



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

EPSOM COLLEGE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Epsom College

Full Name of School	Epsom College
DfE Number	936/6030
Registered Charity Number	312046
Address	Epsom College College Road Epsom Surrey KT17 4JQ
Telephone Number	01372 821000
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Email Address	admissions@epsomcollege.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr Jay Piggot
Chairman of Governors	Dr Andrew Vallance-Owen
Age Range	13 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	708
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (449 boys; 259 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 357
Number of Boarders	Total: 351 Full: 143 Weekly: 208
Inspection dates	29 Jan 2013 to 01 Feb 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2009.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with day pupils and boarders and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior leaders and other members of staff and with the chairman of governors and two other governors. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, chapel and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the medical centre, and took meals with pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation and other written policies and procedures made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Timothy Holgate	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Louise Belrhiti	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of Boarding, HMC school)
Mr William Burn	Team Inspector (Second Master, HMC school)
Mr Michael Evans	Team Inspector (Senior Master, HMC school)
Mr Lee Glaser	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Lynne Heath	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Richard Knott	Team Inspector (Deputy Headmaster, HMC school)
Mr Graeme May	Team Inspector (Academic Deputy Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Sue Sowden	Team Inspector (former Headmistress, GSA school)
Mr David Warwick	Team Inspector (former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Alun Watkins	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Epsom College was founded in 1855 as the Royal Medical Benevolent College to support orphans and widows of members of the medical profession. Royal patronage was granted by Queen Victoria. From fewer than 100 boys at its start, the school today provides day and boarding education for girls and boys between the ages of 13 and 18. Girls were first admitted into the sixth form in 1976, with full co-education twenty years later. Eleven of the houses are single sex all-age houses for day pupils (five houses) or boarders (six houses) from Years 9 to 13. The twelfth house, for sixth-form girls, accommodates both day pupils and boarders. The school's governors hold proprietorial responsibility as directors and trustees of a charitable company. The school is situated close to the town of Epsom in Surrey. A new headmaster took up post in September 2012.
- 1.2 Epsom aims to provide exceptional all-round academic, social, sporting and cultural opportunities in a safe and supportive community. It aims for excellence, and values both achievement and endeavour. The school seeks to challenge pupils to develop their talents and broaden their interests, to become confident in themselves, and to be tolerant and appreciative of others. It aspires to work with families to prepare pupils for the future and help them achieve the highest standards possible. It seeks to provide a place of opportunity, where all children are valued, respected and encouraged to develop their own individual strengths. Through the established house system, the school aims to foster a strong feeling of community and ensure that pupils receive the guidance and support they need to fulfil their potential.
- 1.3 The school provides day and boarding education for 708 pupils (259 girls and 449 boys), of whom 351 are full or weekly boarders, and 322 are in the sixth form. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but the school has identified 105 with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), of whom 45 receive specific support. Day pupils and weekly boarders are mainly drawn from Surrey and south-west London. The great majority of the 143 full boarders live overseas, mainly Hong Kong, Malaysia and Russia, but altogether 26 nationalities are represented. The school provides support for 114 boarders who have English as an additional language (EAL). Pupils take a range of standardised aptitude and ability tests shortly after entry to the school at age 13, and also on entering the sixth form. These indicate that the ability profile is above the national average, but only slightly so in the sixth form.
- 1.4 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
Middle Fourth	Year 9
Upper Fourth	Year 10
Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Epsom College is highly successful in fulfilling its mission and achieving its stated aims. Day and boarding pupils are very well educated and achieve excellent standards throughout the school in their academic work and learning and in their extra-curricular activities. GCSE and A-level examination results are excellent in relation to the national average for all maintained schools. Pupils make good progress to GCSE and a high rate of progress throughout the sixth form. Achievement and progress for the most able pupils, and those with SEND or EAL are at a high level, in relation to their age, ability and needs. Pupils generally exhibit exemplary attitudes to work and show great enthusiasm for the subjects they study and for the activities they pursue out of class. The excellent curricular provision and good teaching, much of which is excellent, contribute strongly to the achievement of these standards.
- 2.2 The personal development of both day pupils and boarders throughout the school is excellent and they demonstrate a very high level of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and awareness. Relationships and behaviour are very good. High standards of pastoral care and the excellent arrangements for pupils' welfare, health and safety ensure that their peace of mind and well-being are strongly enhanced. The roles and responsibilities of tutors across houses are not always clear. The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 2.3 The highly effective governance and excellent quality of leadership and management at all levels ensure that the school provides an excellent standard of education for pupils of all ages, day and boarding. The school's vision and future priorities are clearly identified and promoted. Staff are deployed efficiently and all undergo the required pre-appointment checks, although there have been minor omissions in recording some of these accurately. Formal systems to enable teachers to share good practice and teaching strategies are not yet fully implemented. An excellent partnership is forged with parents, who express strong satisfaction with the school's life and work. The school has made good progress in implementing the recommendations of the previous ISI and Ofsted inspections.

2.(b) Action points**(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2013 and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that the dates when relevant qualifications of new staff are checked are recorded in the single register of appointments [Part 4, paragraph 22(3)(c) under Suitability of staff and proprietors, and National Minimum Standard 14.1 under Staff Recruitment].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

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

1. Enable staff to share teaching techniques and strategies to allow pupils to experience a stronger degree of self-direction and exploration in their lessons.
2. Establish a wider role for house tutors as key figures in supporting pupils' pastoral and academic progress, and improve opportunities for them to appraise all aspects of their work.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The overall quality of pupils' achievements throughout the school is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are very well educated in line with the school's aims to encourage excellence, value achievement, and prepare pupils for university. Pupils have very good subject knowledge and understanding and show significant creative and physical skill. For example, Year 10 pupils demonstrated a high level of sustained precision in achieving grammatical accuracy in French. Year 9 pupils showed themselves adept at composing sonnets based on their understanding of a Dickens novel. Pupils show excellent speaking and listening skills, a good application of number in a variety of subjects, and demonstrate excellent competence in information and communication technology (ICT) in a wide range of software applications. Pupils achieve conspicuous success in academic events, such as the Olympiads in mathematics and biology, the Young Enterprise project and public speaking and debating competitions. They achieve significant success in a range of sporting events and competitions, and in music examinations. They show marked organisational ability in the combined cadet force (CCF) and Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), and in house events and activities.
- 3.3 Pupils with SEND or EAL achieve at high levels with respect to their particular needs and ability, reflecting the support received and the steady refinement of their skills. The performance of the most able pupils is excellent as seen, for example, in their ability to achieve high levels of research and presentation in the junior history project prize, and to sustain a logical enquiry in extended project qualifications, as well as their success in an investment award normally entered by graduates. The great majority of leavers in Year 13 achieve places at the most competitive universities.
- 3.4 The following analysis of examination attainment is based on the three-year period from 2009 to 2011, the latest period for which comparative statistics are currently available. GCSE results have been excellent, well above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Results in all IGCSE subjects have been higher than worldwide norms, and in mathematics also similar to the UK norms, where the benchmark is higher. A-level results have been excellent, well above the national average for maintained schools, and above the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2012, over two-thirds of GCSE results were graded A or A* while, at A level, over eight out of ten results were graded A* to B.
- 3.5 This level of attainment, taken in conjunction with other inspection evidence and nationally standardised progress data, indicates that pupils make good progress to GCSE and an excellent rate of progress between GCSE and A level, relative to the average for pupils of similar abilities nationally. Pupils with SEND and EAL make a similarly high rate of progress, as shown by their performance in standardised tests and examinations, the improvement in their written and spoken English over time, and their growing confidence in contributing actively to lessons. There is currently no significant difference in the achievement and progress of boys and girls.
- 3.6 Pupils generally exhibit exemplary attitudes to work, show enthusiasm for the subjects they study, and demonstrate perseverance and commitment when presented with extended and challenging tasks. They show very good research skills and are adept at building on existing knowledge and applying it to new

situations. A significant number of pupils from Year 10 onwards embark on an accelerated AS-level course in critical thinking with considerable success, and demonstrate very high levels of reasoning and logical thought. When given the opportunity to do so, pupils show great initiative and work particularly well on their own and in small groups.

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

- 3.7 The contribution made by the school's curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The school fully meets its aim to provide pupils with a modern and stimulating academic curriculum and to offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities. The academic provision gives pupils comprehensive opportunities to develop their skills in numeracy, literacy, speaking and listening, and ICT, all of which contribute to the pupils' achievements and success. Pupils entering the school in Year 9 enjoy a broad-based curriculum covering some 17 subjects. At GCSE, pupils study a core curriculum of English, mathematics, at least one foreign language, and three separate sciences. A wide range of other subject options is available, and pupils now benefit from the inclusion of photography and Mandarin Chinese as additional options. Pupils are expected to choose at least one humanities subject. The breadth and nature of subjects taken by all pupils at GCSE (including International GCSEs) are entirely appropriate for their needs. Beyond the formal curriculum time, a variety of subject clinics and individual assistance with academic work are offered by teachers which are much valued and appreciated by the pupils. In the sixth form, pupils choose from a good range of AS and A-level courses (and, where appropriate, Cambridge 'pre-U' courses) that enable them to progress to higher education. The recently revised personal and social development (PSD) programme for Years 9 and 10 provides a good opportunity for considering and developing a wide range of issues and life skills, such as personal motivation, financial management and health education, and these benefit pupils' personal development greatly.
- 3.9 Provision for pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent. A dedicated department conducts a range of screening tests after pupils enter the school to identify perceived learning needs, as well as making provision for needs known prior to entry. Communication with parents is frequent and training of staff in appropriate teaching techniques is given to all teachers as part of their induction. Arrangements are made outside curriculum time for pupils to have one-to-one guidance and further support in small groups. Pupils with SEND and EAL report strong satisfaction with the support they receive.
- 3.10 The curriculum is enhanced by a variety of field trips and cultural outings. Pupils benefit from a wide range of extension and cross-curricular activities, such as the Year 10 cross-curricular *Da Vinci* project involving co-ordination of themes in subjects such as art and science. Extensive provision is made across departments for the most able pupils to stretch and broaden their intellectual horizons through, for example, the science and literary societies, a programme of external speakers, and entry to academic competitions. AS critical thinking and the extended project qualification (EPQ) are also offered to academically-gifted pupils which challenge them intellectually and stimulate their independent learning. All pupils have access to a clear and coherent careers programme, and appropriate guidance is offered for subject option choices and higher-education applications. Pupils benefit from the

well-staffed and stocked library which provides them with a pleasant and stimulating environment in which to work and learn.

- 3.11 The curriculum is greatly enhanced by an exceptionally extensive programme of extra-curricular activities. Pupils of all ages and abilities have the opportunity to develop their interests and talents in a variety of contexts and to explore new challenges, from fashion design and fencing to the medical society and magic club. Pupils engage in CCF, DofE and a number of other service activities, including charity and outreach work, such as 'Growbaby' in Kingston and as classroom assistants at a local primary school. Provision for sporting participation is a strong feature of the school, and there are myriad opportunities for pupils to take part in music, drama, debating, ballet and other performance activities.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.12 The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is good.
- 3.13 Much of the teaching is excellent. At its best, teachers draw on their very strong subject knowledge and excellent relationships with pupils to explain difficult concepts, ask stimulating and interesting questions in lessons and respond to challenging questions and opinions posed by pupils. Class discussion and debate are often used well to draw out ideas, to build confidence and to enable pupils to appreciate the wider context of their subject knowledge. The best teaching employs a wide variety of challenging and well-paced learning tasks and activities to stimulate pupils' interest and curiosity and makes particularly good use of the time available. Teachers have an expert awareness of examination requirements which allows an effective focus on examination techniques which pupils enjoy and appreciate.
- 3.14 Teaching employs a variety of resources which are used to good effect, including ICT, well-prepared games and competitive sorting exercises, and detailed and thought-provoking worksheets. Lessons are well planned, with the learning needs of the pupils paramount, especially those with SEND or EAL. Some of the best lessons occur when teachers are prepared to depart from what was planned in order to respond appropriately to questions or comments from pupils. This approach reinforces the positive relationships and strong rapport which teachers have with their pupils. The energy and commitment shown by teachers in the classroom encourage pupils to sustain concentration and maintain a strong effort. In a significant number of lessons, teachers have the confidence to allow pupils to take the initiative for their own learning, by leading discussions, making presentations and learning from each other in group tasks, thus enabling rapid progress.
- 3.15 In a small number of less successful lessons, pupils' progress slowed and their interest waned. Such lessons relied too much on the direction of the teacher, involved poorly planned and inflexible tasks, and showed a reluctance to allow pupils to be actively involved in their learning. On occasions, the teaching focused too much on the requirements of the examinations, an unnecessarily cautious approach that allowed pupils to remain too passive.
- 3.16 Since the previous inspection, the school has improved the quality of teachers' marking and reporting to parents. Marking is, in general, very good, offering useful advice for improvement and allowing pupils to make significant progress. In a few subjects, the quantity of written marking is less, but that is often supplemented by oral feedback to pupils on the work they have done, an approach that pupils find

equally effective. A new data tracking system is being used effectively to identify underperforming pupils, so that necessary remedial action can be taken.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school's aim of fostering moral and spiritual values, tolerance and understanding in every pupil is well met. The pupils' excellent spiritual development is evident. They are highly confident and very mature for their age, and this is seen particularly in the quality of their discussion, when they ask challenging and sophisticated questions and are very ready to offer opinions, backed by excellent thought and reasoning. Pupils show a high degree of awareness of the spiritual and an appreciation of time for reflection and thinking. They have confidence in expressing deeply held beliefs, and individuals make good use of the chapel as a place for private space and prayer, and accessing the multi-faith chaplaincy team. Pupils frequently give effective presentations in chapel services. Encouraged by the school's self assessment processes, pupils are particularly self-aware, but are also very sensitive to the views of others, as seen in a Year 9 lesson on assisted suicide and palliative care, when they rigorously defended their own view, but gave serious consideration to the views of others.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral development is exceptionally strong. They have a highly developed sense of right and wrong and a finely-honed capacity to make moral and ethical judgements and decisions, a skill that develops strongly as they progress through the school and which is encouraged and nurtured by teaching and pastoral staff. Pupils respond readily and sensitively to the numerous opportunities in lessons to debate ethical dilemmas and make moral decisions on such topics as abortion and euthanasia. Pupils have a great sense of fairness, a strong moral sense and exhibit very good behaviour around school, being polite and courteous.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils take responsibility very seriously. This is particularly evident in the houses, where older pupils respond very well to those younger, helping them with their homework, to enjoy school life and to develop self-confidence as they settle in. Pupils organise a wide range of activities within and between houses, and have a well-developed feeling of belonging to a supportive house community. Older pupils also show an excellent sense of responsibility in a wide range of projects and charitable fund-raising for the less-privileged members of the wider community locally and overseas. Pupils benefit from and appreciate opportunities to show initiative and take responsibility, as prefects and through the CCF and DofE. Younger pupils feel that they have fewer leadership opportunities but some are able to take responsibility through sport and chapel. Pupils' personal development is also strengthened through the PSD course.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural awareness is very highly developed. Pupils become cultured young people by the time they leave the school. They develop a broad appreciation of art and music, and an extensive understanding of the challenges faced by cultures other than their own and the uneven distribution of the world's resources. Pupils gain a first-hand appreciation of the attitudes and beliefs of other cultures and faiths through their close friendships with pupils from overseas who are well integrated into the school community. By the time they leave school, pupils exhibit an excellent standard of personal development.

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

- 4.6 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 It fulfils the school's aim to provide comprehensive pastoral care and guidance in a safe and supportive community, thus making a major contribution to the pupils' strong personal development. Pupils value the harmonious and cohesive communities promoted by the strong house system, with its sense of family and unity that lies at the heart of the school.
- 4.8 Pupils' academic and pastoral progress and development are very well supported by the housemasters and housemistresses and their teams of tutors. The school has fully met the recommendation of the previous inspection to increase the effectiveness of the weekly tutorial period. Efficient communication and sharing of information between pastoral staff strongly enhance the pupils' care and support. Houses differ in the way they deploy and use their tutors, and some pupils see the role of the tutor as having primarily a pastoral rather than academic focus. The relationships between pupils and with staff are very strong and built around trust and a sense of looking out for each other. Pastoral staff know their pupils extremely well.
- 4.9 Pupils enjoy well-balanced, nutritious and varied meals at lunchtime, and the school actively promotes the idea of healthy eating and living. Issues such as drugs and alcohol use are well addressed through the PSD programme. Pupils have many opportunities to take appropriate and regular physical exercise.
- 4.10 Pupils' behaviour, seen in lessons and throughout the school, is exemplary. Pupils are familiar with the school's high expectations of behaviour and the systems of rewards and sanctions used when necessary. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of pupils expressed the view that these are used unfairly or ineffectively. However evidence from interviews with pupils did not support this view. Pupils report that bullying is not an issue or concern to them and, on the rare occasions when conflict occurs, staff deal with it effectively and appropriately. Nevertheless, the school has recently strengthened its procedures for this important pastoral area. It has refined its policies and strategies, produced clearer guidance for pupils to promote positive behaviour, developed appropriate training for prefects and appointed a governor to monitor any instances of bullying.
- 4.11 The school has an effective policy to promote equal opportunities and tolerance amongst the pupils and has drawn up a suitable plan to widen access to its educational provision by pupils with disabilities.
- 4.12 Opportunities for pupils to express their views are available through the school council, the food council and prefects' meetings. Minutes of recent council meetings reveal that wide-ranging issues are raised and thoroughly discussed. The methods by which pupils are informed of the outcomes of these meetings vary between houses, possibly contributing to the negative views of a minority of pupils about the effectiveness of the consultation processes in place.

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

- 4.13 The quality of the school's provision for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The school has a comprehensive and helpful safeguarding policy, effectively implemented, and all arrangements are fully compliant with government guidance and specific to the context of the school. Child protection training is carried out

regularly for all teaching and non-teaching staff, who have a strong awareness of safeguarding issues.

- 4.15 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risks from fire and other hazards. Required documentation and records, including detailed risk assessments, are carefully, accurately and comprehensively maintained. Arrangements to promote pupils' health and safety are efficient and effective. Pupils who are ill or injured are treated in the medical centre, which is staffed around the clock. The school takes all possible measures to promote and safeguard pupils with particular needs of any kind. Policies and procedures take account of off-site activities, portable appliance testing and medical care.
- 4.16 The recommendation made from the previous inspection to improve attendance registers has been met. The school maintains accurate records of admissions and attendance, and registers are stored as required. Regular checks are made throughout the day on the whereabouts of day pupils and boarders. Cases of day pupils who are absent are promptly followed up.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.17 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.18 The school's mission and aims are fully supported by the quality of provision and outcomes for boarders and their personal development which are excellent. The school has effectively addressed the recommendations of the previous inspection.
- 4.19 Boarders feel valued and have a strong sense of house loyalty which is promoted by the outstanding support and care received from dedicated boarding staff and tutors. Excellent relationships exist among boarders themselves as well as between staff and boarders. All new pupils, including those from overseas, are warmly welcomed and integrated into the life of the house. Differences, such as culture and language, are respected and celebrated. House events and inter-house competitions encourage all age groups to work collaboratively, to take responsibility and to develop mutual respect and tolerance. Lasting friendships are formed, and boarders are articulate, courteous and confident. They are encouraged to express their views through channels such as the food committee, in tutor groups and informally to staff, or in questionnaires, and have confidence that their concerns will be taken seriously. Older pupils have the opportunity to cultivate leadership skills as house prefects which prepares them for greater responsibility in the wider world. In questionnaires and interviews, boarders expressed a very high level of satisfaction with their houses and the care they receive.
- 4.20 The quality of boarding provision and care is high. New boarders receive a thorough induction, helping them to settle quickly into their boarding houses and to feel safe and well cared for. Older pupils frequently act as 'buddies', while boarders experiencing 'culture shock' or homesickness are swiftly identified, reassured and monitored. The school counsellor and chaplain, as well as a Muslim imam and Hindu priest, offer support and guidance. Boarding house staff work well together; they understand their boarders well and are diligent in identifying and catering for individual needs. A significant proportion of boarders responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they were not satisfied with the food. This view was not supported in interviews with pupils, or in the sampling of meals by inspectors. A three-weekly rota of menus, with an emphasis on healthy eating, provides excellent choices of nutritious and freshly prepared food. Portions are

generous and individual dietary needs and preferences are carefully met. Fresh fruit is always available and the dining facilities are bright and clean. In house, boarders have access to drinking water, milk, fresh fruit and snacks.

- 4.21 A well-equipped and spacious medical centre provides 24-hour care from a team of well-qualified nurses. Regular doctor's surgeries are held and pupils can opt to see either a male or female doctor. Medication is suitably stored and detailed records kept. A high proportion of school staff has had first-aid training and first-aid kits are located at strategic positions around the school. The school has outstanding sports facilities and offers a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities. Tutors and house parents carefully monitor boarders' participation to ensure they achieve a healthy balance between academic work and activities. Although some questionnaire responses suggested that insufficient trips take place at the weekend, inspection evidence did not support this. Occasional weekend trips are offered but uptake is low owing to the wide range of available facilities on site and boarders' need for time for relaxation, which they value.
- 4.22 The accommodation in the seven boarding houses is generally of a high standard and an on-going programme of refurbishment is taking place. Older boarders generally have their own rooms while younger boarders share. Each house has a spacious common room and recreational spaces which are used by all year groups. Houses have more than adequate bathroom facilities. Boarders are able to keep in contact with their families through email, or by landline or mobile phones. Boarding staff foster good links with parents through email and telephone contact, as well as at school sports and social events.
- 4.23 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. All staff and prefects receive specific safeguarding training on appointment which is regularly updated. Comprehensive and effective risk assessments ensure the health and safety of boarders. Fire drills take place at least once each term including at night. Policies and procedures for countering bullying are clear, and are understood by the boarders. A harmonious atmosphere prevails in boarding houses and pupils have an impressive sense of right and wrong. The majority of boarders accept that school and house rules are reasonable and necessary, and consequently abide by them. The system of rewards and sanctions is well received by pupils who report no worrying incidences of poor behaviour or bullying. Staff register boarders' attendance at least three times each day and boarding staff hold lists of pupils' whereabouts. The school's policy to monitor and control access of visitors to houses complies with requirements. Houses are adequately staffed with at least one member of staff sleeping in at night. Boarders are aware of the procedure for contacting a member of staff in the night.
- 4.24 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. Policies and procedures are thoroughly implemented, regularly reviewed and updated as needed. Boarders' records are well maintained. Staff are committed to the school's aims and ethos and conscientious in their endeavours to promote a strong culture of mutual consideration and harmonious social interaction. A strong sense of loyalty both from boarders and staff is clearly evident. Staff presence in the houses is generally sufficient. All boarding staff have detailed job descriptions. New staff, including any 'gap' assistants, benefit from a comprehensive induction programme which includes safeguarding awareness. Staff are experienced and well qualified. Regular boarding staff meetings take place and some members of staff take advantage of the generous professional training opportunities offered by the school. The school has recognised the need to appraise

all tutors in their boarding and pastoral roles in addition to their roles as teachers. All parents responding to the questionnaires stated that their children enjoy boarding, confirmed by nearly all the boarders who responded. The great majority of parents also felt that boarding is well organised and managed effectively, which helps their children's progress and development. Inspection evidence endorses these views.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governors ensure that a high quality of education is maintained at all levels in the school, in line with the school's stated aims. Formal meetings of the governing body review educational standards including public examination results, pastoral arrangements, extra-curricular provision and matters of pupils' welfare, health and safety. Working closely with the headmaster and bursar, governors ensure both prudent financial management and ample investment in resources and facilities to support teaching, learning and the provision of high-quality pastoral care. Governors are fully committed to the school's success in achieving its strategic priorities. The breadth of expertise and experience on the governing body, which includes three serving heads, provides a valuable resource from which the school draws considerable benefit. Newly appointed governors are properly inducted into their roles and an active approach is taken to ensure governors receive sufficient training.
- 5.3 Governors attend formal school events, are invited to shadow pupils for a day, and receive regular communications from the senior management team. These serve to provide a real insight into the workings of the school, enabling the whole board to offer valuable support, advice and challenge to the headmaster and staff. The monitoring of educational development, a function shared by senior managers and governors, is enhanced by a strategy day to discuss their vision for the future. This is supported by external consultants who have recently conducted a major survey to ascertain the perceptions of parents and staff. Staff are also encouraged to make regular presentations to provide governors with a valuable perspective on new initiatives to contribute to school improvement.
- 5.4 Governors are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities as proprietors, including the monitoring of child protection, staff recruitment and health and safety. These form agenda items for committee and board meetings. Governors review and scrutinise key policies regularly. Individual governors are responsible for liaison with key school staff covering anti-bullying, child protection and health and safety. Governors conduct their required annual review of child protection policy and procedures, although this lacks sufficiently detailed confirmation in the board's minutes.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management throughout the school is excellent.
- 5.6 The school has made effective progress since the previous inspection in clarifying its improvement targets and in ensuring that the necessary recruitment checks are carried out. The work of those with leadership responsibilities makes a major contribution to the successful fulfilment of the school's aims, and the strong achievement and personal development of the pupils. Senior staff and middle managers demonstrate a very strong sense of purpose and are clear about strategies and priorities to guide the school's future development, while ensuring effective implementation of day-to-day policies and procedures to enhance the welfare and well-being of the pupils.

- 5.7 The school benefits greatly from the clear vision of its most senior staff. This is promoted strongly among all members of the wider school community. Staff feel consulted and empowered to share in and embrace the drive to maintain high standards and develop policy and practice even further. A strengthening culture of self-evaluation and positive self-criticism is evident within the school. Senior leaders and governors have a sharp awareness of the school's strengths, weaknesses and areas for further improvement. Heads of academic departments produce an annual report on the achievements of their subject areas which is discussed with the headmaster, and includes an evaluation of examination success and targets for future action. Housemasters and housemistresses are keenly aware of the pastoral life of their houses, but do not as yet produce a formal evaluation. New priorities to guide the next stage of the school's development have been identified, and have benefited from consultation with and input from staff and parents. These will form the basis of the school's new strategic plan.
- 5.8 Teaching and non-teaching staff are committed to the school's success and are well deployed throughout the school. All necessary checks, including criminal records checks, are carried out when staff are appointed, although the dates when some of these were completed have not all been recorded efficiently. Staff are provided with the necessary training in child protection and other welfare areas, and undergo an efficient induction process. Staff development procedures include a biennial appraisal process generating outcomes linked to whole-school development areas and an indication of training and professional development needs. The headmaster has embarked on a programme of lesson observations, and other staff have opportunities to observe colleagues teaching. However, a formal system for staff to share and discuss strategies to enhance pupils' learning further is not yet well developed.
- 5.9 Parents are very satisfied with the education and support provided for their children. Those responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire particularly approved of the range of available subjects, the availability of information about the school, the appropriateness of homework, the happiness and safety of their children and the excellent extra-curricular programme. A small proportion raised concerns about the level of information provided on their children's progress and the school's encouragement for them to be involved in school life. Inspection evidence did not support these concerns.
- 5.10 The school fosters an excellent partnership with parents, and a constructive relationship is maintained in accordance with the school's aims. This is achieved most especially through parents' regular contact and communication with house staff and tutors concerning academic, pastoral and social issues. Parents' concerns are effectively dealt with and the school has a complaints procedure that complies with regulations. Records of concerns and complaints resolved at different stages of the procedure are kept as required, although not always comprehensively enough to generate a detailed picture of any patterns or trends over time.
- 5.11 Parents have very good opportunities to be involved with the academic progress and wider lives of their children, recently enhanced through the parent portal on the school's website, and many attend sports fixtures, school plays and concerts and a variety of social events, both school- and house-based. Regular parents' meetings with teaching staff address progress in academic subjects.
- 5.12 The website is an excellent resource for keeping current parents, and those of prospective pupils, informed about school life. Regular newsletters, a

comprehensive handbook at entry for new parents, and the headmaster's regular communications and informative 'College Notes' at the end of term provide parents with a very clear view of the school and what it stands for. The school provides and makes available to parents all items of information required by regulations. The written reports on pupils' achievements and academic progress are frequent and of high quality, and include summaries of the work completed in academic subjects, comments on achievement, progress and attitudes, and useful pointers for improvement. The regular interim 'Orders' also give grades for effort and achievement and these are available to parents on-line.

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