



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BRENTWOOD SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Brentwood School

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

Full Name of School	<b>Brentwood School</b>
DfE Number	<b>881/6035</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>310864</b>
Address	<b>Brentwood School Middleton Hall Lane Brentwood Essex CM15 8EE</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01277 243243</b>
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Email Address	<b>headmaster@brentwood.essex.sch.uk</b>
Head	<b>Mr Ian Davies</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Colin Finch</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 19</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>1123</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (655 boys; 468 girls)</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>1057</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>66</b> Full: <b>66</b>
Inspection dates	<b>22 Jan 2013 to 25 Jan 2013</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. 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.

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.

## 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 and the chair of the education committee, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses 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 John Sugden	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sandra Clements	Team inspector (former Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Andrew Gist	Team Inspector (Director of IB, HMC school)
Dr Haydn Griffiths	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Michael Horrocks-Taylor	Team Inspector (Second Master, HMC school)
Ms Alison Horton	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Dr Simon Hyde	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Ms Heather McKissack	Team Inspector (Senior Mistress, HMC school)
Mr David Pritchard	Team inspector (former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Stewart Roberts	Team inspector (former Head, HMC school)
Mr Timothy Weston	Team inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr David Woodward	Team inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Matthew March	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Brentwood is a large, co-educational, selective school in the centre of Brentwood, set in substantial grounds. Brentwood is a prosperous Essex town with strong City connections. The Pre-Preparatory and Preparatory Schools are a short walk away from the Senior School. The school was founded in 1557 by Sir Anthony Browne and for much of its history was a boys' boarding school. It was a direct grant grammar school until 1977 when it reverted to full independence. Sixth form girls joined the school shortly afterwards and in 1988 girls were admitted to Year 7. The school is an unincorporated registered charity whose trustees are the school's board of governors.
- 1.2 The school aims to produce well qualified, thoughtful and caring pupils, who benefit from the wealth of opportunities available to grow in confidence, work in teams, develop leadership skills and become aware of the needs of other people.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 1123 pupils in the school, about two-fifths of whom were girls. There are 66 boarders, about three-fifths of them boys. The sixth form has 331 pupils. The school has identified 87 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and of these, 43 receive help from the school. In total, 59 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and 43 of them receive support from the school.
- 1.4 The pupils' ability profile on entry to the school in Year 7 and in Year 12 is above the national average. At the age of 11, pupils come from Brentwood's preparatory school and many other local schools; about one-third are from the maintained sector. Most pupils are from professional families but the school also draws pupils from farming families in rural Essex. Approximately one in twenty are from minority ethnic backgrounds, predominantly Asian.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection the school has opened a new sixth-form centre, classroom block and auditorium and a second synthetic pitch.
- 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 National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
First Year	Year 7
Second Year	Year 8
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

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

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

- 2.1 The overall quality of pupils' achievements is excellent. The pupils make strong progress in their learning, because of their excellent attitudes to study, dedicated and sometimes inspiring teaching and an academically challenging curriculum, which is flexibly adapted to suit all pupils' needs. Sixth-form pupils are offered the choice of studying for A levels or for the International Baccalaureate (IB) diploma. In recent years, the pupils' attainment in external examinations has been consistently good and close to excellence in GCSE and good at A level, rising to excellent in 2011, when it was above the maintained selective schools' average. The curriculum is enriched by an outstanding range of activities, which attract high participation rates. Many pupils excel in drama, music and sport, several at national level, as well as in art, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), where significant numbers gain a Gold Award. Those pupils with SEND and those with EAL make good and, occasionally, exceptional progress, sometimes outperforming their peers, thanks to the high quality of learning support provided. However, despite strenuous efforts to raise overall standards in teaching and learning, some variability in quality remains.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development, the central feature of the school's aims, is excellent. It is supported by outstanding pastoral care, as epitomised by highly effective, supportive tutoring and by the extensive range of activities, clubs and trips worldwide. The caring and supportive example set by the staff is mirrored in the pupils' own interaction. They show genuine concern for each other's welfare and grow strongly in self-awareness and self-esteem. The pupils feel safe and valued. Relationships are excellent. The quality of boarding provision is exceptional.
- 2.3 The school's aims are being fully realised, a strong testimony to the quality of governance, as well as to the challenging vision and outstanding educational direction of senior leadership. Excellent facilities include a new sixth-form centre and auditorium, as well as an outstanding sports hall and a dedicated fencing 'salle'. Current policies and procedures for safeguarding the pupils' welfare, including safe recruitment of staff, are rigorous and implemented carefully. The school promotes excellent links with parents, whose replies to their questionnaire showed overwhelming support for all aspects of school life, including excellent communication between school and parents. A minority of pupil respondents felt their voice wasn't heard and that teachers were unfair in their use of rewards and sanctions. The majority, including all those interviewed, disagreed. Inspectors found that consultation with pupils does occur, but structures are variable in standard. They found no evidence of teachers being unfair.

## **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 2011.

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

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure greater consistency in the monitoring of teaching and learning and in the performance of academic middle management.
2. Ensure the excellent practice seen in the best teaching is disseminated throughout the curriculum.



### **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 and learning throughout the school is excellent overall.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated, in line with the school's aim to ensure pupils emerge as intellectually curious, resilient and enterprising life-long learners. Pupils show good and often excellent knowledge and understanding at all levels. They are extremely articulate and willingly listen to others' opinions. Their excellent writing skills are increasingly well developed, enabling them to produce striking, thoughtful and well-researched extended essays in Years 12 and 13. The pupils rise enthusiastically to the challenge of independent learning, when opportunities to do so are provided. They have highly developed creative skills and frequently produce innovative work in art, drama, dance, music and English, as seen in the literary magazine, Black Frog. Pupils' numeracy skills are strong. They interpret data presented graphically and regularly use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively for research as well as for more complicated tasks, such as composition in music.
- 3.3 The pupils' achieve outstanding success across the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Well over one-third of the pupils who entered the Mathematics Olympiad gained gold awards. Awards are won regularly in science Olympiads and National Challenges. School teams enjoy much success, with individual pupils being invited to join national squads in fencing, cricket, football and water polo. Results in public speaking examinations have been outstanding, as have those in music examinations, where, in the last three years, almost one-third of the 410 entries achieved a distinction. Two pupils perform in the National Youth Orchestra, two in the National Youth Theatre. A number of pupils are exhibitioners at London music colleges or hold organ scholarships at university. Debating skills learnt in junior and senior debating societies lead to success in English Speaking Union finals, whilst of the 161 pupils gaining the Duke of Edinburgh's Award this year, 29 gained the Gold Award. Over four out of every five Year 13 leavers were accepted by their university and course of first choice.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been consistently good and close to excellent, significantly above the national average for maintained schools. Well over half the subject entries were graded A\* or A. Results at A level have been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools, consistently matching the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2011, they were excellent, above the selective schools' average, with over three-quarters of grades being A\*, A or B, a figure which rose to over four-fifths in 2012. Similar improvements were made by the small cohorts of IB pupils, with pupils' average score of 35.80 in 2011 being above the United Kingdom average. These levels of attainment, backed up by observations of lessons, indicate that, throughout the school, the pupils make good progress. The attainment of pupils identified with SEND is in line with pupils of similar ability at the school, because of the excellent learning support they receive. Pupils with EAL make good progress, reflecting similarly strong support. Their attainment at IGCSE is above the national average. When challenged, the most able pupils make good and sometimes excellent progress, but when their thinking is not stretched, their progress does not rise above appropriate.

- 3.5 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are overwhelmingly positive in outlook, well behaved and cooperative. They are enthusiastic participators in class activities, eager to learn and willing to persevere and sustain concentration. The pupils work well in groups and are mutually supportive. They are keen to succeed.

### **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 curricular and extra-curricular provision supports in outstanding fashion the aims of the school to give its pupils a set of skills which will equip them for life. It promotes the acquisition of high level skills in literacy and numeracy and provides ample opportunity to participate in creative, aesthetic and physical activities.
- 3.8 The curriculum is broad, balanced and challenging, covering all required areas. A range of modern foreign languages and classics, including Greek, is provided, as is the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL). A critical thinking course in Years 7, 8 and 9 challenges pupils to think and learn independently. The sixth-form curriculum is structured to meet pupils' needs, offering a choice between traditional A levels and the IB diploma, the latter providing a viable alternative, which reflects the school's aims. Twenty-six subjects are offered at A level. The sixth-form curriculum is enriched by a programme of subsidiary subjects, ranging from survival cooking at university, through law and GCSE Italian to training in peer mentoring or sports leadership.
- 3.9 Opportunities to extend study are provided by all departments. Science and mathematical Olympiads, university essay prizes or research projects far beyond the confines of examination specifications challenge the most able. Junior and senior societies provide stimulating programmes of lectures, debates and presentations. The Headmaster's Award provides an incentive for pupils in Years 8 and 9 to demonstrate their research and critical thinking skills. Excellent support within and outside the timetable is provided for pupils with SEND, each of whom has an individual education plan (IEP), and for those with EAL. These are tailored to individual needs. An excellent life skills programme covers personal, social, civic and health issues and incorporates careers guidance. The strong careers programme includes online components in Year 9, Year 11 assessments, interviews with external advisers and an annual careers convention. Sixth-form provision includes work experience, advice on choice of university and mock interviews.
- 3.10 The school's extra-curricular programme is outstanding and continues to be a major strength of the school. An exceptionally wide and diverse selection of clubs, activities and trips attracts very high levels of participation. Multiple sports teams from each year group represent the school and benefit from excellent coaching in football, hockey, netball and rugby, whilst other pupils take advantage of first-class facilities, for example to swim, fence or play squash. The CCF, with 500 cadets, forms one of the largest and most successful contingents in the country. The school organises DofE provision through to the Gold Award.
- 3.11 Music, dance and drama play a central role in the life of the school. Choral and instrumental groups give concerts in and out of school and tour in Europe biannually. Regular drama encompasses major productions (*Macbeth* recently), junior plays, house drama and a dance showcase. An enormous variety of national and foreign educational, adventurous or sporting visits and expeditions takes place, including recently sports tours to Canada and Barbados, expeditions to Morocco and Mexico

and educational trips to Iceland and Venice. The CCF sponsors the cadet force at a local school and girls from another local school are taught Greek after school. A vibrant community service unit organises placements. The school community supported the Burkina Faso paralympic team, whilst houses' charities have included support for a school project in Zambia.

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

- 3.12 The quality of teaching is good overall.
- 3.13 Teaching supports the aims of the school to enable pupils to become confident, resourceful and enquiring learners. In more than a quarter of lessons observed, teaching was excellent; in only a small proportion of lessons was it unsatisfactory. Since the previous inspection, significant progress has been made as a result of measures taken to address that inspection's recommendations. However, there is still some inconsistency in the effectiveness and monitoring of teaching within departments, as well as in the quality of schemes of work.
- 3.14 Teaching is generally highly effective in promoting pupils' progress. Most lessons are carefully planned. Teachers know their pupils well and respond with sensitivity to their individual needs. Most care intently for their pupils and 'go that extra mile' for them. Opportunities are taken to stimulate reflection, often innovatively. Good use is made of excellent resources and much of the teaching fosters enjoyment. The introduction of the IB diploma in Years 12 and 13 and of creative and critical thinking courses in Years 7 to 9 is beginning to have a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning.
- 3.15 Teachers are confident to employ a variety of methods, meeting another of the recommendations of the previous inspection, and they demonstrate good, and frequently excellent, subject knowledge. Many of the best lessons incorporated pace, rigour and challenge, engaging pupils' rapt attention. Opportunities were taken to stretch pupils' thinking, presenting them with open tasks that required them to apply their subject knowledge to challenging problems. Equally strong progress came from challenging group work, showing high levels of understanding and of reflection in applying it. However, opportunities to encourage independent learning were sometimes missed. In the weaker lessons, low expectations led to too much direction from the teacher, inhibiting pupils' active involvement.
- 3.16 Pupils with SEND and those with EAL receive excellent support. Detailed individual education plans are drawn up for each pupil and subject teachers were observed using the advice offered in the IEP to assist their lesson planning and class management. In addition to one-to-one tuition, subject-specific help is offered to small groups and lunchtime drop-in sessions offer any pupil the chance to ask for help and advice. These approaches help to foster the remarkable self-confidence and self-reliance which are demonstrated by pupils with SEND and EAL and enable them to make excellent progress. Challenging extension activities are offered in many subjects to stimulate the most able pupils through departmental clubs, lectures, discussions and external competitions.
- 3.17 Marking is thorough and regular, and usually includes helpful advice on how to improve work. Where the new marking templates are used in Years 7 to 11, they are helping to ensure a greater consistency in marking. External progress data are effectively used to monitor pupils' progress and set targets, as well as to guide schemes of work and lesson planning.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school continues to maintain its traditional values of "Virtue, Learning and Manners" in a modern setting. The pupils are friendly, welcoming and exhibit self assurance without arrogance; their attitudes and behaviour exemplify the Christian ethos of the school. These outstanding levels of personal development are promoted by the exceptional quality of relationships within the school community and the excellent care shown for the pupils by a highly dedicated staff. The school is fulfilling its aim to produce pupils who are well qualified, thoughtful and caring, with well developed skills of leadership and who are able to work with a variety of different people and with a sense of service to others.
- 4.3 The pupils' outstanding levels of confidence and self-worth derive from a secure learning environment. All are valued as individuals; mutual support is strong. The pupils thrive on the vast range of opportunities available to them to appreciate the non-material aspects of life. They demonstrate spiritual and moral awareness in their response to regular chapel services and to the headmaster's assemblies. The artwork exhibited around the school is inspirational, as is the constant music making, showing an appreciation of aesthetic ideals together with well-developed emotional maturity.
- 4.4 Pupils have an extremely strong sense of right and wrong and are keen to give each other praise. In lessons, pupils are cooperative and respectful, listening to the views of others and interacting with staff and peers in a relaxed yet purposeful fashion. The care for junior pupils by their more senior peers, particularly in the boarding houses, is exemplary and ensures, through patient discussion, that bullying is not a problem at the school. The pupils' understanding of ethical issues is furthered by discussions across the curriculum. Their respect for and understanding of the civil and criminal law is deepened in assemblies, tutor periods and life skills lessons. Pupils act upon their moral awareness, as when, during a school expedition to Morocco, they helped to build a Women's Community Co-operative to teach local women a variety of skills including adult literacy.
- 4.5 The pupils' social, economic and political awareness is outstanding. Relationships are excellent, encouraging well-mannered, considerate behaviour. Staff and senior pupils are effective role models. Throughout the school, pupils are active members of the community and they hone their leadership and teamwork skills in sports teams, musical ensembles and drama groups, as well as by becoming 'praepostors' (prefects) or heads of house in some cases. Greater self-awareness, resilience and personal responsibility for one's actions are promoted by the CCF and the DofE. Pupils value the prefects as a conduit for their ideas and opinions. They feel confident they can turn to the trained peer mentors for advice and rightly value the drop-in room.
- 4.6 The pupils gain a good awareness of the Western cultural tradition as well as of different religions and cultures as a result of discussions in friendship groups, in lessons and from school assemblies. They enjoy celebrating different cultural festivals. They come to understand the realities of other cultures through the extensive opportunities provided for travel overseas and thus realise the importance of a Christian school making arrangements to respond to the needs of pupils with

different faiths. The boarders, who come from a wide range of nationalities, live and work harmoniously together.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 An outstanding level of pastoral care is provided by heads of year and, above all, by tutors, who play a pivotal role in caring for and guiding the pupils, ably supported by the delegated senior manager and by all colleagues, who together create the enabling, supportive ethos. Tutors combine pastoral care with detailed academic monitoring, thus treating the whole person. Their encouragement to their pupils to participate in a wide range of activities successfully engenders greater self-confidence and self-awareness.
- 4.9 The house system offers a strong sense of belonging and fulfils the school's aim to treat every single child as an individual. It greatly helps new pupils settle into school life and provides caring communities, in which pupils feel at ease. Houses also offer excellent leadership opportunities and challenges in a range of activities.
- 4.10 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves is outstanding. Pupils and teachers cherish the ethos of trust which permeates school life. A drop-in service, run by trained sixth-form mentors, typifies the remarkable care and concern pupils feel for each other across age groups. This supportive ethos successfully promotes good behaviour, in line with clear policies, and helps guard against bullying and harassment. The pupils say they feel safe and happy and parental questionnaire responses confirmed this almost unanimously. If unacceptable behaviour does occur, it is dealt with constructively, following clear procedures.
- 4.11 Pupils' views are sought through discussions with tutors, in year group councils and through surveys. There is no school council. Almost half the pupils' questionnaire responses felt that their opinions were not sought or responded to. Evidence showed this not to be the case, but the school is aware of the pupils' views and is seeking to respond appropriately.
- 4.12 Pupils receive a well-balanced and varied choice of nutritious meals. Healthy eating is promoted in lessons, including a Year 9 life skills presentation during the inspection about eating disorders and body image. Regular exercise is promoted and is wide ranging. A suitable plan to provide and improve educational access for pupils with SEND is already having the desired effect.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The school's policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils' welfare are robust and comprehensive. They are extremely well implemented and have regard to official guidance, including safer recruitment procedures. All staff have been checked to ensure their suitability to work with children. Relations with the local safeguarding agency are good. They have trained the designated senior person for child protection, his three deputies, and two governors, in inter-agency working. All other staff have undergone regular required training in safeguarding pupils' welfare. All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards; a recent recommendation from the Fire Authority has been dealt with to the authority's

satisfaction. Health and safety procedures are excellent. Appropriate risk assessments are carried out. An external health and safety audit took place in November 2012 and its recommendations are being followed up. The health and safety committee meets regularly. Health and safety documentation is very thorough and the fire safety and maintenance logs indicate that policies and procedures are rigorously implemented.

- 4.15 Medical care is excellent. Accidents are suitably recorded and facilities for pupils, day and boarding, who fall ill, are good. The excellent san sister lives on site and is readily available around the clock. She is ably assisted by a second nurse, who lives nearby. The admissions and attendance registers have been accurately completed, backed up and correctly stored for at least three years.

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

- 4.16 The quality of boarding is excellent.

4.17 Boarders have an excellent level of personal development. They are erudite and open, relating to fellow boarders and to adults with an easy confidence. A wide range of nationalities is represented within the houses and the tolerance and understanding exhibited by boarders for one another is outstanding. Houses celebrate their multi-cultural tradition in a variety of ways, for instance in an event marking the Chinese New Year. They value the friendships they form with one another and new pupils remark upon the way in which they have been welcomed and assimilated by their fellows and valued and cared for by their seniors. The role models provided and leadership offered by senior boarders in ensuring that this atmosphere of tolerance and mutual support is maintained is a particularly significant feature of the houses. The boarders exhibit a palpable sense of pride in their houses. They are comfortable in their well-equipped houses and there is a warm and positive relationship, based upon mutual trust, between the boarders and those adults who have responsibility for them. The boarders report that there is a consistency and fairness in the way they are treated in both boarding houses.

4.18 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. The boarders are accommodated in well-furnished and well-maintained houses. Boys all have individual rooms, whilst some girls share spacious double rooms. The boarders are able to personalise their own space and communal areas. Bathroom facilities in both houses are of a high standard, clean and well maintained. All houses have computer access and Wi-Fi facilities, televisions, a range of games facilities and newspapers delivered daily. Houses arrange regular trips and activities at the weekend, ranging from cinema and theatre trips to a very popular bonding weekend at a theme park for all boarders. Annual events include a Christmas dinner and a meal to celebrate the Chinese New Year. The boarders have access to the school sports facilities at weekends and in the evening, where they can use the swimming pool, squash courts, fitness suite and hall to stay fit and healthy. There is an excellent support staff network within the houses, with cleaning taking place every day and boarders' laundry washed and returned within 24 hours. Maintenance issues are dealt with promptly. The boarders receive a clear and detailed induction and those with EAL receive support from the EAL department. Detailed records are kept of all significant issues relating to boarders, such as parental contact and permission forms. The boarders have frequent opportunities to raise any concerns or suggestions with staff and their concerns are acted upon wherever possible. Although a significant minority of boarders were critical of catering, inspectors judge that food is plentiful and nutritious with a wide choice available at all meals. Menus

are rotated monthly and there is a dining hall committee which enables boarders' views to be put forward although this also occurs informally. The houses have a good range of supplies to allow the boarders to make snacks outside of mealtimes.

- 4.19 Arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent. The designated senior person has a strong grasp of the theory and practicalities of safeguarding. Safer recruitment procedures are implemented effectively, ensuring that the boarders are cared for by individuals who have been subject to all required checks, including criminal record checks, written references, employment histories and identification. During interviews, all house staff showed a sensible awareness of their responsibilities for those in their care, and all have been appropriately trained in safeguarding. There are strong structures in place via school policies for all areas of safeguarding, including anti-bullying and other serious offences. These are clearly displayed on house notice boards, in boarding handbooks and are made available to parents. The boarders have clear access to help lines should the need arise and have the contact details of an independent listener; they can also access the school counsellor. Records are kept in the houses of all minor offences, and any more serious matters are referred to senior staff.
- 4.20 The medical provision and care for the boarders are excellent. The sanatorium is staffed from 8am to 6pm throughout the week, and a nurse is on call at all other times. There is daily communication between the sanatorium and the houses giving details of any boarders' visits. The doctor holds a surgery twice a week uniquely for boarders. If overnight accommodation for sick boarders is needed, there is a further fully equipped sanatorium, with separate en-suite bedrooms for boys and girls. The administration of medicines in the houses is clearly recorded; medicines are securely stored and checked regularly by the sanatorium staff. All boarders have panic buttons in their rooms and are aware of what to do if unwell or in case of a night time emergency. Alarm systems and emergency lighting are tested weekly in both houses. Fire drills are carried out regularly during boarding time and clearly documented. A new fire alarm system has been fitted in Mill Hill House and fire escape routes improved so as to meet the recommendations of the previous inspection in keeping the boarders safe. Trips and activities are carefully risk assessed and permission is sought from parents prior to any high risk activity. Staffing in all areas effectively meets the needs of all boarders.
- 4.21 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent. There is a clear oversight of boarding at senior level, including the chairing of regular boarding team meetings. Here, matters raised by boarders as well as staff are discussed. A number of improvements have been made to the houses since the previous inspection, including the introduction of weekend cleaning and improvements to the security systems. The staff in both houses are well qualified, enthusiastic, and speak highly of the boarders in their care. Communication between staff is regular and very efficient, with any issues arising communicated to all house staff via email on a daily basis. The boarders value the care and support they receive and their relationships with boarding staff: they report that the housemaster 'always asks' if there are any issues. They also enjoy the wide cultural mix in the houses and feel that this enhances their experience. All policies relevant to boarding are of high quality and freely available to boarders in their handbook and on notice boards in the houses. There is a notable degree of consistency in the routines and operation of both houses. Contact with parents is regular, with clear records kept of significant contact. Other records relating to boarders, such as permission for medical treatment, guardianship arrangements and weekend trips and visits are comprehensive and securely kept.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Highly effective governance makes a significant contribution to supporting and reinforcing the aims of the school, enabling pupils to make outstanding personal progress. The governors' breadth of expertise is a major asset. A suitable governance structure, comprising nine committees, covering all key areas, ensures that the trustees have comprehensive oversight of all sections of the school and discharge their responsibilities in exemplary fashion for educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. The new sixth form centre is now fully operational. All committees comprise governors and members of the senior management and excellent relations are thus established. Two governors worked with senior management in the creation of the new school development plan.
- 5.3 Governors strongly support the school's ambitious vision. Their insight into the working of the school, which previously came mainly from reports from senior leadership and management, has been greatly increased by the formation of an education committee, under expert academic chairmanship, which has increased governors' care for the school's academic life. It supports senior leadership and monitors their initiatives, providing excellent challenge and stimulus for growth. Presentations on various aspects of school life are now made to the full governing body and to the education committee. The compliance committee enables governors to discharge their responsibilities for statutory requirements. Governors review the safeguarding and health and safety policies, procedures and practice at least annually. One governor is specifically designated to oversee the implementation of safeguarding procedures, two have attended child protection training and two have been trained in safer recruitment. Current procedures are implemented successfully.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.5 In line with the school's aims, strong strategic leadership has moved the school forward since the previous inspection, and enabled pupils to achieve higher academic standards as well as building further on the school's pastoral and extra-curricular excellence.
- 5.6 Clear educational direction accompanied by a distinct focus on school improvement emanates from a determined and dedicated senior team, who work collaboratively and in consultation with a broad coalition of supportive staff to implement new policies and initiatives. The contribution of all employees is welcomed through the annual staff survey and frequent meetings of the Headmaster's Forum. Senior managers' professional approach is balanced by care for individuals and this excellence in leadership results in outstanding personal development for the pupils.



- 5.7 The school's leadership is particularly effective in establishing and delivering long-term development priorities such as the new sixth-form accommodation. The current plans for a learning resource centre illustrate the high quality of the senior leadership's vision and planning
- 5.8 Management responsibilities are clear. Targets for academic departments are set by the annual school improvement plan, aided by external lesson validation and rigorous scrutiny of departmental results and performance. Whilst these systems are well established and thorough, the monitoring of teaching and learning and the sharing of good practice varies in quality between departments. The best departmental schemes of work support the school's aims by providing imaginative ideas for inspiring pupils as well as extensive information on resources available. However, some schemes are merely programmes of study and fail to incorporate the many excellent teaching initiatives that the school has been advancing.
- 5.9 The school's leadership is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating a high quality staff. The school ensures that all members of staff are effectively trained for their roles in safeguarding the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Safe recruitment procedures are rigorously implemented to ensure that applicants are suitable to work with children.
- 5.10 The teaching staff is well supported by an effective appraisal system which operates on a line-management principle and represents a significant strengthening of the system that existed at the time of the previous inspection, although some inconsistency remains. Targets are set, followed up annually, and suitable training is arranged. The generous training budget ensures that professional development is a priority for the school as it seeks to fulfil its aims. The appraisal of support managers and staff is less well established and inconsistent in its application. However, their significant and valued contribution to school life makes a considerable impact on the quality of the environment and thus on pupils' development.
- 5.11 Links with parents and the community are excellent. They were excellent at the previous inspection and the school has since striven to develop them further. To this end, they have introduced a termly parental forum and a weekly headmaster's newsletter, as well as extending considerably the use of digital technology. In particular, "the Frog", a virtual learning environment, accessible to parents and pupils from the school website, is a valued facility which carries much useful material.
- 5.12 Parents are very positive about the education and opportunities provided for their children. Almost all respondents to the parental questionnaire expressed their approval for the school's curriculum, range of activities, standards of behaviour, pastoral care, the availability of information about the school and their child's progress. They are aware that they can contact teachers and tutors by email and the school is able to reach almost every parent in this way. The school carries out its own regular survey of parents and has responded to concerns raised in it. There is a clear complaints policy and the few complaints received have been handled swiftly and effectively.
- 5.13 Although a small number of parents' responses to the questionnaire suggested that they were not provided with enough information about a pupil's progress, inspectors judge that clear and useful subject reports are sent out annually. These include subject reports, a house report, detailing involvement in activities, and a form tutor

report. In addition, at least two assessments of performance and effort are provided per year, as is a list of summer examination results which puts each mark in the context of expectations for that pupil. Each year group has a parents' evening and an early introduction meeting with tutors; in Years 11 and 13, this function merges into IB presentation and UCAS evenings.

- 5.14 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. Helpful booklets are distributed to new parents at the time of important subject choices, such as sixth-form entry. In addition, parents are welcomed into school for presentations on important pastoral topics, such as drugs and cyber-bullying, and to a special evening this year for parents of younger students on "The Changing Face of Education". An open invitation is made to join the "Friends of Brentwood School", which aims to raise funds through social events.

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