John Sykes	Team Inspector (Senior Leader, HMC school)

## CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>(a) Main findings</b>	3
<b>(b) Action points</b>	4
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	4
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	4
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>5</b>
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	5
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	6
(c) The contribution of teaching	7
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	9
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	10
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	10
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
(a) The quality of governance	12
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	12

## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Birkdale School is a selective day school for boys aged between 11 and 18 and girls between the ages of 16 and 18, situated on an extensive campus close to Sheffield University. The school was founded in 1904 as a preparatory school for boys. In 1978 it opened a senior department for boys between the ages of 11 and 16, adding a sixth form in 1988. Girls were first admitted to the sixth form in 1995. The governing body has oversight of both the senior school and the nearby preparatory school.
- 1.2 The school's Christian faith underpins its core values of care and respect for all, commitment to each other and to the school, and the pursuit and celebration of excellence. The school aims to give all pupils a strong academic education, while developing them as whole individuals prepared for their wider role as responsible citizens willing to serve the community.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection in February 2010, the school has constructed a new three-year strategic development plan, increased its focus on academic rigour, introduced a school council, and increased the range of extra-curricular activities. A new headmaster was appointed in September 2010.
- 1.4 Of the 560 pupils on the roll at the time of the inspection, 327 are in Years 7 to 11 with 233 pupils in the sixth form. Pupils come from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds. The large majority of pupils are of white British origin, but a small minority are from minority ethnic families. Most pupils are from business or professional families, and most live in the vicinity of the school.
- 1.5 The ability profile of the senior school is above the national average, with a large minority of pupils having well above average ability. Of the fifty-seven pupils identified by the school as having specialist educational needs and/or disabilities, sixteen receive learning support. Thirteen pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), seven of whom receive additional support. Four pupils have an education, health and care plan. No pupils have a statement of educational needs.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

### ***Senior School***

<b>School</b>	<b>NC name</b>
S1	Year 7
S2	Year 8
S3	Year 9
S4	Year 10
S5	Year 11
L6	Year 12
U6	Year 13

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

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

- 2.1 Birkdale School is highly successful in achieving its aims, which are based on core Christian values. Throughout the school, pupils including those with SEND and EAL, achieve excellent results in national examinations. Overall, pupils make good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Pupils have an extremely positive attitude towards learning and they demonstrate a genuine desire to learn and succeed. Throughout the school, especially in the sixth form, pupils are actively engaged in their learning and they show high levels of motivation to achieve their best.
- 2.2 Pupils enjoy their learning and collaborate very well to attain high standards. Pupils achieve success in many extra-curricular activities and benefit from an excellent curriculum, which is suitable for all abilities and needs. Teaching is good. Since the previous inspection, a number of initiatives have been introduced which have improved the quality of assessment to identify pupils' progress. Despite the implementation of work scrutiny by senior leaders, with regard to the recommendation regarding marking, its standard is not always in line with the school's policy. This recommendation has not been fully met.
- 2.3 The school's ethos of care and respect underpins its promotion of pupils' personal development. Pupils are articulate, courteous and supportive of each other. They have high levels of self-esteem and understand the importance of contributing to the school community as well as to other communities both locally and globally. Pupils' social and cultural development is excellent. The strength of their spiritual and moral development is seen in their participation in the school council, assemblies and notably in charitable work, which is a great strength of the school. A well-organised pastoral care system ensures that pupils develop and mature in line with the school's aims. Pupils report that they feel happy and safe at school. There are effective arrangements for safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. Pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, have an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave school.
- 2.4 The school's improvement since the previous inspection has been supported by good governance, based on a clear vision for the future. Governors know the school well, and they provide the school and its leadership with support and stimulus for school development. Leadership and management are good. Pastoral leadership is excellent at all levels. Good self-evaluation and planning have led to the creation of a new three-year strategic development plan. The recommendation of the previous inspection, to include clear timescales in the plan have been met. Criteria for success are not however sufficiently developed. The school has made some progress since the previous inspection in extending monitoring at all levels. However, monitoring by middle management is not yet consistent. Links with parents are excellent.

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

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

2.5 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

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

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure the rigorous implementation and monitoring of all school policies at all levels of management.
2. Ensure consistent application and monitoring of the school's marking policy.



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

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims. A very large majority of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were pleased with the progress their children make at school. Pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, display an excellent breadth and depth of knowledge. They have well-developed reading and writing skills and demonstrate significant levels of linguistic ability. Pupils apply mathematical skills accurately, are highly articulate and express ideas with confidence. Pupils are logical and relish thinking independently, as was seen in the sixth-form committee's decision making. Pupils have outstanding levels of creativity, seen in art work on display and the high standards of their music. They are competent in physical activity
- 3.3 The pupils achieve success in many extra-curricular activities. They achieve notable success in mathematics and science Olympiads, debating, drama, and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme. They also achieve excellence in a wide variety of sports, with representation at local, county and national levels. On leaving school, nearly all pupils gain a place at their first choice of university. A large majority of pupils gain places to universities with highly competitive entry requirements.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national statistics for the years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at GCSE have been well above the national average for boys in maintained schools and similar to the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. Results at IGCSE mathematics are higher than worldwide and UK norms overall, but in 2014 results were in line with UK norms. French and German results in 2014 were higher than worldwide norms whereas Spanish results were lower.
- 3.5 Results in A-levels are above the national average for maintained schools, and above the national average for maintained selective schools. Girls' results are lower than boys, being similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools.
- 3.6 The level of attainment at GCSE, the nationally standardised progress data, combined with work seen, lessons observed and curriculum interviews indicates that pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. More able pupils achieve at a high level. Results at A level indicate that pupils make good progress in their time in the sixth form. The overwhelming majority of pupils responding to pre-inspection questionnaires felt they make good progress in their work.
- 3.7 Pupils have an extremely positive attitude towards learning. In class they are attentive, co-operative, and collaborate very well. They are inquisitive and enthusiastic. Pupils display excellent concentration and have a genuine desire to learn and succeed in their pursuit of excellence. In their pre-inspection questionnaires, most pupils reported that they found the work they do interesting. They enjoy their learning and gain satisfaction from their achievements. Pupils show excellent initiative outside the classroom through the organisation of house events and charity work. Pupils' attitudes develop as they move through the school. In the

sixth form, pupils are able to express their ideas with confidence and maturity. They hone their research skills through the Extended Project, producing sophisticated research and high-quality written work.

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

- 3.8 The curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The contribution of the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities is fully in line with the school's aims. The extremely broad range of subjects and activities on offer are suitable for all ages and abilities and needs, including those with an education, health and care (EHC) plan. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the vast majority of parents were satisfied that their children are provided with a broad range of subjects and extra-curricular activities.
- 3.10 Lower and middle school pupils pursue subjects including the sciences, humanities, computing and a range of expressive arts subjects, with opportunities to study Greek and Mandarin. The range of modern foreign languages includes French, Spanish and German. At GCSE, pupils generally choose ten subjects from core subjects and a wide range of options, which include either three separate sciences or dual award science, making suitable provision for pupils of all abilities. A comprehensive PSHEE programme (personal, social, health and economic education) is delivered through assemblies and form tutor periods.
- 3.11 In the sixth form, the range of options available is further extended by the addition of subjects as film studies, economics and psychology. Challenging enrichment opportunities are offered through research for the Extended Project Qualification. The PHSEE programme, delivered through general studies, provides further opportunities for sixth form pupils to broaden their learning and prepare for life after school. It also allows for the promotion of fundamental British values. The careers programme begins in Year 7 and continues into the sixth form. It includes visiting speakers, visits and events providing useful advice to pupils, parents and staff. Preparation for university entrance, in particular for those pupils who are applying for highly selective universities, is comprehensive and greatly appreciated by them. There is a balanced presentation of opposing views in the coverage of political issues in both curricular and extra-curricular activities, most notably in school debates.
- 3.12 Provision for pupils with SEND has been strengthened under new leadership. Appropriate systems identify and support pupils with SEND and EAL, who all have individual educational plans. Support in class allows pupils to achieve their potential. Pupils with SEND receive support in both individual and group sessions. Pupils with EAL are well provided for through support from specialist teaching. More able pupils are catered for effectively by setting in core subjects, by extension tasks in lessons and homework, and through encouragement to take part in regional and national competitions.
- 3.13 The curriculum is supplemented by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, trips and visits. This excellent extra-curricular provision includes sports sessions, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), and numerous clubs suited to individual capabilities and interests. Music provision is a significant strength, with seventeen activities running every week. Provision for sport has been increased since the previous inspection with additional leadership, increased professional coaching and the introduction of new sports.

- 3.14 Other intellectual, cultural and outdoor education opportunities ensure pupils have an enriching experience. Pupils also benefit from the school's strong links with the local community through the Community Action programme with placements in schools, hospitals, care homes and charity shops. The very large majority of pupils who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires felt that they could join in a good range of activities.

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

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.16 Teaching is effective in promoting pupils' progress and supports the aims of the school. A substantial number of lessons were excellent. Secure lesson planning enables pupils to make good progress and consolidate understanding. Teachers know their pupils well and teaching often reflects their understanding of individual needs. Teachers demonstrate good time management. In pre-inspection questionnaires, most pupils felt the volume and tasks set are appropriate to their abilities and needs. The teachers' willingness to freely give one-to-one help is a factor in pupils' success. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, most of the pupils who responded said they felt teachers help them to learn.
- 3.17 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities and needs to make good progress. The school's recent focus on supporting all abilities within the class was evidenced in many lessons. Strong liaison between academic and pastoral staff ensures effective monitoring of pupils' progress and needs.
- 3.18 The school has embarked upon meeting the needs of SEND and EAL pupils better, through increased individual support which more accurately matches the needs of each pupil, including those with an EHC plan. Teaching provides sufficient challenge and extra resources for the more able, a feature of many of the best lessons. Regular homework is set. In pre-inspection questionnaires, parents felt that their child receives appropriate homework for his/her age.
- 3.19 Marking of pupils' work is not always in line with the standards set out in the school policy, and the recommendations of the previous inspection have not therefore been fully met. The best marking fully abides by the school expectations, being encouraging, regular and thorough with informative comment and strategies for improvement. Most work is taken in regularly, but marking can lack in the expected detail and rigour, with inconsistencies within and across departments.
- 3.20 The quality of assessment, and of the collection and use of assessment data, to identify pupils' potential has improved since the previous inspection and fulfils the recommendations of the previous inspection. Grading of effort and attainment in regular formal assessments and reports is consistently applied and allows the extent of progress to be easily recognised by both pupils and parents.
- 3.21 Teachers show enthusiasm for their subject and demonstrate very strong subject knowledge. Teaching is effective through judicious selection of resources, including the use of digital projectors, electronic boards and other devices that support active learning. Teachers use these to good effect in enhancing the pupils' experience, for instance through the use of video clips to promote active learning. The establishment of a virtual learning environment has improved opportunities for the use of technology to extend pupils' skills and knowledge. Teaching is enhanced by pupils' work on display.

- 3.22 Intellectual curiosity and independence of mind are highly valued by the school and were evident in many lessons. In pre-inspection questionnaires, a very large majority of pupils reported that they are encouraged to do things for themselves and to work independently. Teaching in the majority of lessons provides appropriately challenging work and expectations, achieved through skilful questioning and listening. A minority of lessons observed were overly teacher-led and lacked stretch, pace and opportunities for pupils to contribute or think independently.
- 3.23 Teaching promotes tolerance and respect, as was seen in the positive relationships between pupils and teachers and amongst pupils themselves. Teaching encourages pupils to evaluate and share their opinions, which results in interaction between articulate and thoughtful pupils who show courtesy and good humour in their frequent wide-ranging discussions. Teaching is balanced and is non-partisan in its coverage of political issues.

## **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 is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils demonstrate excellent personal development in accordance with the school's aims to enable pupils to grow in confidence, maturity and wisdom, and be better equipped to face life beyond school as independent people. These values are reflected in the pupils' behaviour, their approach to work and their response to the other opportunities which are offered in the school.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. All pupils, whatever their stance on faith, appreciate the strong Christian ethos within the school. Pupils have high levels of self-esteem and demonstrate their self-confidence in assemblies, music and debating. In the very popular Christian Union, pupils develop a deeper knowledge of their faith and are challenged to think about the big questions in life. Pupils are respectful of each other's beliefs and enjoy opportunities to learn about them. They appreciate the non-material aspects of life through the creation of high-quality art and music, both of which encourage a spiritual response.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They are encouraged to develop an ethical approach and moral awareness. Pupils understand the need for rules, know right from wrong and understand and respect the civil and criminal law of England through their work in PSHEE. They are encouraged to think through the consequences of their own and the actions of others. They accept the importance of taking responsibility for their own behaviour. They show initiative and understand how they can contribute to the lives of those living locally and in particular in Nepal, where pupils fundraise for a local school but provide support through work on projects. There is a clear passion and commitment for this project in school, which provides invaluable opportunities for pupils' moral development.
- 4.5 Pupils' social development is excellent. They behave courteously towards visitors, teachers and each other. Pupils show respect for others and understand the importance of identifying and tackling discrimination. They are very supportive of each other. Pupils work collaboratively with each other through participation in assemblies, house events and competitions. They contribute towards their own community through the school council, where they consider suggestions for school improvement and charitable activities. A small minority of pupils who responded in pre-inspection felt that there was insufficient opportunity to take on roles of responsibility. Inspection evidence showed that there were many opportunities for leadership throughout the school through contribution to house and charity events.
- 4.6 The quality of pupils' cultural development is excellent. Pupils develop an understanding and appreciation of other cultures and faiths. Tolerance and respect for those of other cultures, beliefs and abilities is central to the ethos of the school. They welcome diversity amongst their friends and respect different cultures. Pupils develop a deep respect for their own culture through visits, lessons and lectures. They have a good understanding of the public institutions and services of England. Pupils are aware of the benefits and responsibilities of being a citizen in British society. They value democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty. A wide range of school trips is offered to pupils in all year groups which create excellent opportunities for personal development away from home and for the exploration for other cultures.

- 4.7 Pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, have an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave school.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The well-organised pastoral care system ensures that pupils receive highly effective support and guidance in accordance with the school's aims. In pre-inspection questionnaires, a very large majority of pupils said they liked being at school.
- 4.10 Relationships are positive between staff and pupils, and among the pupils themselves. There is a strong sense of community. The very large majority of parents who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires felt that their child was happy and safe in the school.
- 4.11 Pupils feel well supported by their teachers who know them extremely well. Regular meetings of the pastoral team ensure consistency and high standards of care. Information about pupils is constantly shared and concerns are responded to quickly, with ready lines of communication to senior management.
- 4.12 The school is effective in promoting good behaviour and guarding against bullying. Most pupils reported that the school deals with any bullying that occurs. A small minority of pupils, responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that the sanctions and rewards systems are not always operated fairly. Of those pupils interviewed during the inspection all agreed that procedures in these areas were fair and reasonable. Detailed records demonstrate that staff implement the school's policy and procedures fairly, taking due account of any related difficulty or disability.
- 4.13 In pre-inspection questionnaires, just over half the pupils expressed concern that the school did not ask for their opinions or respond to them. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The school is effective in seeking pupils' opinions through regular meetings of the school council which has, for example, been instrumental in increasing portion sizes at lunch.
- 4.14 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through the school's provision of nutritious meals. Pupils are expected to take regular exercise through participation in a variety of sports and lunchtime activities.
- 4.15 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- 4.16 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.17 The school takes its responsibilities towards pupils' safety seriously. The safeguarding policy and procedures are appropriately implemented and monitored effectively. All staff receive regular training in child protection and understand who to contact if they have concerns. Designated senior staff have developed strong relationships with local agencies and have appropriate updated training. Detailed child protection records are maintained. Minor clerical errors were found on the school's single central register of appointments but these were immediately rectified. Staff and pupils have all received specific training to raise awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and secure procedures are in place to vet and

supervise visiting outside speakers. Measures to counter cyber-bullying are effective through the delivery of the PSHEE programme and school monitoring.

- 4.18 Effective arrangements for health and safety are monitored by the governor responsible for welfare, health and safety. The health and safety committee regularly reviews preventative measures and assesses potential risks. Measures are in place to reduce risks of fire. However, fire evacuation drills are not carried out sufficiently early in the school year to enable pupils, particularly those new to the school, to understand procedures. Accidents and incidents are carefully recorded and patterns are analysed to ensure safety standards are maintained. Potentially hazardous substances are safely stored. Detailed risk assessments are carried out for trips.
- 4.19 Comfortable facilities are in place for pupils who are ill or injured, with suitable provision for those with SEND. The school has an appropriate first-aid policy and sufficient staff are fully qualified to provide first aid. Medicines are securely stored. Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and stored.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governance provides effective oversight of the school in keeping with the Christian ethos which underpins the school's aims. Governors have a clear vision for the future, ensuring that the achievement and personal development of the pupils is central to their commitment to school improvement.
- 5.3 Through their combined expertise and experience, governors discharge their responsibilities for standards, financial planning, and facilities effectively. They ensure that the school is well staffed and resourced. Governors have recently provided stimulus for improvement, through working with the school leadership team to create a new strategic development plan to ensure a clear vision for future development.
- 5.4 Governors know the school well through regular visits, classroom observations, and attendance at school events. For all parts of the school, they take an interest in educational standards and pastoral matters. The governing body receives detailed reports from senior leaders and presentations from staff on key topics. Regular meetings between the school and governors ensure effective communications. There is a specifically designated governor for welfare, health and safety, SEND, and safeguarding. The chair keeps in regular touch with the head, providing valuable advice and support for improvement. Appropriate appraisal arrangements are in place for evaluating the work of the school leadership in the school.
- 5.5 Governors have a working knowledge of the applicable safeguarding regulatory policy and are committed to discharging their responsibilities for child protection and welfare, health and safety through the monitoring of school policies. Governors have received induction and safeguarding training and they monitor safeguarding procedures through audits, an annual review of policy and procedures and liaison with local safeguarding authorities. However, the brevity of minutes when safeguarding is discussed at governors' board meetings does not reflect the importance the governors give to this area.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management of the school, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.7 School leaders provide clear educational direction. They have a shared vision of how best to develop the school in accordance with its strong Christian ethos and to foster high levels of achievement. Staff respect their leaders who have successfully created a supportive environment underpinned by excellent relationships; this results in a strong community where all pupils can thrive, grow in self-awareness and excel in many areas. The senior leadership team's passion and commitment to the school are evidenced by the strong pastoral care and personal development of pupils across the school. The leadership understand and transmit what the school does best to staff and parents alike, and it is constantly striving to improve outcomes for pupils. There are clear, defined roles for the senior leadership team with a strong



- sense of collective responsibility and a commitment to school improvement. Senior staff know the pupils well, are approachable, and are quick to address any issues which may arise. Pupils acknowledge the visibility and key role the leaders play in the school.
- 5.8 Values that encourage respect for others, and democracy, are very evident in the aims of the school and from the senior leadership team's approach to management. Senior leaders in the school work collaboratively and constructively with middle managers who in turn meet regularly with their respective teams. Pastoral leadership is excellent at all levels and enables highly effective monitoring of pupils' well-being throughout the school. Pastoral team meetings provide coherent and effective leadership and management. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a very large majority of parents felt that the school was well led and managed and almost all parents said that their child was well looked after. The school leadership has a deep-rooted care for the pupils' academic success which has ensured improvements in standards and best outcomes for pupils.
- 5.9 Senior leaders have high aspirations for the school and its pupils, and a number of initiatives have been introduced recently in response to the recommendations of the previous inspection to raise standards of marking and assessment and to extend monitoring at all levels. These include the introduction of termly teaching and learning themes, the development of systems to track pupils' performance, and the implementation of work scrutiny by senior leaders. They are effective in self-evaluation and in setting targets for improvement for themselves and staff. Middle management leaders have responsibility for monitoring the quality of provision within departments. Middle management is not always consistently effective in the evaluation of their areas of responsibility. Lines of responsibility are mostly clear, although middle management do not ensure the sharing of best practice as widely as possible. As a result, the quality of teaching and marking remains variable, as does the standard of development planning at departmental level.
- 5.10 The school has made progress since the previous inspection. Senior leaders have created a new strategic development plan for the next three years which provides a clear framework for the next few years. This was preceded by consultation with staff and governors and by thoughtful and perceptive self-evaluation by senior leadership. The recommendation of the previous inspection, to include clear timescales within the school development plan, has been met. However, the criteria for judging implementation are not yet sufficiently precise. Good planning and financial management have enabled investment in the school's facilities. Whole-school planning has facilitated the resourcing and development of both major and minor sports over recent years, including the employment of specialist coaches which has had a positive impact on sport in the school.
- 5.11 The school is successful in securing, supporting, and retaining dedicated staff. There is an effective programme of induction for new staff. Formal schemes for the appraisal of all teaching staff are linked to clear targets and focussed continuing professional development. The smooth running of the school is supported extremely well by administrative and support staff. Arrangements for the safeguarding of children are effective and staff suitability for employment is checked regularly, together with the suitability of governors, and the information is held on the required single central register of staff appointments. Staff are well trained for their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, with the most recent training addressing the dangers of radicalization.

- 5.12 The school maintains a very supportive and constructive relationship with its parents. Responses to pre-inspection parental questionnaires indicate that parents are extremely positive about the school, with the vast majority reporting that they are happy with the information they are given about their child's progress, the high standard of behaviour the school achieves and how well the school deals with bullying. Information for prospective parents is plentiful.
- 5.13 Engaging with parents is seen as a high priority by the school. Communications have improved since the previous inspection due to the introduction of significant initiatives such as the Birkdale Post, which provides parents with information about many aspects of school life. Staff at all levels are readily available to speak to parents and the vast majority of parents are satisfied that responses to their questions are timely.
- 5.14 The school actively provides opportunities for parents to be involved in the progress of their children. Regular reports and grades about their children allow parents to monitor their child's progress and follow up with staff if there are any concerns. The school has introduced sessions for parents to meet their child's tutor at the start of each section of the school which has also helped to build strong relationships between parents and the school. The school is very keen to give parents the opportunity to express their opinions through regular parental satisfaction surveys and the school takes note of the feedback given. There are regular parent consultation evenings. Parents also attend information evenings on topics which will help them to support their children. They contribute to the wider curriculum through talking about their work to pupils as part of the careers programme.
- 5.15 Parental concerns are handled with care and sensitivity and in accordance with the school's published procedures. The school has an effective complaints policy. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a very small minority of parents did not feel that the school handled their concerns very well. The scrutiny of a sample of complaints showed that the school follows proper procedures in dealing with them.

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