



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**CULFORD SCHOOL**

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## Culford School

Full Name of School	<b>Culford School</b>
DfE Number	<b>935/6053</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>310486</b>
Address	<b>Culford School Culford Bury St Edmunds Suffolk IP28 6TX</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01284 728615</b>
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Email Address	<b>hmpa@culford.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Julian Johnson-Munday</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Air Vice Marshal Steven Abbott</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>661</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (354 boys; 307 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>3-5 (EYFS): 24    5-13: 270 13-18: 367</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>Total: 399</b>
Number of Boarders	<b>Total: 262</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Sarah Preston</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>18 to 21 November 2014</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2008. There was an inspection of Boarding Welfare in February 2012.

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

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is**

**'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the 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 George Fisher	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Val Clark	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Angela Alsop	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Jane Davies	Team Inspector (Former Headmistress, HMC school)
Mr David Edwards	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mr Steve Fox	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Paul Lunn	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Miss Francesca May	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr Tony Nelson	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mrs Janet Watts	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)
Mrs Myra Rodgers	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Paul Johnson	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Senior Housemaster, HMC school)
Mrs Penny Oates	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Culford School was founded in 1881 by the Methodist Church as the East Anglian School for Boys. In 1971, the school moved to its current site of 480 acres, near to the town of Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk. In 1972, it amalgamated with the East Anglian School for Girls. It remains a Methodist school, and its work is overseen by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust (MIST), which is represented on the school's governing body, and which owns the school's assets. The Pre-Preparatory School (pre-prep), including separate buildings for Nursery and Reception children, and the Preparatory School (prep), are in separate buildings on the site, each with their own head, while the headmaster of the senior school has overall responsibility for the whole school.
- 1.2 The school welcomes pupils of all faiths and denominations, and those with none. The aim of the school is to provide an academic education, within a strong boarding environment, which is challenging, enriching and fun. It seeks high academic performance according to each pupil's identified ability, an active and supportive social life as a caring Christian family community, and engagement in a wide programme of sports and activities.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has incorporated Year 3 pupils into the prep school, restructured the pastoral arrangements so that all boarding houses now have a mix of boarding and day pupils, and opened a second girls' boarding house. Additionally, a Lawn Tennis Association centre of excellence was opened on site in 2010 and work on the construction of a new library is under way.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 661 pupils on roll, including 354 boys and 307 girls, between the ages of 3 and 18. Of these, 24 pupils were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the pre-prep had, in total, 64 pupils between Nursery and Year 2, comprising 29 boys and 35 girls. The prep had 230 pupils from Years 3 to 8 of which 121 were boys and 109 were girls. Within the senior school, Year 9 and above, there were 204 boys and 163 girls, including 150 pupils in the sixth form. There were 262 boarders, between the ages of 7 and 18, accommodated in five houses, with 139 boys and 123 girls. Boarders come largely from East Anglian families, with around one-fifth from Europe and overseas, the latter joining mainly for the sixth form. About one-third of the pupils receive some fee support from the school and one in ten has a boarding allowance from the British Ministry of Defence or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. The social and ethnic mix of the school closely reflects the character of the surrounding Suffolk and East Anglian community.
- 1.5 Admission to the prep and senior schools is by examination; younger pupils are informally assessed. The ability profile of pupils in Reception is in line with the national average. In the senior school it is above the national average, with around two-thirds of pupils being of at least above average ability, and one-quarter having ability in line with the national average. The ability profile of the sixth form is in line with the national average for pupils in sixth form education. A total of 49 pupils have identified special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 40 receive additional support from within the school. Of those requiring additional support, most have dyslexia. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 87 pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), of whom 46 receive additional support.

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 tables.

1.7 **Early Years Foundation Stage Setting**

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception

**Pre-preparatory and Preparatory Schools**

School	NC name
PP 1	Year 1
PP 2	Year 2
Lower 1	Year 3
Upper 1	Year 4
Lower 2	Year 5
Upper 2	Year 6
Lower 3	Year 7
Upper 3	Year 8

**Senior School**

School	NC name
Fourth Form	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13



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

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

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement is good. Pupils are well educated, in accordance with the school's aims of providing an education that is challenging, enriching and fun. From the EYFS onwards, pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND and EAL and the more able, develop good knowledge, understanding and skills. The curriculum provides a wide range of subjects and is carefully adapted to meet the needs of the individual, whether because of a particular learning need, or because of their heavy involvement in sports. The enrichment programme successfully enhances the curriculum, and the extra-curricular provision and pupils' achievement within it are excellent throughout. The overall quality of teaching is good with highly effective practice in the EYFS and excellent teaching in the senior school. There is now more specialist teaching of English and mathematics in the prep school. In the senior school independent learning is now more in evidence, representing an improvement since the previous inspection. However, subject-specific strategies are inconsistently implemented within the classroom, to meet fully the needs of pupils with SEND, EAL and the more able. Pupils in the EYFS make at least good progress and in most cases they make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. Progress is good within the pre-prep and senior schools, but slows within the prep, where some teaching does not fully engage and stretch the pupils.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development throughout the school is excellent and is supported by strong pastoral care. Pupils have high levels of moral and social awareness, and a clear sense of right and wrong, demonstrating emotional maturity. They treat each other with tolerance and respect and there are excellent relationships between staff and pupils. Pupils of all ages willingly take on responsibility. The school promotes a culture where pupils are encouraged to be responsible, thus engendering trust. The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good and play an important part in promoting pupils' all-round development. Most routine matters of welfare, health and safety are carefully managed but a small number of issues were drawn to the school's attention during the inspection. The quality of boarding is excellent, ensuring that there are very positive outcomes for boarders. The accommodation has benefited from continuing investment and refurbishment, as recommended in the previous inspection.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is excellent and it is fully committed to the Methodist ethos of the school. The wide range of expertise on the governing body enables highly effective governance and the successful achievement of the school's aims. There is rigorous attention to statutory responsibilities, including child protection and the regular review of the safeguarding policy. The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent overall. Senior leadership identifies a clear vision for the school, and pastoral management is excellent throughout. Planning is effective at every level, although the approach within EYFS is not sufficiently coherent. Academic management is strong within the pre-prep and senior schools, and developing within the prep following restructuring. Links with parents are outstanding throughout. Many opportunities exist for parents to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children and in school life. Most parents were very positive about the school in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

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

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

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

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

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Improve consistency of implementation of the agreed strategies for supporting pupils with SEND, EAL and the more able.
  2. Further develop the quality of teaching in the prep school.
  3. Ensure that all matters of welfare, health and safety are managed in accordance with the school's policy.
  4. Develop a more coherent approach to planning in the EYFS.

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

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

- 3.1 The overall quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims of providing an education that is challenging, enriching and fun. Nursery children are able to explain about the magic powers of magnets. They recognise numerals up to ten and some of the letters from their own, as well as their friends', names. In Reception, repeating patterns are accurately devised with as many as four variables. Older pupils read fluently and write competently and clearly for a range of purposes. Opportunities for extended writing in the prep school are sometimes limited. Across the curriculum and age groups listening skills are well developed. Oral skills are also strong with pupils able to express their thoughts and opinions articulately across a range of subjects and within different settings. Pupils' numeracy skills are good and these are applied effectively across the curriculum in the senior school. In the prep school, numerical and problem-solving skills are less well developed. Sound information and communication technology (ICT) skills are evident throughout the school. Pupils are logical thinkers and able to both analyse and synthesise complex arguments. Physical activity is developed to an exceptionally high standard for some, and all pupils benefit from the extensive opportunities which are provided. Pupils are highly creative, as shown by the quality of art and design work which was seen in both the prep and senior school, and in their written contributions to school publications.
- 3.3 Extra-curricular achievement is excellent across the whole school. Pupils demonstrate significant achievements in a wide range of activities, gaining scholarships and awards in speech, music and drama examinations, and in mathematical challenges and Olympiads. There is a strong combined cadet force (CCF) through which pupils gain national qualifications such as Senior Cadet Instructor, and around one-fifth of pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), with a similar proportion gaining the gold award.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve highly in a wide range of sporting activities, including at county and national levels in hockey and rugby. The tennis programme, under the direction of the high performance manager, has led to the school becoming a national centre of excellence. A similar programme is being developed within swimming through West Suffolk swimming club. Other pupils have joined the Olympic development programme in rowing and represented Malta in the Davis Cup. Success in music includes winning the West Suffolk 'battle of the bands' and categories within the West Suffolk Young Musician of the year. Success in art has seen the winning of national competitions, including the Saatchi Prize in 2014. Drama is staged within school, at nearby theatres, and at the Edinburgh Festival, demonstrating high levels of performance.
- 3.5 Within the prep school, pupils' attainment cannot be measured against national averages, but on the evidence available from pupils' work, through pupil interviews and within lessons, the overall achievement is good. Within the senior school, the data used in the following analysis is for the years from 2011 to 2013, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Pupils' attainment in public examinations has been above the national average for maintained schools. GCSE results have been above the national average for maintained schools and results in International GCSE (IGCSE) mathematics have

been higher than the worldwide results. At A Level, results have been higher than the national average for maintained schools and in line with the national average for selective maintained schools. More recently, results have been closer to the national average for maintained schools.

- 3.6 Evidence from the school, together with classroom observations, shows that there are no significant differences in attainment relative to potential between genders or abilities. Furthermore, pupils with EAL and SEND, and the more able, all achieve in line with their potential. Pupils with SEND and the more able make good progress overall, demonstrated through observations in lessons and through analysis of case studies. Given their success in additionally acquiring the English language, pupils with EAL make better progress than their peers. Within the EYFS progress is at least good, and in some cases excellent in relation to children's starting points and capabilities. Progress is good in the pre-prep, but slows as pupils move through the prep school. Progress within the senior school is generally good.
- 3.7 Within the prep school, pupils attain well in Common Entrance, and gain entry to a range of senior schools, including the most selective. The significant majority progress to Culford senior school. A very large majority of sixth-form pupils gain admission to universities in the UK or abroad, with around one-third gaining places at the more selective universities.
- 3.8 Pupils throughout the school work well independently, or in pairs and groups. Presentation of work is generally good, but at the top end of the prep school the same care and attention are sometimes absent. Pupils generally complete work to the best of their abilities. They develop good work habits and are enthusiastic and cheerful in the classroom, frequently taking the initiative in their learning. Within the EYFS children play independently and imaginatively, and enjoy exploring both the indoor and outdoor environments. For example, they become farmers caring for their animals, or they become patients in the doctor's surgery. They concentrate well and can think critically and be creative.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The broad and well-structured curriculum strongly supports all areas of learning. Within the EYFS the philosophy programme in Reception helps all children to develop their critical thinking skills, and the provision for children with SEND is of high quality. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in French, music, outdoor games, tennis, gymnastics, ballet and swimming. The EYFS provision helps all children to reach their expected levels of development. The pre-prep prepares children effectively for the next stage in their learning, providing daily literacy and numeracy lessons, combined with a topic-based approach across the curriculum; this represents an improvement since the previous inspection.
- 3.11 Cross-curricular skills continue to be well developed in the prep school: aesthetic and creative skills are promoted through drama, taught within English, art and design technology. Linguistic experience is extended for the more able through the provision of Latin in Year 7. In response to a recommendation of the previous inspection, specialist teaching in mathematics and English has been introduced into the prep school. Additionally, elements of a social and emotional aspects of learning programme and academic reflection tutorials are used by the prep school to help prepare pupils for the senior school.

- 3.12 Setting takes place in mathematics in the prep school. All pupils from Years 6 to 8 are taught in form groups which are streamed by ability, enabling them to work at an appropriate pace. Within the senior school, setting by ability is used effectively in many subjects, and the most able mathematicians take IGCSE in Year 10. Since the previous inspection, several subjects now offer IGCSE examinations, increasing the immediate challenge and easing the transition to A level. In accordance with the school's values, individual programmes of study are devised at GCSE, enabling participation in the elite sporting programme or allowing pupils with EAL to receive additional, specialist support. Science enrichment sessions, private study, physical education (PE) and games complement the overall development of pupils at GCSE. A carefully planned personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme reflects the school's Christian foundation. At A level, every attempt is made to accommodate pupils' choices from a wide range of over 20 subjects. Since the previous inspection, German has been withdrawn at all levels, along with discrete ICT lessons beyond Year 9.
- 3.13 Developing independent learning is a focus throughout all three parts of the school. Seven personal learning and thinking skills are assessed and reported on through specific projects, or as an integral part of subjects. In the sixth form, the extended project qualification and Open University modules enhance the opportunities provided, thus helping to meet a recommendation of the previous inspection. The process to identify pupils with SEND and EAL has been improved since the previous inspection. Pupils with more acute SEND have lessons with trained specialists and pupils with EAL are prepared for external English language examinations. Subject-specific strategies and training to facilitate support for identified pupils are available throughout the prep and senior school. Provision for the more able has also been enhanced since the previous inspection through the academic and sports scholars' programmes.
- 3.14 Careers guidance is thorough, including an excellent careers convention, access to careers specialists, and the innovative careers 'blog', 'Step Beyond', providing topical information, links and resources. Many pupils undertake work experience.
- 3.15 An outstanding range of diverse and effectively monitored extra-curricular activities enriches the school's curriculum. Opportunities abound, including sport, such as scuba diving and horse riding, performing arts, with a plethora of plays and concerts, adventurous activities with the introduction of 'Pioneers' in the prep school, and academic clinics.
- 3.16 Pupils willingly participate in community service from weekly visits to a residential home for the elderly and involvement with a school in Nepal. Sixth Form pupils provide extensive support for projects in Malawi including construction of village schools and community facilities. A wide variety of enrichment activities further extends pupils' experience, including prep school residential trips to France and senior school gallery visits and fieldwork in Norfolk.

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

- 3.17 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.18 The majority of teaching effectively promotes pupils' learning and progress and supports the aims of the school. Most teaching is effective in enabling pupils of all abilities to make appropriate progress. At its best, teaching is lively and challenging and teachers create an environment in which pupils enjoy learning for its own sake.

In the EYFS careful planning of educational programmes to match individual children's needs enables most children to make excellent progress in the key areas of learning, whatever their starting point. A rich variety of teaching strategies, together with an effective balance of adult-led and child-initiated activity, allows children to make independent choices. They play imaginatively and enjoy exploring. They rise to the high expectations of the staff, who are skilled in motivating the children to learn. Teaching within the pre-prep is characterised by the creation of a positive atmosphere within lessons, and the effective management of time.

- 3.19 Teaching in the prep is good overall. Some excellent lessons were observed, but others were overly teacher-led and failed to engage and stretch pupils sufficiently. In a number of lessons teaching did not recognise the different abilities and needs of pupils, with the result that pupils are not all challenged fully. Additionally, the lesson planning does not always translate into classroom practice. In this respect the prep school has not yet fully addressed a recommendation made by the previous inspection. It has successfully met the recommendation to increase the number of specialist teachers in mathematics and English.
- 3.20 In the senior school teaching is excellent, representing an improvement since the previous inspection. The senior school has embraced the recommendation to promote independent learning. It has also taken steps to cater more effectively for the full range of its pupils, including the more able and those with SEND or EAL, although the detailed plans that exist are not always carried out in the classroom. This sometimes results in more able pupils doing exactly the same work as their peers, thus restricting their progress. The positive relationships between teachers and pupils create an atmosphere that is conducive to effective learning.
- 3.21 Teaching generally benefits from good subject knowledge and questioning skills, which, in the best lessons, are used to challenge the more able and to assess the needs of the less able. Much teaching, particularly in the senior school, is characterised by imagination, flair and creativity. The school believes strongly in pupil-centred lessons and the best teaching shows a light touch that sparks and facilitates learning. The school's teaching and learning policy sets out very clear pedagogical guidelines. A rigorous programme of appraisal and monitoring ensures that most teachers follow these guidelines in order to plan challenging, well-paced and engaging lessons. A variety of good resources are well used to support learning, including the use of ICT by pupils in the senior school, who acknowledge the success of the school's laptop programme. The woodland area directly outside the pre-prep is used imaginatively by them.
- 3.22 Marking in the pre-prep is good, with suitable comments and plenty of encouragement being given. In the prep, although there is some excellent practice, the quality of marking is inconsistent, with insufficient guidance on what pupils need to do to improve. In the senior school, work is marked frequently, accurately and thoroughly in the majority of subjects. Indeed, some marking is outstanding, for example in Latin and history. Pupils take a pride in their work, which is well presented and well organised, as a result of the careful monitoring of the majority of teachers. Helpful, developmental comments mean that, in most cases, pupils know how they might improve.

## **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 This strongly supports the school's aims to provide an enriching education and to create a rewarding environment in which all pupils can develop. The school produces pupils who, by the time they leave school, are confident and self-aware and who actively care for those within their community.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual development is evident throughout the school, promoted through the distinctive Christian ethos which successfully permeates every area of school life. Pupils make highly-effective contributions to carefully planned collective acts of worship which provide a strong spiritual foundation for all pupils, regardless of their faith. Pupils in the pre-prep visit the discovery centre at the Cathedral in St Edmundsbury, and Year 8 pupils make an annual pilgrimage to Walsingham Abbey. Pupils appreciate the non-material aspects of life and become emotionally mature for their age through opportunities such as these and their day-to-day experiences at school. Children in the EYFS leave well-prepared for their transfer within the pre-prep.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral development is excellent and they have a clear sense of right and wrong. They cultivate a strong moral framework within which to develop their own values and attitudes. The excellent example which is set by staff helps pupils to recognise the value of their own personal contribution to the school community, however small that may be, and to replicate the same care for others. Pupils play an active part in setting a framework for their own behaviour, often by considering personal values rather than through a dependency on rules. Pupils display a powerful sense of loyalty to the school, to its code of conduct and the people within the school community. Within the EYFS the children's personal, social and emotional development is excellent. Their behaviour is exemplary. They take turns and share toys and equipment sensibly. They are happy, feel safe in the secure environment and are confident to share any concerns with staff.
- 4.5 The pupils' social development is excellent. Throughout the school, pupils take on a range of age-appropriate responsibilities and leadership roles. For example, pupils at all stages within the school, and within the houses, can become head boy or girl, form captain or house captain. The scholars and captains of sports at all ages act as academic leaders in lessons or in extra-curricular activities. Older pupils show a keen interest and enthusiasm to be trained as peer counsellors, or to train to operate the email counselling service, 'Bob', which is available to all pupils. Thus, pupils demonstrate their desire to improve further the social dynamics within their school. Pupils also develop strong political and economic awareness, in part through the PSHCE programme within the senior school.
- 4.6 Pupils make regular contributions to their local community, for example by a regular commitment to help in local care homes or, further afield, through the annual visit by sixth-formers to undertake projects in Malawi. Pupils value charitable fundraising, an integral part of the school, for the thought and the deed, rather than the amount of money which may be raised. This reinforces the message of, 'all you can', a theme which underpins their extensive charitable giving. Pupils of all ages are able to reflect on the needs of others and are then able to make their own contribution. For example, pupils in the pre-prep took part in an "African Wellie Walk" in the

school grounds to raise money for the school's projects in Malawi, with Year 2 pupils walking alongside and supporting the younger children.

- 4.7 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. Pupils become very aware of other faiths and cultures through the inspirational work of the chaplaincy, and a range of classroom and extra-curricular experiences. They are able to reflect on the many cultural benefits which they themselves enjoy, and to reassess what they value as they consider the lives of people from other cultural backgrounds. Opportunities are made for pupils in the school, who come from a wide range of geographical, ethnic and religious backgrounds, to share their experiences with the other pupils. Positive relationships between pupils of different faiths and cultural backgrounds are apparent throughout the school.
- 4.8 Pupils' overall personal development, already a strength of the school, has been further enhanced since the previous inspection.

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

- 4.9 The quality of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 Pastoral care is given a high priority which leads to strong and effective support and guidance, in accordance with the school's aim of being a caring, Christian, family community. Form tutors have day-to-day responsibility for pastoral care and are guided by a comprehensive booklet outlining their role. Each part of the school has a pastoral committee, which meets frequently to discuss pastoral matters. In the EYFS the provision is excellent and contributes directly to children's well-being. The key person system works very effectively and staff understand the needs of every child extremely well, including those who require extra support, thereby enabling them to feel secure and valued.
- 4.11 Throughout the school, excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves. The house system promotes healthy competition amongst pupils and offers opportunities for leadership roles. There are numerous opportunities for achievement to be celebrated, and where positive behaviour is rewarded and each child is valued. In the EYFS adults are excellent role models and children reflect this by playing and learning with consideration towards one another. Intervention to resolve differences is rarely required as behaviour is exemplary.
- 4.12 The benefits of healthy eating and the importance of physical exercise are emphasised throughout. Healthy choices of nutritious food are available to all pupils and they participate in a range of physical education. In the EYFS, personal hygiene needs are managed well. Physical exercise is promoted through ready access to the high quality outdoor play and learning spaces, and through the additional curricular opportunities provided elsewhere on the school site.
- 4.13 The behaviour of pupils in class and around school is generally excellent. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions which are recorded on the school management information system, enabling a very effective means of monitoring and communication. The school has a robust anti-bullying policy which is clear and well understood by pupils, who know what to do if they encounter bullying or harassment. Pupil responses in the questionnaire in these areas were generally positive, although a small minority of pupils expressed concern about the fairness of the application of the systems for rewards and sanctions, and the management of bullying, which was also brought up by a few individuals in interviews. Inspection



evidence, including interviews with pupils and study of school documentation, shows that incidents of bullying are infrequent and that they are dealt with effectively. Rewards and sanctions were seen to be awarded consistently, and in line with school policy.

- 4.14 Both the prep and senior schools have a school council, which is valued by the pupils and is one of several methods used to elicit their views. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a minority of pupils indicated dissatisfaction with the school's willingness to listen to their opinions. However, when interviewed, pupils said that they had many opportunities, both formal and informal, to voice their views. Recent improvements include the purchase of weights equipment for the sports centre using the school council's budget.
- 4.15 The school has a suitable plan to increase access for those pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.16 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.17 The policy to safeguard pupils' welfare is comprehensive and is updated appropriately to incorporate any regulatory change. The designated safeguarding lead ensures that all staff, governors and volunteers have a thorough and up-to-date knowledge of their responsibilities for safeguarding, and attends regular training updates through Suffolk LA, with which there are strong links. New staff receive a high quality of safeguarding induction training.
- 4.18 Safeguarding of the children is carefully managed and is supported by a range of risk assessments. Risk assessments for visits and activities are very thorough, including those within the EYFS. There is a suitable health and safety policy and a school committee, with governor presence, meets termly to review health and safety matters. This group is fully representative of the key areas within the school, and its findings are reported for further consideration to the governors' estates committee. However, a small number of minor matters of welfare, health and safety were drawn to the attention of the school during the inspection. The fire policy clearly defines emergency procedures; fire drills are regularly carried out, logged appropriately and any issues arising are promptly addressed. All staff have regular training in fire awareness. Fire and electrical equipment is systematically tested and any deficiencies are quickly remedied.
- 4.19 The medical centre provides excellent care for sick or injured pupils and for those with specific conditions. Medical records are comprehensive and accidents are appropriately reported. Medicines are stored correctly and there are effective channels of communication between the medical centre and boarding or school staff. Pupils deliver the 'blue slips', which detail their medical treatment, to their parents or boarding house staff, with treatment for more serious conditions reported directly by email or telephone.
- 4.20 Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored.

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

- 4.21 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.22 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The boarders' personal development is clearly promoted by their boarding experience, enabling them to develop key

qualities, which include confidence, tolerance and independence. All boarders have equal opportunities and staff are very sensitive to individual needs. The boarding community is based upon the development of the whole person, in keeping with Christian values. The integration of day and boarding pupils in the senior houses is actively promoted and is seen to be working in practice, whilst boarders' privacy is respected.

- 4.23 Boarders feel safe and secure within a nurturing environment, and they are respected as individuals, so helping them to achieve their full potential. Boarders say that the houses feel like home, and they value the friendships which they form. Resident house staff are supported by tutors and a team of matrons; boarders are appreciative of the efforts which staff make on their behalf. Some boarders have significant extra sporting commitments and staff are mindful of this, helping them to balance the various demands upon their time. Boarders enjoy being part of their community and make a positive contribution in all areas. Older boarders have opportunities to contribute to the running of their house through various councils and an effective food committee; they are also confident in raising issues individually and feel listened to and valued. Changes suggested by councils have been adopted, including the choice of house furniture and the development of wi-fi within the boarding houses. House prefects play an important role in the organisation of boarding, interacting well with staff and having a supportive role within the senior houses. They receive appropriate training and supervision from staff and are aware of their responsibilities. Other boarders, including those within the prep school boarding house, are also given roles of responsibility to develop their leadership skills.
- 4.24 Boarders say that there are several staff to whom they can turn for guidance, and that they receive appropriate support. There are appropriate help lines displayed in all houses, including the independent listener and the children's commissioner. The school has a policy to promote good behaviour which is implemented in practice. Boarders were observed to be very well behaved and are polite to one another, and when interacting with adults. Above all, boarders are happy.
- 4.25 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. New boarders say they receive a warm welcome, enabling them to settle quickly. There is a thorough programme of induction. On arrival they are given a 'buddy', a prefect mentor and helpful written information. The school has effective policies for those who are unwell and these are implemented fully in practice. They receive excellent care from the medical centre, which is staffed by qualified nursing staff, who are on duty seven days a week. Boarders say they are well looked after should they be ill. Medications are held securely and the school doctor holds twice-weekly surgeries. Additionally, appointments can be made with local specialist services. All house staff are trained to administer medication. Inspectors found that the 'blue slip' system for transferring information about minor illness and injury between the medical centre and the house is reliant on the boarders themselves. The quality of food is excellent and of a high nutritional value. Fresh produce is used and baking is done on site. There is a good choice available, including healthy options, and special dietary needs are well catered for. In addition, boarders have access to house kitchens where there are plentiful supplies of snacks, including fresh fruit. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, one-half of the boarders who responded said they were not happy with the quality of food, and a minority also commented that there were insufficient availability of snacks and drinking water. However, inspection evidence did not support either of these views. The food is of good quality and

nutritious snacks and drinking water are readily available. There is an efficient laundry on site and clothes and bedding are regularly laundered.

- 4.26 The boarding accommodation is of a good standard, comfortable and clean, with a rolling programme of refurbishment, so fulfilling the recommendations of the previous inspection. Boarders can personalise their areas with posters, photographs and helpful information. The bathroom facilities are excellent with individual cubicles. The common rooms are large and well furnished, with a range of games and leisure facilities. They are well used by both day and boarding pupils. Boarders can obtain personal items from the school shop. Protection is provided for boarders' possessions, including laptop safes, although one breach in procedures was observed. Boarders are enthusiastic about the wide range of activities after school and at weekends, especially for sport. The boarders live in an area of great natural beauty which considerably enhances their boarding experience. They can maintain regular contact with families through emails, telephone and internet-based telephone calls. Access to information from around the world is available through newspapers, television and the internet. A suitable complaints policy is available to both parents and boarders.
- 4.27 The effectiveness of the arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. The school operates safe recruitment procedures which meet regulatory requirements. Child protection measures are in place and all staff receive comprehensive training in this area. Behaviour is very well managed, in line with the school's policies, and boarders say that, where sanctions are necessary, they are given fairly. An anti-bullying policy is implemented thoroughly, and boarders report that instances of bullying are rare and that, where any does occur, it is dealt with immediately. Regular fire drills are held. There is a rigorous signing in and out procedure which enables staff to be aware of the whereabouts of boarders at all times. Teams of staff operate a duty rota in the boarding houses, including overnight, and boarders know how to contact staff when necessary.
- 4.28 The leadership and management of boarding provision are excellent. There is a suitable statement of the school's boarding principles and practice which is made known to boarders and parents alike. Staff are committed to promoting the school's aims, including the distinctive Methodist ethos, with its emphasis on engendering trust. The boarding teams are well supported by senior staff and maintain a consistently high standard of management across the houses, whilst allowing each house to retain its own characteristics. Since the previous inspection, a new girls' boarding house has opened and it is now well established. The recommendation for matrons to have the opportunity to attend external, accredited boarding courses has been met. Boarding staff have job descriptions, annual appraisals and opportunities for further training. The boarding team holds regular meetings. There is a strong commitment to self-evaluation and improvement of the boarding provision. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the boarding provision.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governance is very strongly supportive of the aims and distinct ethos of Culford. A wide range of relevant professional backgrounds, including representatives of MIST, use their collective expertise in strategic planning, education, personnel management and finance, amongst others, to make well-informed contributions to the development of the school in all aspects. Several governors have a current or previous connection with the school and this serves to strengthen further the links between the governing body and the school and its parent body.
- 5.3 Recent restructuring of the governors' committees has been highly effective in increasing the focus on academic provision and in providing both support and challenge for the school. Financial planning is very detailed and accompanied by the use of risk management processes; it enables governance to work with the school in planning confidently for the future, ensuring that sufficient resources are available. Governors monitor the work of the school closely by scrutinising and reviewing policies and by following up on reports from the school. The professional approach of governors is a significant contributor to the ultimate success of the school. Governors maintain a high profile within the school. They attend school functions regularly, are known by staff, and use their expertise to support and oversee the work of all sections of the school, including the pre-prep and prep.
- 5.4 Governors are highly effective in discharging their responsibilities for child protection and for welfare, health and safety. All governors have safeguarding training and there is a very thorough induction programme, as well as a comprehensive governors' manual. A designated and suitably trained governor is highly effective in supporting the school in its priority for pupils' welfare, including within the EYFS, and the governing body also receives regular reports on such matters. There is an annual review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding policy by the whole governing body.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 The Executive leadership team has established a strong vision, which has the full support of governors and energises the various management teams within the school. The vision is in line with the aims and ethos of the school, and consistent with the Methodist tradition and its emphasis on forgiveness, and care and concern for others. The development of the whole child is at the heart of the school's thinking, demonstrated by the development of the pupil study programme, the 'all you can' theme, and the scholars' and performance pathway programmes.
- 5.7 The fast-moving, yet thorough approach to strategic development, creates a sense of purpose throughout the school. This is reflected in the enthusiasm of the executive leadership team, which oversees implementation across the school, and

which has engendered the support of staff at all levels. The sense of pride in, and passion for, the school is evident throughout.

- 5.8 Leadership and management in the senior school and in the pre-prep school are particularly effective in ensuring that the aims of the school are achieved. In the EYFS leadership and management are excellent and a strong management structure ensures the effective running and integration of the two sites. There is effective monitoring of classroom practice, assessment and planning procedures. In the prep school leadership and management are good but the monitoring of teaching and learning is not yet fully effective. The prep school leadership team has recently been restructured, with new appointments made, and there is now a new focus on improving this area.
- 5.9 An extensive leadership and management structure, with clear lines of reporting, promotes rapid and efficient communication and enables effective planning and self-evaluation. Responsibility is delegated to the heads of the various sections of the school, each of whom reports to governors. Pastoral committees throughout the school are highly effective in monitoring the personal development of pupils. The leadership and management of boarding provision are excellent. Heads of departments within the senior school work effectively to monitor the quality of teaching and learning, including for pupils with SEND and EAL. In addition, formal monitoring of pupils' feedback on their classroom experience provides managers with a valuable insight into the quality of provision.
- 5.10 The leadership and management of the support staff are excellent. Since the previous inspection, the bursarial function has been reorganised very successfully. This has led to more effective and efficient administrative systems, and has helped the school to make rapid progress with capital development plans, and to plan more effectively for the future.
- 5.11 A comprehensive and democratic process underpins whole-school planning with lively discussion taking place at all levels. Staff, drawn from all parts of the school, also participate on various consultative committees. Decisions are then shaped through a range of academic, pastoral and support committees. Departmental planning is made with reference to the whole school plan and a thorough budgeting process ensures that the allocations made are sufficient and support the identified priorities. Budgets are well managed. In the EYFS staff identify targets for future development, but the planning document lacks coherence for the setting as a whole.
- 5.12 A well-established and thorough system of annual appraisal is in place for all teaching and support staff, incorporating elements of self and external review. The appraisal process also helps to inform the requirements for training and continuing professional development, which is carefully targeted and generously funded. Whole-school training takes place regularly and extensive online resources are used to provide ready access on topics such as fire safety awareness and the management of pupils' medical conditions.
- 5.13 Safeguarding training is thorough and is provided by a dedicated in-house trainer. Excellent arrangements are in place for the safe recruitment of staff, governors and volunteers and robust recruitment procedures ensure their suitability. The required pre-appointment checks are recorded meticulously. An ethos of continuous professional development helps the school to retain staff, offering fresh career opportunities wherever possible, including within the EYFS. A highly supportive

programme of induction for all new staff, and statutory induction for newly qualified teachers, is in place.

- 5.14 Parents express very strong levels of satisfaction with the quality of education and support which the school provides. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents commented very favourably on the range of extra-curricular activities on offer, as well as on the quality of pastoral care and the school's ability to develop confident children. A few parents commented that their concerns had not been dealt with satisfactorily, but a study of school documentation showed that any parental concerns are dealt with in a timely manner and according to published procedures. A very few parents said that there were incidents of verbal bullying at the school, but no such behaviour was noticed during the inspection.
- 5.15 Communication between the school and parents is outstanding. This includes regular online newsletters, which include, *Fieldgate News*, for the pre-prep, *The Arch*, for the prep and the senior school newsletter, as well as *Culford Connections*, a termly publication, bringing the news from all three schools. Parents of current and prospective pupils are given extensive information about the school. Pupils' achievements are celebrated through the academic journal, *Endeavour*, as well as the school website, which can be accessed through tablet and mobile phone technology. There is also a recently-launched 'twitter' account and informative videos about various aspects of the school. The information service is also greatly appreciated by overseas parents.
- 5.16 Many opportunities exist for parents to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children. For example, parents support fully the various social events, such as a charity fashion show and a Highland Ball, raising money both for the school and for charities. Parents associations in the pre-prep and prep school also give parents a voice and their opinions are listened to, for example with regard to the future development of the school. Furthermore, parents offer their time to the school by coming in and speaking to pupils about their professional lives. Within the EYFS parents also expressed very strong support for the school. They particularly appreciate the ready availability of the staff for regular dialogue and praised their knowledge of individual children, as well as the high quality of the learning environment. Parents feel very involved in their children's education.
- 5.17 There are numerous opportunities for parents to visit the school. Twice a term, parents are invited to attend the Headmaster's Open House, over coffee. In addition, parents are invited to attend events throughout the year, including the Restaurant Charity Evenings. They attend plays and concerts, including Opera in the Park, where they can picnic and enjoy music in the school grounds. There is a combined choral society for parents, older pupils and the community. Many parents take advantage of the facilities within the sports and tennis centre, and a weekly parent and toddler group holds a wide range of activities.
- 5.18 Parents receive detailed and informative reports bi-annually, informing them about the work and progress of their children. Reports in the prep and senior school are very thorough and include comment on strengths and weaknesses, supported by effort and attainment grades. In the prep school they also contain information on the numbers of rewards and sanctions. Additionally, there are annual parents' evenings which provide the opportunity to discuss progress with staff. Pupil diaries, which become increasingly sophisticated as pupils move through the school, act as planning tools, as well as providing helpful information for parents and encouraging a dialogue between home and school. Within the EYFS every opportunity is taken

to inform parents of children's progress, and staff actively welcome parental feedback.

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