



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BLUNDELL'S SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Blundell's School

Full Name of School	Blundell's School		
DfE Number	878/6011		
Registered Charity Number	1081249		
Address	Blundell's School Blundell's Road Tiverton Devon EX16 4DN		
Telephone Number	01884 252543		
Fax Number	01884 243232		
Email Address	info@blundells.org		
Head	Mrs Nicola Huggett		
Chair of Governors	Mr Cedric Clapp		
Age Range	11 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	567		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (342 boys; 225 girls)		
Numbers by Age	11-13:	118	13-19: 449
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	216	
Number of Boarders	Total:	351	
	Full:	90	Weekly: 90
	Flexi:	171	
Inspection dates	29 Jan to 01 Feb 2013		

PREFACE

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

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

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

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', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period and the registration procedures. They attended chapel services, tutor meetings and assemblies, and ate meals in the dining room with the pupils. Inspectors visited all the boarding houses, the school library and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Rodney Fox	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Cleary	Team Inspector (Director of Music, HMC school)
Mrs Fiona Hallworth	Team Inspector (Director of External Relations, HMC school)
Miss Katherine Haynes	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Miss Karen Hollingdale	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Stephen Jefferson	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, GSA school)
Mr Gerry Pike	Team Inspector (Deputy Head (academic), HMC school)
Mrs Rosalind Hayes	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Timothy Bayley	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, Society of Heads school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Blundell's School aims to promote wholeness by providing a rounded education in which pupils learn to be flexible, articulate and able to present themselves and their ideas well, as well as being capable of motivating themselves and others to identify their goals and how to achieve them. The school sets out to foster qualities of academic ambition and a sense of service to the community. It seeks to provide its pupils with 'roots' for security, based on friendship, respect for others and personal values, and 'wings' to succeed in the challenging yet dynamic world beyond school, based on self-confidence, a sense of excitement and an appreciation for the environment. An inclusive Christian foundation with its own chapel, Blundell's welcomes pupils regardless of their faith background.
- 1.2 Founded in 1604 in the Devon market town of Tiverton by Peter Blundell, a successful cloth merchant, the school moved to its present extensive site on the outskirts of the town in 1882. A coeducational boarding and day school for more than 550 pupils aged from 11 to 19, the school has its own prep school on an adjacent site. The two schools are managed as an educational charity, governed by its trustees.
- 1.3 The present head took up her appointment in January 2013. The second master took office in September 2012, and the chairman of governors in November 2011. Since the last inspection, the school has continued its programme of renovating the boarding houses.
- 1.4 Pupils may be full or weekly boarders, may board on a flexible basis, or may be day pupils; those boarding on a flexible basis stay for some nights each week, or more occasionally. All pupils are in one of seven houses. School House accommodates boys and girls in Years 7 and 8. Pupils in Years 9 to 12 are in one of three boys' or two girls' houses. All Year 13 pupils are accommodated in Westlake, a purpose-built co-educational house for sixth-form students. At the time of the inspection, there were 567 pupils in the school, of whom 116 boys and 56 girls were in Year 12 or 13.
- 1.5 Entry to the school is selective. Standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is above the national average, with one in seven being of well above average ability. The ability profile of pupils in Years 12 and 13 is slightly above the national average, with a wider spread of abilities than in the years to GCSE. No pupil has a statement of special educational need. The school has identified 126 pupils as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), 122 of whom receive specialist learning support. Fifty-six pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), 44 of whom receive support for their English. Most pupils come from within a twenty-mile radius of the school, although boarders come from a range of countries and ethnic backgrounds.
- 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 Blundell's School is highly successful in achieving its aims. Pupils experience a wide-ranging education, based on an excellent curriculum, and achieve good standards throughout the school, both academically and in their activities. Especially in the creative arts, in sport and in debating, some of their achievements are excellent. The teaching is good and often excellent. Pupils with SEND or EAL are given excellent support and enabled to progress at least in line with their abilities. Members of staff are highly committed, and their generosity with their time is recognised and appreciated by the pupils and their parents. The pupils have excellent attitudes towards their learning, being willing, cooperative and eager to succeed.
- 2.2 The personal development of the pupils at all stages is excellent. They are polite, socially adept, confident young people, who relate well with each other and with adults. They are evidently at ease with themselves, happy in their school and able to reflect thoughtfully on their own values and priorities, in line with the school's aims. The care and guidance provided for them are excellent. Boarders are happy in their houses and report that they get on well with one another. The boarding houses are spacious and well organised, but still vary widely in quality of provision, and most would benefit from the creation of more homely areas in which to relax. Pupils are loyal to their houses and have good opportunities for personal development within them.
- 2.3 The senior management team was newly established at the time of the inspection, with the head only very recently in post. Individual members of the team have clear aims and a sense of direction, but the team as a whole has yet to develop their common vision and a plan to make it a reality. The school has many areas of excellence, but in several aspects of school life existing good practice needs to be shared and applied with greater consistency. The governance is good and governors are conscientious in fulfilling their responsibilities, though a small number of safety and compliance issues need to be resolved. Pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed their enjoyment at being at the school.
- 2.4 The report following the previous ISI inspection in 2007 made four recommendations, which concerned the refurbishment of the houses, developing the use of assessment information to monitor academic performance and encourage high aspirations, establishing greater consistency in the management of academic departments, and sharing best practice in teaching. The school has responded effectively to these recommendations and made progress with each, although further work remains to be done with all four. The Ofsted inspection of boarding standards in 2010 made no recommendations.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.5 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that safe recruitment procedures for staff supplied by outside agencies are rigorously implemented [Part 3, paragraphs 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety; NMS 11, under Child Protection; and NMS 14.1, under Staff Recruitment and Checks on Other Adults]

2.6 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, as described above.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.7 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Strengthen the monitoring of all aspects of school life by the senior management team in order to promote with greater consistency the best provision and practice.
2. Increase the variety of the food provided at supper.
3. In the boarding houses, continue the rolling programme of refurbishment and, in all the houses, create areas with a more homely atmosphere.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 The pupils are well educated and, in accordance with the school's aims, at all stages acquire good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill across the range of the curriculum, as was apparent in lessons and in their books and files. Throughout the school, they demonstrate good levels of literacy and numeracy, use information and communication technology (ICT) proficiently, reason logically and are highly articulate. Pupils with SEND or EAL achieve well in relation to their ability, as the school's close monitoring of their achievement confirms. The school's contestants in the English Speaking Union Competition won the area finals in 2012, and the school's team at a recent Model United Nations Conference received a nomination as including the 'Most Distinguished Delegate'. Many individual pupils have gained significant success in sporting, musical, speaking and drama examinations and events. Particular success has been achieved at national level in a number of sports, including rugby, fives and riding, by the 'Ten Tors' teams and in the Devizes to Westminster kayak race. The quality of the art work displayed around the school is excellent. Almost all of those leaving school at the end of Year 13 are successful in gaining entry to higher education.
- 3.3 The following analysis of examination results uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Results at A level from 2009-11 have been above the national average for maintained schools. Results in 2009-10 were similar to the national average for maintained selective schools and, in 2011, they showed improvement, being above the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2012, at GCSE more than a third of candidates achieved eight or more passes with A or A* grades, whilst at A level two-thirds of all the grades achieved were A* to B.
- 3.4 These results, together with the nationally standardised measures of progress that are used by the school, and inspection evidence, confirm that pupils at all stages, including those with SEND, make progress that is good relative to the average for pupils of similar abilities. In particular, pupils in Year 10 made rapid progress in using complex sentence structures in modern languages. The most able pupils advance their knowledge and insight through participation in the scholars' club, which offers stimulation for rapid progress and developing interest for pupils in all years. All recent pupils with EAL have improved their English language skills sufficiently to qualify for higher education in the United Kingdom. Pupils with SEND benefit from the teachers' very good understanding of their individual needs, which often contributes to them being amongst those pupils at the school who are progressing the most rapidly.
- 3.5 The pupils' attitudes to work, their cooperation and behaviour are excellent and highly conducive to good learning. They listen to one another with respect and they persevere well and in a mature way with the tasks set. They are eager to learn and to do their best. Scrutiny of their books and files reveals the pride that most take in their work. Creativity and ambition are evident, and they clearly enjoy learning. They participate in activities and sports with enthusiasm, as was evident as they

cheerfully returned from a cross-country running practice on a wet and muddy afternoon.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 The curriculum and extra-curricular provision fulfils the school's aim to provide a rounded education. The academic curriculum has been improved since the last inspection to provide a very good, wide and balanced programme, covering all the required areas of knowledge. The curriculum in Year 7 has been strengthened and includes Latin, the three separate sciences, and French. A choice of 3 languages is available at Year 9. GCSE options include the short course in religious studies, as well as opportunities for top mathematicians to be challenged to the next level. Subject choices throughout are well supported by talks and advice from the dedicated careers department, year heads and tutors. At A level, a wide range of subjects is provided and the programme is further augmented by the 'Futures' course (covering the application process for higher education and careers guidance), a mathematics course for scientists and the specialist courses to enable EAL pupils to acquire the proficiency qualifications in English needed for entry to higher education. An increasing number of pupils choose to enrich their A-level programme by taking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which allows them to work independently on a project of their choice.
- 3.8 The school is committed to, and very successfully provides, academic and activities programmes that meet the needs, skills and abilities of all the pupils. Flexibility in planning and managing the curriculum enables pupils to choose an academic programme which meets their individual needs. The curriculum is adapted to provide for those who wish to take additional subjects which reflect their interests and abilities, and to provide well for those who have SEND, or who need support for their English. Teaching groups selected by ability in mathematics and languages, in particular, enable pupils to progress at a pace suited to their ability. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire are well satisfied with the breadth of the curriculum and extra-curricular programmes. Pupils rate the range of activities and the careers guidance highly.
- 3.9 The extra-curricular programme is extensive. Pupils enjoy and participate fully in a variety of games sessions three or four times a week, and choose one or two other activities a week. The oversight and management of the activities programme is efficient, enabling most pupils to pursue their first choice of interests. The programme incorporates suggestions from pupils ('boxercising'), parents (yoga) and staff (ukulele playing) and is enthusiastically embraced by pupils and staff alike. The range of activities encompasses creative (rehearsing for *Grease* or the Saatchi Sculpture Competition), sporting, spiritual (confirmation classes and discussion groups), academic (science and mathematics competitions and olympiads), and practical activities, providing very good opportunities for pupils to participate whatever their interest or ability. Personal development is fostered through the Combined Cadet Force, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, Young Enterprise and inter-house debating, musical and other internal and external competitions. Individual excellence is widely cultivated, encompassing amongst others, achievements in athletics, fly fishing, equestrian, astronomy and poetry. Links with the local community are good. The Devon environment fosters enthusiasm for the outdoors as well as involvement with all aspects of the local community through voluntary work, charity fund raising and engagement with the business community

for careers work. The curricular programme is suitably enriched by numerous trips and expeditions in this country and overseas.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 The overall quality of teaching is good
- 3.11 Throughout the school, teaching is mostly good and, in a significant proportion of lessons, it is excellent, fostering academic ambition in accordance with the school's aims. There has been a clear improvement in the overall quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Teaching is characterised by good subject expertise, thoughtful planning and effective deployment of a variety of resources. Such planning provides a strong framework within which students can progress confidently. Lessons are generally well pitched and paced, making best use of the short single lessons. Teachers know their pupils well and show consistent sensitivity to their individual needs. For example, in a practical chemistry lesson pupils in Year 11 were offered three methods for completing a calculation, according to their level of understanding. An excellent and unforced rapport is evident between teachers and pupils.
- 3.12 A good range of teaching styles and methods is used. This enables pupils to develop a wide range of skills and abilities and to develop good habits of academic collaboration and teamwork. Considerable encouragement of independent thought and critical thinking distinguishes the excellent lessons, which are also characterised by high expectations of pupils. An adroitly paced and highly active drama lesson, for instance, demonstrated ascending creative challenge as pupils in Year 9 learned how to build dramatic tension. The use of informed discussion and debate promotes lively and interactive lessons. A game provided the centrepiece of a very competitive German lesson which pupils in Year 10 thoroughly enjoyed, whilst making rapid progress in the accurate use of sentence construction. Good use of ICT is widespread and some departments are outstanding in this respect. The strong rapport that teachers establish with the pupils promotes good behaviour and a positive learning ethos.
- 3.13 Pupils with SEND and EAL are systematically identified and supported, often by drawing them into group or pair work, although only in a minority of lessons are they set different tasks, adapted to match their needs, or guided towards appropriate resources. Meeting the needs of individuals is considerably aided by the small class sizes at almost all levels of the school. That all pupils are enabled to make progress and to achieve their best is a consequence of informed teaching, particularly as teachers are now making good use of information from base-line testing to help pupils across the ability span, as recommended by the previous inspection report. The work of the learning support department is pivotal in identifying, supporting and tracking the progress of individual pupils. Overseas pupils are given close academic support to help them settle and to learn.
- 3.14 Diligent, regular and mostly thorough marking helps pupils' progress, although the school marking policy is not generally followed so that practice varies across departments. Written comments are frequently affirming but rarely set explicit goals. The regular grading of pupils' effort and attainment for 'mark orders' allows pupils' progress to be tracked, excellence to be celebrated and underachievement to be promptly identified. The introduction of target-setting, informed by standardised statistical analysis, into Years 11, 12 and 13 sharpens pupils' focus and further promotes academic progress.

- 3.15 Pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire recognised the contribution that teaching makes to their progress, and the generous individual help that teachers readily provide.

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 Pupils' personal qualities are very well developed. The school's aim to promote wholeness, to provide an entire education and a sense of service is fully met. In class, with their peers and with adults, pupils are confident, articulate and mature. They are self-reliant, enjoy good self-esteem, and are able to work independently or in teams, giving each other support and encouragement. Pupils have a set of values, principles and beliefs which informs their perspective on life and their behaviour. Pupils' awareness of the spiritual dimension and their ability to reflect are often evident, as in a history lesson when Year 10 pupils discussed the persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany, or when pupils in a Year 11 geography lesson considered the effects of poverty in Brazil. Pupils discuss religious belief in lessons and, through their regular attendance of Chapel services, are familiar with the importance of faith in believers' lives. In an English lesson, pupils in Year 11 reflected with interest and curiosity on the power of propaganda to distort truth, and were able to draw comparisons with current issues.
- 4.3 Pupils' demonstrate an excellent sense of right and wrong understanding the reasons for laws and rules. Their behaviour around the school is excellent and they learn in a calm, purposeful manner. Pupils are kind to each other. They share ideas readily, working towards understanding and cohesion. They discuss ethical issues thoughtfully and are able both to listen to other peoples' views and to justify their own.
- 4.4 Pupils' sense of responsibility is very well developed. Pupils support a variety of charitable events, both locally and in other countries, showing an awareness of those less fortunate than themselves and a willingness to participate in sometimes challenging activities. Pupils avail themselves of opportunities to help run the school through the house monitor system, by peer mentoring and by acting as a big 'brother' or 'sister' to younger pupils helping them to settle into school life. Pupils exercise self-restraint and self-discipline in their daily lives.
- 4.5 Pupils' understanding and respect for other faiths and cultures, as well their own, is excellent. Pupils are keenly aware of other peoples' beliefs and lifestyles through chapel, through interaction with international pupils and through themes covered in divinity lessons. Pupils' awareness of other cultures is also developed by attending international evenings and by recognising and celebrating important festivals of other cultures, for example Chinese New Year. They display considerable tolerance towards one another. Through the high standards of art, drama and music that they experience at school, pupils acquire a good understanding of western European culture.
- 4.6 Pupils have excellent civic awareness. They have a thorough understanding of British public institutions and services through the comprehensive work covered in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons. They take part in the democratic processes available to them, for example voting in the school election or offering to be house monitors. Extensive participation in debating allows balanced viewpoints to be aired and considered.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Pupils receive strong guidance and support from a wide range of staff, enabling them to choose those mentors with whom they feel affinity. Pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire are confident that they have ready access to members of staff who are approachable and willing to help when needed. The arrangements for pastoral care fully support the school's aims.
- 4.9 The excellent relationships between pupils are characterised by tolerance and encouragement for each other's achievements at all levels. The school's extra-curricular programme offers a wide variety of events where pupils' strong sense of community involvement produces a notable degree of mutual support and engagement on behalf of others. Relationships between staff and pupil are typified by ease, mutual respect and friendliness.
- 4.10 The wide range of organised activities and sports ensures that all pupils take regular exercise. The commitment shown on the part of pupils to sporting and fitness activities is of a high order. Pupils' attendance at meals is monitored effectively. Breakfasts are substantial. A good choice of dishes, including a salad bar, is provided at lunch times. The variety and choice available at suppers are more limited and, in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and at interview, pupils expressed dissatisfaction with this meal. Inspection evidence confirmed these concerns.
- 4.11 The school has effective policies and procedures for promoting good behaviour. Measures for dealing with bullying are well-publicised. At interview, pupils were confident that the procedures for dealing with any instances of bullying are robust.
- 4.12 The school has a thorough and well-conceived process for improving the educational access of pupils identified as having SEND, which identifies their requirements with care, and details the supportive actions which are needed.
- 4.13 Extensive measures are taken to elicit the views of pupils. Annual surveys are conducted and a number of initiatives have sprung from the survey outcomes, including the coffee shop, Sunday 'brunch' and the enhanced wireless internet access in the houses.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good overall.
- 4.15 Training in all aspects of safeguarding is effectively and regularly undertaken by all teaching staff as part of their continuing professional development. All new staff receive child protection training during their induction. All school and house monitors receive some child protection training. Procedures to ensure the suitability of staff being recruited are generally rigorously applied and meticulously recorded in a single central register. However, until the inspection, the school had not established a procedure to ensure the safe recruitment of staff supplied by an outside agency, with the result that a very small number of non-teaching staff have started work at the school without the required checks being made as to their suitability. An appropriate procedure has now been established.

- 4.16 Fire practices are held regularly and a suitable fire risk assessment has been conducted. Fire evacuation practice records are carefully maintained. The health and safety committee meets regularly and the minutes are reviewed by the governing body. Thorough risk assessments are undertaken in all areas of the school, and for school trips.
- 4.17 Pupils benefit from excellent health care provision, which provides suitable support and guidance as the need arises. Good records are maintained and medicines are safely stored and distributed. All staff are trained in first aid, in line with the school's first aid policy. Suitable arrangements are established for pupils who are ill or injured whilst at school, and a newly formed welfare committee monitors pupils' wellbeing. Pupils have good access to the school doctors and a counsellor in the medical centre.
- 4.18 Attendance is efficiently monitored using a digital recognition system. The attendance and admission registers are suitably maintained and stored for the required period.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The quality of boarding is good
- 4.20 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The school is highly successful in providing a vibrant, supportive and caring environment which encourages the growth of self-confidence and self-reliance. Relationships between boarders are excellent, with friendships extending across the year groups. Pupils are at ease with staff and say that they enjoy boarding life. Standards of behaviour are high and pupils are well mannered and courteous. International boarders are welcomed into the houses and quickly integrated into the friendly community. They are well supported by teachers in the EAL department, who provide excellent pastoral care in addition to teaching. The school encourages flexi-boarding so that as many pupils as possible can benefit from the boarding experience. House committees and the diet committee provide valuable opportunities for boarders to express opinions, and they are confident that their views are listened to and can influence decisions, citing as an example the newly established gymnasium area. The role of house monitor enables senior boarders to develop leadership skills. The monitors feel that they gain much from this experience. Boarders show considerable loyalty to their house, and to the school as a whole.
- 4.21 The quality of the boarding provision and care is good. House staff know the boarders very well. Younger boarders enjoy a valuable team-building day in the summer term before joining the school, and all new boarders are paired with 'shadows' to help them to settle in. New parents and guardians are invited to tea at the beginning of term to meet boarding staff and build relationships. Thereafter, regular communication is maintained with parents or guardians via email or telephone. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were strongly appreciative of the ease with which they can contact the staff who care for their child, and of the timely responses received.
- 4.22 Policies relating to boarders' health and welfare are clear and implemented across the houses. The medical centre provides excellent day-time care and an on-call nurse provides overnight care when necessary. Daily surgeries provide good access to both a male and a female doctor. Boarders have suitable access to dental, optometric and other specialist services when necessary. Excellent

communication between boarding staff and the medical centre allows medical information to be shared efficiently. Individual welfare plans are detailed and closely followed. Boarders can contact the school counsellor directly by email, enabling appropriate confidentiality to be preserved.

- 4.23 Fire drills are carried out regularly, and include occasional practices when most boarders are asleep. Each house keeps an accurate fire evacuation practice record, with details of times and outcomes.
- 4.24 The school is proud of its extensive range of activities which includes sport, music, drama, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, the Young Enterprise scheme and Model United Nations. Debating is especially popular. At weekends, house staff, in consultation with the boarders, arrange trips such as ice skating, mountain biking, surfing and visits to the cinema and theatre. Boarders have easy access to local shops. The daily programme is very busy and, in interviews, some boarders indicated that they have limited free time for self-directed activities.
- 4.25 The standard of boarding accommodation varies. A refurbishment programme is in place to enhance boarding facilities, in line with the recommendation of the previous inspection report. Where renovation has taken place, the physical environment is clean and well furnished, but in the remaining houses, the need for significant improvement is apparent. Boarders in Year 13 live in a co-educational house where greater freedom prepares them for life beyond school. This is a popular arrangement and, in interviews, pupils expressed their appreciation of this facility.
- 4.26 Individual dietary needs are appropriately catered for, including those arising from allergies. An excellent pictorial guide, displayed in the staffroom, kitchen and house offices, gives information about pupils with special requirements. Water fountains and dispensers are available throughout the school. A significant number of responses to the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the food. Interviews with pupils indicated that most concerns are about the lack of choice at supper, concerns with which the inspectors agreed. Houses have satisfactory facilities for making drinks and snacks in the evening.
- 4.27 Boarders are able to communicate easily with their friends and parents. The majority have mobile phones and laptops and all houses are equipped with wireless internet access. All boarders have suitable lockable space. Although pupils' questionnaire responses raised concerns about the safety of possessions, this concern was not confirmed in discussions with boarders.
- 4.28 The school has good arrangements for welfare and safeguarding. All staff receive appropriate child protection training when they start at the school and this training is updated regularly. Senior pupils with responsibilities also receive some safeguarding training. School policies for countering bullying are clear, and boarders are confident that any bullying is dealt with swiftly and effectively. In discussion, boarders list a number of people they can talk to if they are worried, but are especially complimentary about the support offered by their house master or mistress.
- 4.29 In each house, the house master or mistress is complemented by a resident matron, who plays a key role in the day-to-day welfare of the boarders, and by resident tutors. Tutors from the academic team provide additional support to ensure that effective links are made between academic and residential staff.

- 4.30 The electronic registration system provides detailed information about pupil whereabouts and this is reinforced by effective systems for signing in or out of boarding houses. Boarding staff are clear about the procedures for dealing with a missing pupil. The use of closed circuit television cameras does not impinge on the privacy of boarders.
- 4.31 The leadership and management of boarding is good. The school's boarding principles and practices are clearly stated and appropriately made available. The recently-appointed leadership team has a strong commitment to retain and further enhance the boarding ethos that underpins the school's life. Effective systems to encourage boarding staff to research and share good practice are evolving. House masters and mistresses are required to undertake self-evaluation and to produce annual development plans for their houses. They have regular meetings with the second master, who has overall responsibility for boarding. A comprehensive appraisal scheme includes all staff involved in the care of boarders.
- 4.32 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, both boarders and their parents expressed their confidence that boarders are safe and well cared for in their houses. The parents had no significant criticisms of the boarding and said that they considered the boarding to be well organised and managed. The pupils' main source of dissatisfaction was with the food, but a high proportion expressed overall enjoyment of boarding.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of the governance is good.
- 5.2 The school benefits from committed, supportive and interested governors, with wide-ranging experience. Their understanding of and affection for the school are highly regarded in the school community. Through their sub-committees, which receive regular reports and presentations about the work of the school, and by their individual links with it, governors exercise effective oversight of all aspects of the school, including educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff and resources. In particular, they have continued the programme for enhancing the boarding houses, as recommended in the last inspection report.
- 5.3 Governors have a good awareness of the working of the school, monitor it carefully, and have shown themselves capable of imaginative decisions, for instance when planning a separate house for pupils in Year 13. The education committee enables governors to provide suitable support, challenge and stimulus for academic growth and improvement.
- 5.4 The governors are aware of, and mostly effective in discharging, their responsibilities for safeguarding the pupils. As a body, they review the child protection arrangements annually, although the minutes of their meetings do not reflect the thoroughness with which they have discharged this responsibility. The school's procedures for the safe appointment of staff are generally thorough, but until the inspection no proper process had been established for the infrequent occasions when the school uses staff supplied by outside agencies. Through the bursar, the governors make good use of consultants to conduct risk assessments, although the risks inherent in allowing moving traffic to mix with pedestrians on the school site merit further assessment.

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

- 5.5 The school's leadership and management are good.
- 5.6 At all levels, those with leadership and management responsibilities understand the school's aims and are effective in promoting them. The newly-established senior team has considerable expertise and understands the school's strengths well. The policies and procedures established are appropriate and well-formulated. Senior managers understand the importance of putting policy into practice, particularly in regard to the safeguarding of pupils.
- 5.7 The new structure of the senior leadership group ensures effective oversight of all areas of school life. Clear educational direction is being established, so as to strengthen the school's identity and further refine the development of its aims. In the houses, pastoral management is particularly effective in promoting the core values of the school, as is apparent in the pupils' excellent personal development. Academic departmental management is inconsistent, as was identified at the last inspection. Mutual lesson observation, for example, although encouraged is infrequent and undertaken largely on the initiative of individual teachers and departments rather than as a routine for improving teaching by sharing good

practice. The recently establishment academic leadership group is developing ways to increase consistency of practice and provision across departments and to promote ways of raising academic achievement further. The senior leadership team is aware of the need for increased monitoring and has already established strategies for achieving this.

- 5.8 Whole school development planning is well established but the new leadership team has not yet had the chance to re-formulate the plan and bring it up-to-date. A range of initiatives is already in place, with short and long term aims. Priorities are known and clear. Planning at the level of departments and houses is strong, with visibility and accountability the aim. Self-evaluation is an integral part of the planning process for both houses and departments, so that a perceptive awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development is widely shared and priorities are emerging.
- 5.9 A recently revised staff appraisal process is starting to move the school towards achieving its potential by identifying training needs and priorities. Careful attention is given to child protection, welfare, health and safety, and all staff have had appropriate training. Satisfactory systems are now in place for the safe recruitment of staff, but these have not always been properly followed when taking on a small number of non-teaching staff provided by outside agencies. Recruitment and retention of staff is successful, and staff give freely and generously of their time and effort.
- 5.10 The school's relationship with the parents is excellent. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the school expressing their highest levels of satisfaction with respect to the care, happiness and safety of their child, the ease with which staff can be contacted, the timely response to messages, the good range of activities, and the well managed and organised boarding. A small minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with level of encouragement received to be involved in events and other aspects of the school's work; however, inspection evidence indicated that the school is very much a community that includes and involves parents. Parents do engage with the life of the school, and often take the many opportunities to get involved. Parent attendance at events such as concerts and sports matches is good. Electronic communication is increasingly the means of contact to and from parents, and this works well. The website is informative and up to date, with all the relevant information available.
- 5.11 Scrutiny of correspondence confirms that parental concerns are dealt with diligently and promptly and that any complaints are handled in accordance with the published procedure.
- 5.12 The wealth of excellent published material is of high quality and suitably informative for both parents and prospective parents. Regular magazines and newsletters are available. Reporting to parents on their children's progress is regular and includes both written reports and 'mark orders', but often the written comments provide only descriptive comment as to progress, focusing more on providing encouragement than information. Presently only some year groups receive target grades. Parents, however, reported that they are satisfied with the information that they receive about their children's progress. Parents' evenings are well attended, with additional individual meetings held as necessary.

5.13 A high proportion of the parents responding to the questionnaire said that they would recommend the school.

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