



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

MOWDEN HALL SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Mowden Hall School

Full Name of School	Mowden Hall School		
DfE Number	929/6005		
Registered Charity Number	309639		
Address	Mowden Hall School Newton Stocksfield Northumberland NE43 7TP		
Telephone Number	01661 842147		
Fax Number	01661 842529		
Email Address	info@mowdenhall.co.uk		
Head	Mr Ben Beardmore-Gray		
Chair of Trustees	Mr Adrian Richardson		
Age Range	3 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	186		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (93 boys; 93 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	24	5-11: 98
			11-13: 64
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	63	
Number of Boarders	Total:	123	
	Full:	62	Weekly and Flexible: 61
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Sophie Milburn		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection Dates	10 Jun 2014 to 13 Jun 2014		

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 September 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, 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. 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 principal trustee, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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

Mrs Jan Preece

Mr Kerry Lord

Mr Kit Thompson

Miss Myra Rodgers

Miss Mary Regan

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Mowden Hall School is a co-educational, predominantly boarding school situated in a 50-acre rural location, 20 miles west of Newcastle upon Tyne. It was founded as a preparatory school for boys in 1935 and moved to its present site in 1945, after wartime evacuation to the Lake District. The school became co-educational in 1982 and a pre-preparatory department was opened in 1993. In 2007 the school became a member of the Cothill Educational Trust and it is administered by a board of trustees. All schools in the trust share bursarial and human resources support. A particular feature of the school's educational provision is that every pupil in Year 7 spends a term at a French chateau, which is owned by the trust. Since the previous inspection and through membership of the trust, pupils undertake a residential visit to a French farmhouse and also to a science activity centre in Dorset. An extension to the pre-prep to provide a new nursery and pre-nursery is nearing completion and the proportion of the prep school population who board has increased significantly.
- 1.2 The school's aim is to provide a first class education in which every child is given the opportunity to achieve his or her potential within a broad range of academic, cultural and sporting pursuits. The school believes that high ideals, excellent pastoral care and traditional family values will help pupils to grow up happily and honourably, with self-respect, confidence and a strong sense of responsibility and consideration for others and the wider community.
- 1.3 There are 186 pupils on roll, aged between 3 and 13. Of these, the 24 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and 27 pupils aged between 5 and 8 form the pre-prep department, all of whom are day pupils. There are 135 pupils aged from 8 to 13 in the prep school, of whom 123 are boarders. Within the boarding community, 62 pupils are full boarders, 32 board weekly and 29 board on a flexible basis.
- 1.4 The school has identified 26 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 20 receive specialist learning support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs and none requires support in learning English as an additional language (EAL), though occasionally students from Spain spend a term or longer in the school. Pupils come from a fairly wide geographical area and most are from families with business or professional backgrounds. Whilst there is a fairly wide spread of abilities represented, the ability profile of the school overall is above the national average.
- 1.5 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.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Pre-Nursery	Nursery (rising 3 years)
Nursery	Nursery (age 3-4)
Reception	Reception (age 4-5)

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Mowden Hall School is very successful in achieving its aims to provide a first-class education in which every child is given the opportunity to achieve his or her potential within a broad range of academic, cultural and sporting pursuits. Its provision for boarders and day pupils ensures that the school's ethos of traditional family values and pastoral care of high-quality is fulfilled. Improvements to the curriculum and teaching have raised the quality of both. Consequently pupils' learning, progress and achievement over time are excellent. Children in the EYFS make good progress from their starting points due to the provision of broad and often exciting learning programmes. However, EYFS staff do not make sufficient use of the extensive outside learning environment to fully enhance their learning experiences. Throughout the school, academic standards are high and supported by excellent teaching and the provision of a broad curriculum, which includes a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities, so that pupils develop interests and skills to take into the future. Pupils with SEND or who are spending time at the school from abroad, make good progress because they receive effective individual support, although teachers do not consistently plan activities in class that they will be able to accomplish without adult help. Pupils who are particularly able make rapid progress due to the provision of enrichment activities as well as well-targeted teaching and high expectations from teachers.
- 2.2 Pupils of all ages demonstrate excellent personal development. They are confident and emotionally mature and have a clear sense of right and wrong. Their strong social awareness arises from the close community spirit within the school and their involvement in fund raising for charities. They are mutually supportive and respectful. The school's pastoral care is of high quality, although in the pre-inspection questionnaires pupils raised criticisms about teachers' fairness in awarding sanctions and opportunities for offering their views. Inspection evidence found that records of sanctions and rewards do not easily allow for monitoring by senior staff to ensure fairness. It also found that the organisation of the school committee and frequency of its meetings do not offer enough formal opportunities for pupils to raise issues. The school pays excellent attention to welfare, health and safety and the safeguarding of its pupils. Outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders' personal development is clearly promoted; they are very well cared for and most speak warmly of their boarding experience. Their parents are extremely positive about their children's experience of boarding.
- 2.3 Governance is good and trustees clearly understand the school's strengths and areas for development. They have been instrumental in ensuring plans for a new nursery building are being realised. They pay careful regard to much of their monitoring role, though less rigorously for the EYFS, and have ensured that regulatory deficiencies in staff appointments have been rectified and that oversight of their responsibilities for health and safety are carefully undertaken. Leadership of the school is excellent and provides clear direction for continuing improvement. All recommendations from the previous inspection have been addressed, including those for boarding and the EYFS.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that all teachers are consistent in planning activities which enable pupils with SEND to gain independent learning skills.
 2. Improve the recording of rewards and major and minor sanctions in order to facilitate effective monitoring and ensure fairness and consistency.
 3. Develop and use the extensive outside environment to further promote children's learning and development within the EYFS.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school achieves its aim of enabling every child to achieve his or her potential within a broad range of academic, cultural and sporting pursuits.
- 3.3 In the EYFS most children, including those with SEND, make expected levels of progress in their learning and development relative to their starting points, while the most able reach levels that exceed expectation in some areas. All children are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. They are highly articulate and listen attentively to their teachers and each other. Children in the Nursery enjoy making decisions, use scissors independently and are developing a good understanding of the concept of 'one more than' as a precursor to addition. Children in Reception have a wide phonetic knowledge and can confidently sound out simple key words. They enjoy reading daily to an adult and taking books home. They are developing good independent writing skills and their sentences show an understanding of the use of simple punctuation. They can use everyday language to talk about measures. The children are highly motivated and engage enthusiastically in well-planned activities. Many attractive displays in and around the setting show paintings and models connected with the current seaside project. However, many of the children's learning experiences are teacher-led and opportunities for exploration and investigation in and beyond the classroom are limited, particularly in taking learning outside. Children have good concentration and demonstrate the confidence to work independently. They enjoy role play and creative activities.
- 3.4 In the rest of the school, pupils develop excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities. Throughout the school they are highly articulate, able to converse fluently and to explain their ideas. Their thoughtful responses in class demonstrate well-developed listening skills and many display mature reasoning ability. Pupils read well for their ages and capabilities due to priority being given to this skill in the Pre-prep. From an early age they demonstrate particularly good writing skills in a variety of contexts so that by Year 8, the writing of the most able is excellent. Since the previous inspection, mathematical skills have improved so that they are now strong and applied competently in subjects such as geography and science. Pupils demonstrate appropriate skills in information and communication technology and they carry out investigations and practical work confidently in science.
- 3.5 Pupils' exceptional creative skills are shown in the many excellent displays seen around the school and art studio. These not only include a vast range of two-dimensional artwork, such as still life using oils, pastels and water colour, but high-quality textile work and some excellent pieces of pottery. Pupils enjoy participation in a good range of instrumental and choral activities and many achieve success in external instrumental examinations. They have numerous opportunities to achieve success in a wide variety of physical pursuits, both within the curriculum and during the evenings and at weekends. Many pupils describe their enjoyment and enthusiasm for sport. Boys have represented the county and region in rugby and the girls' hockey teams won both the Northumberland League and Cup

Tournaments. Pupils achieve a good measure of team success in rugby, swimming, cricket and tennis, as well as in athletics.

- 3.6 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but on the evidence available, is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils follow a broad and challenging curriculum which includes classical and modern languages and, since the previous inspection, all have been successful in gaining places at their first choice of senior school. Each year a significant proportion gain awards, which include academic scholarships but also for music, sport, drama, art or as all-rounders. This level of attainment, as judged by the quality of learning seen in lessons, the scrutiny of written work and curriculum interviews with pupils, indicates that they make excellent progress in relation to those of similar ability. Pupils with SEND or any with EAL make good progress from their differing starting points thanks to effective individual specialist tuition and support in class, which sometimes includes activities well-tailored to their learning needs. The most able make rapid progress because of the school's provision of enrichment activities as well as well-targeted teaching and high expectations from teachers.
- 3.7 Pupils' success is strongly supported by their excellent attitudes towards learning. They are invariably very well-behaved and attentive in lessons and remain focused when working cooperatively but concentrate equally well in independent tasks. Pupils of all ages make effort to present their work neatly. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire almost all parents indicated that they are very pleased with the levels of progress being made by their children and almost all the pupils said they feel they are making good progress.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The curriculum is highly effective in its coverage of the requisite areas of learning and in achieving the school's stated aims. The school has continued to enhance the curriculum since the previous inspection.
- 3.10 The EYFS setting makes good provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. The broad and often exciting educational programmes across the seven areas of learning and development help all children to reach the level of development typical for their age. Children enjoy the advantages of specialist teaching in French, music and swimming and share many excellent facilities with the main school. Almost all of the children's learning and development activities observed during the inspection took place within the classroom and staff do not take sufficient advantage of the many opportunities for children to learn in the exciting outside learning environment.
- 3.11 In the main school, subject time allocations have been adjusted to provide a more effective balance between subjects, particularly English and mathematics, while retaining a high proportion of time for games. The curriculum is wide-ranging and includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum and French, as well as Latin for pupils from Year 5, and Greek for those pupils in Years 7 and 8 who are preparing for academic scholarships. Through a programme of thorough preparation and guidance, the school is very successful in helping its pupils to achieve success in entry to a wide range of senior schools, both through Common Entrance and scholarships. A comprehensive post-scholarship programme has recently been

introduced, which incorporates study of different languages and cultures, British Sign Language, extended projects, presentation skills, woodwork, poetry and visits. Pupils told inspectors that they particularly enjoy the amount of sport available to them. This provision is complemented by high-quality facilities such as tennis courts, an indoor swimming pool and extensive, well-maintained games pitches. A wide range of sporting fixtures are also arranged. Exceptional provision in all areas of the school for creative subjects is highlighted by displays of extremely high quality artwork. All pupils are given excellent opportunities to take part in annual whole-school musicals, together with year group plays for pupils in Years 1 to 6. As at the previous inspection, music has a limited time within the curriculum for senior pupils, though additional sessions for those requiring music theory tuition have been introduced and the vast majority of pupils learn at least one instrument.

- 3.12 The school makes good provision for pupils with SEND and any with EAL, including those within the EYFS. This ensures early identification of any problems accessing the curriculum, liaison with parents and external agencies where appropriate, and information and advice for staff, which is held centrally on the school intranet. Where necessary, individual support is arranged from a learning support specialist. When pupils from Spain spend time in school they receive English language lessons from a specialist teacher. Provision for able and talented pupils is particularly good. As well as scholarship preparation, there is a broad programme of extension seminars and additional opportunities for specific abilities, such as involvement with a strength and conditioning coach for pupils with sporting ability.
- 3.13 Pupils are offered a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, which contribute significantly to their overall development and are very popular. These take place during the afternoon twice a week, on each evening, and at weekends for full boarders. Options include a comprehensive mix of pursuits offering cultural, sporting, creative, expressive and cerebral development. Pupils in Years 5 and 7 benefit from spending extended time in France at sister trust schools, where they gain significant insights and development in the French language and culture. Pupils in Year 6 visit Paris annually. A variety of trips, to local, regional and national destinations support extra-curricular provision and the Year 8 leavers' programme is particularly exciting, including camping in the Lake District, visits to a nearby industrial museum and spending nights on board an historic ship in London. The school promotes a diverse range of links with the community which increase pupils' social awareness. Examples of this include support for a trust that provides outdoor adventure for people with disabilities at a local lake, concerts at local venues, support of a locally-based charity working in Eastern and Southern Africa, and work for a local church appeal.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.15 Teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- 3.16 In the EYFS, teachers know their children very well and support them in the development of important skills, enabling them to develop and learn effectively to be ready for the next stage of their learning. Planning for teacher-led activities takes account of the needs of all children so that they make appropriate progress in most areas of learning. Staff engage with and successfully motivate all the children. Assessment and planning procedures have improved since the previous inspection

and staff are now monitoring children's achievement closely and tracking progress across most areas of learning and development. The school has identified this as an area for continued development. Children's learning journals are comprehensive and contain good photographic evidence and samples of their work. They support teachers' observations and assessment across the seven areas of learning and development. The wide range of resources used within the classroom is of good quality. However, during the inspection there was less evidence of resources available to support children's learning in the wider learning environment outside.

- 3.17 Across the school, much teaching is characterised by teachers' competent subject knowledge, which brings high expectations for pupils' success and makes learning interesting. Teachers' enthusiasm results in eager participation by the pupils so that they are keen to engage in their work. Teachers make particularly good use of questioning to encourage pupils to reflect and offer detailed responses. In subjects such as science and history this promotes the development of reasoning skills. And in English it extends pupils' vocabulary which results in writing of high quality. Lessons offer a variety of approaches, which hold pupils' attention, consolidate their learning and stimulate independent thinking. This ensures that the most able are challenged at an appropriate level for their abilities and contributes strongly to the excellent progress pupils make. Much teaching includes activities that allow pupils to learn to work cooperatively while remaining focused on their learning objective, as well as tasks that require independent thought. Eye-catching displays in classrooms, provide information to support learning and work on show throughout the school affirm pupils' efforts through attractive presentation.
- 3.18 Relationships within the classroom are supportive and teachers offer encouragement and effective help to further motivate pupils. When planning takes into account teacher's knowledge of pupils' learning needs, those with SEND or EAL are able to work with minimal adult intervention. However, some teaching relies on extensive adult support to enable these pupils to achieve because the tasks are insufficiently tailored to their individual needs. When this is the case, progress is less secure. In the most successful lessons, planning is clear, lessons proceed at a brisk pace, use interesting resources and at their conclusion draw pupils' learning together with an enjoyable and useful summary. In the few less successful lessons observed, lesson objectives lacked challenge and teaching proceeded slowly so that pupils were less engaged and learning was less rapid.
- 3.19 Since the previous inspection and in response to a recommendation, the prep school has developed an assessment system to enable pupils' progress to be monitored. This includes internal examinations, annual reading and spelling tests and three-weekly effort and attainment grades. Pupils are also assessed by external standardised tests in Years 4 and 6, which provide teachers with useful information about their abilities. The school has identified in its development plan that the Pre-prep does not have a similar standardised assessment tool to enable information about pupils' potential and progress to flow continuously between both sections. The results of assessments are shared and discussed at staff meetings with the learning support co-ordinator so that appropriate interventions are implemented if there is cause for concern. Teachers' marking is regular but the school has identified that their guidance to pupils on how to improve their work has been limited in some subjects. The recent initiative to annotate all formal marking with a target for improvement has resulted in greater consistency, although this is not yet fully embedded in practice.

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 pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The children's personal, social and emotional development is excellent in the EYFS. The setting strives to develop all children intellectually, emotionally, socially and morally, as well as placing a high priority on the unique individual. Children demonstrate great confidence when making decisions for themselves about their learning. They relate very well to each other and to adults whom they trust, so they feel secure and happy. Arrangements for transition are excellent and many opportunities are provided for children in the EYFS to spend time with those in Year 1 at play and lunchtimes as well as in shared activities with their teachers so that they are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual development is strong. They are able to be reflective as they have many opportunities to consider non-material aspects of life in assemblies as well as at church services which full boarders attend on Sundays. The chaplain often leads the assemblies and is very involved in the life of the school, visiting weekly and offering a listening and friendly ear to the pupils. Pupils of all ages are extremely confident and emotionally mature for their age. They appreciate their good fortune in living and working in such a beautiful landscape. Pupils are polite and have a genuine concern for the welfare of others. They were very open and fair-minded in their discussions with inspectors. Their self-worth is increased by participation in sports teams, the choir, instrumental ensembles and house competitions.
- 4.4 Pupils have an excellent standard of moral development. They demonstrate a keen sense of right from wrong and are respectful of others; this is promoted well throughout the school in many subjects, including personal, social and health education. During religious education lessons senior pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of moral and ethical issues such as crime and punishment and prejudice and discrimination. Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness of the needs of others when raising considerable funds for charities. Pupils in Year 3 explained that by organising cake sales themselves, they have a better understanding of why they are raising money and who they are raising money for.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate outstanding social awareness, which is encouraged by the close community spirit that pervades throughout the school. They show self-discipline and there is a strong feeling of teamwork and empathy. Pupils appreciate the house system and how they can earn points for kindness, good manners and politeness. They are given jobs on a daily basis and understand the importance of this as part of living in community. In the pre-inspection questionnaires a small minority felt they have limited opportunities to take on responsibility until they become seniors but inspection evidence found that pupils of all ages are given appropriate responsibilities. Pupils in Year 7 develop their responsibilities during their term at Sauveterre. They learn to appreciate people's differences by mixing with children from other schools and are wiser and more aware of the world when they return. Pupils learn about major public institutions through a comprehensive programme of talks, visitors and trips. These are complemented by the Year 8 leavers' programme, which gives them a useful and highly enjoyable preparation for the move to senior

school. Topics within the curriculum, which often use the locality, enable pupils to develop a keen awareness of environmental concerns.

- 4.6 Pupils demonstrate a strong awareness and respect for their own and other faiths and cultures. This is seen in the work done when pupils learn about different religions and study the culture of one world region each term in the Pre-prep and re-visiting the main world faiths in the Prep. During their term in France, pupils are immersed in French culture and meet children from other backgrounds, so that they return more self-confident and culturally aware. These experiences enable pupils to learn from and respect their own and other cultures, including that of the Western tradition, and to relate well to those from other backgrounds in the school community.
- 4.7 By the time they leave the school, the personal development of the pupils is excellent. They appreciate the trust they are offered by the staff.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is good.
- 4.9 Pastoral care plays a pivotal role in allowing the school to fulfil its aims and is given high priority by the leadership. Provision for children's well-being in the EYFS is excellent. Teachers, as the key persons, and support staff, ensure that all children, including those with additional needs, enjoy very positive relationships with adults, feel safe and form secure emotional attachments. High standards of behaviour are expected and adults help children to understand why it is important to listen to others, to share, cooperate and take turns. Children understand the importance of physical activity and enjoy weekly swimming lessons and riding their tricycles at play time. Healthy snacks and nutritious lunches are provided and water is available throughout the day. Children understand why they need to wash their hands and have established a good routine. Most children can manage their own basic personal hygiene and can dress themselves independently and those who cannot are given good support.
- 4.10 Pupils say they feel well cared for, supported and guided in the school, which many view as a real home from home. This is reinforced by the resoundingly positive views of parents. Pupils reported that they feel able to approach staff members easily to discuss any problems they might experience. Relationships between staff and pupils are of high quality so that throughout the school bonds are sensitive, caring and meaningful. Co-ordination of pastoral care is strong, based on a system of residential staff, form tutors, matrons and assistants who know their pupils extremely well and show genuinely personal care to their charges.
- 4.11 An excellent menu of freshly-prepared food, which is praised by the pupils, forms the centrepiece of school family mealtimes. A wide choice and plentiful helpings provide the stimulus for the development of healthy eating habits. Daily opportunities abound for games and activities in the extensive grounds and woodlands, so that pupils enjoy and understand the value of regular exercise.
- 4.12 Behaviour in the school is exemplary; pupils are unfailingly polite, both to each other and to visitors. These standards are promoted by a variety of approaches and the very high expectations of the entire school family. However, in the pre-inspection questionnaires a minority of pupils expressed dissatisfaction with the distribution of rewards and a majority felt that sanctions are not given fairly by teachers. In

discussion with inspectors, older pupils confirmed this view. On further investigation, inspectors found that although comparatively few sanctions are awarded due to high standards of behaviour, the recording of rewards and of major and minor sanctions does not offer sufficient detail to permit effective monitoring of any patterns by senior management. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a few pupils felt that bullying is not effectively dealt with by the school, but the inspection team found no evidence to substantiate this. Clear policies and detailed procedures are in place to prevent and deal with cases of bullying and pupils spoken to did not feel bullying to be a problem.

- 4.13 In the pre-inspection questionnaire a majority of pupils were dissatisfied with opportunities to voice their opinions and this view was confirmed by some older pupils in interviews with inspectors. Pupils are able to express their views formally through the school committee, which is an elected body of pupils in Years 4 to 8 that meets at least once a term. Inspection evidence found that although this body is highly valued by pupils, there remains some dissatisfaction with its organisation and a perception of selectivity in the staff's choice of issues raised, as well as with the frequency of meetings. The school has a suitable plan in place to improve educational access for pupils with SEND. These pupils spoke with enthusiasm about the support they receive.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 The careful attention paid by the school to its procedures to safeguard children and promote their welfare strongly supports their personal development. The designated senior people have received appropriate training in inter-agency working and all staff receive safeguarding training at the required intervals. The school ensures that comprehensive safeguarding training is included as part of its arrangements for induction. In the EYFS staff receive full child protection training, including age-specific areas requiring extra vigilance, and have a clear understanding of health and safety procedures. There is a shared understanding and responsibility of how to protect children. Throughout the school recruitment procedures are thorough and checks are carefully recorded.
- 4.16 Health and safety procedures are managed by the trust, whose compliance officer chairs the health and safety committee which meets each term. The trust ensures that health and safety procedures are rigorous and that testing and maintenance of electrical and other equipment is carried out at the correct intervals. The school conducts suitable risk assessments which cover the building and pupil activities as well as outside visits. Provision for pupils who are unwell or who hurt themselves is good and records of accidents and treatment given are properly maintained. A suitable policy ensures that medication is administered to the correct child with due regard to correct protocols for administration, recording and storage. In the EYFS staff trained in paediatric first aid ensure children's medical needs, as well as any playground accidents, are dealt with effectively, although a few aspects of record keeping required attention during the inspection.
- 4.17 The school gives careful attention to the prevention of risk from fire. All staff have received basic training in fire procedures and a suitable number are trained at a higher level. A fire risk assessment has been carried out by an officer of the trust and is reviewed annually or if there are any changes to accommodation. Its recommendations have been efficiently addressed and agreed with the fire service.

Fire drills take place at suitable intervals and are recorded efficiently. The admissions and attendance registers are maintained correctly and stored for the required three years. Registration is carried out efficiently at the beginning of morning and after lunch.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

4.18 The quality of boarding is excellent.

4.19 The outcomes for boarders are excellent and their personal development is clearly promoted by their boarding experience. They develop key qualities such as confidence and tolerance and are considerate of the needs of others. During the inspection boarders were observed to be very well behaved and extremely polite to visitors and all members of the school. They enjoy being part of their community and make a positive contribution to it. There are no prefects but older boarders are given positions of responsibility within the school, such as games captains, church wardens and in the organisation of events. These roles develop their leadership skills. All boarders help in the dining room to provide an efficient service. The head's wife leads a team of matrons to provide strong pastoral care for boarders. All are dedicated and caring in their support and they create a homely atmosphere. Consequently, strong relationships exist between boarders and staff. Senior academic staff also assist in the house and organise activities which the boarders enjoy. Boarders report that the school committee, formed of year representatives and staff, has facilitated the adoption of some of their suggestions such as the provision of scampi as an alternative to fish on Fridays and the presentation of special socks for sporting colours. Boarders have ready access to information about the world through newspapers and the television news.

4.20 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent and boarders feel safe. Good induction arrangements mean that boarders are welcomed with a sleepover and day in school before joining and are provided with guides for their first few days. Parents and boarders are provided with a helpful and informative handbook. In interviews boarders said they have a wide range of people in school that they can talk to in times of need. An independent listener visits the school and her telephone number is displayed along with other helplines including the Children's Commissioner. The school chaplain visits each week and is also available to talk to boarders. The school implements effective policies for those who are unwell. When the part-time nurse is not on duty, matrons are responsible for medical care and they can be summoned during the night. Medications are stored securely and administered with due care. The school doctor is based at the local surgery and appointments can be made with specialist services including dentists and opticians. Boarders confirmed that they receive excellent healthcare. The quality of food is of a high nutritional standard and very appetising. Fresh produce, which is sourced locally, is mostly used, baking is done on site and special dietary needs are catered for. Boarders confirmed they enjoy their meals and that portion sizes suit their individual needs. In pre-inspection questionnaires some boarders expressed dissatisfaction with the availability of snacks; however inspectors found that they are frequent during the day and appropriate for their needs.

4.21 An efficient on-site laundry ensures that clothes and bedding are regularly laundered. Personal and stationery items are easily obtained in school. The boarding accommodation is of a good standard and is comfortable and clean. Boys and girls reside in separate areas and share dormitories with others of a similar age.

Boarders personalise their own areas, for instance with posters and photographs. The bathroom facilities are suitable. The boys' showers are not in the immediate vicinity of their accommodation however they do not consider this to be a problem. The common rooms provide pleasant areas for socialising and playing games and boarders may use other school facilities during the evening. In pre-inspection questionnaires many boarders felt their possessions were not safe but boarders interviewed did not consider this to be a major problem since they can have lockable tuckboxes for additional secure storage.

- 4.22 In pre-inspection questionnaires a small minority of boarders were not happy with the balance of free time and activities. Inspection evidence does not support this view since boarders interviewed were very enthusiastic about the wide range of activities provided after school and at the weekends. Activities range from den building in the woods to country dancing. At weekends there are also outings, including that recently enjoyed by boarders to the beach. Boarders have sufficient free time. The school is set in beautiful grounds which enhance the experience of boarding and the boarders were seen by the inspectors to be enjoying outside play with different year groups integrating well. Whilst a small minority of boarders in the pre-inspection questionnaire felt it was sometimes difficult to contact parents, inspection evidence found that they may contact family and friends by email and letter writing; there are also two phones which have been recently enclosed to offer privacy, following a recommendation from the previous inspection. Suitable complaints policies are made available to parents and children and in the pre-inspection questionnaire most parents agreed that they can easily contact boarding staff.
- 4.23 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. Safeguarding measures are effective and all staff, including ancillary staff, receive regular training and are aware of their responsibilities. The school operates a safe procedure for the recruitment of staff. There are sufficient numbers of staff on duty, including overnight, and boarders can contact them at all times. An anti-bullying policy is in place and boarders say that bullying is not an issue. Boarders are registered by staff at appropriate times and in the unlikely event that a child should go missing, a suitable procedure is in place. A policy to promote good behaviour is implemented in practice. In pre-inspection questionnaires a minority of boarders did not think they were treated fairly. However, in conversation with inspectors this view was not found to relate to their experience in the boarding house. Appropriate risk assessments are in place and regular fire drills are held.
- 4.24 Leadership and management of boarding are highly effective. The headmaster and his wife show a strong commitment to boarding, which is at the heart of the school's ethos. This commitment is realised in their leadership of boarding and in the undertaking of boarding duties by senior staff. Consequently boarders' academic and welfare needs are both readily integrated. Meetings between boarding staff are regular and there is daily informal communication. Staff have the opportunity for further training to improve their knowledge of boarding practice. A clear statement of boarding principles and practice is available and all the required policies and documents are in place. The responses to pre-inspection parent's questionnaires are extremely positive. The vast majority say their child enjoys boarding and most boarders speak warmly of their boarding experience; these views were confirmed on inspection. Since the previous inspection common rooms and accommodation have been refurbished. The regulatory requirement from the previous inspection relating to accurately entering records of safe recruitment has been met.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The trustees provide strong support to the school to enable it to secure its aims and distinct ethos. They bring a useful range of expertise to their roles including education, the law and finance, which enables them to provide useful guidance and appropriate challenge. The trust manages accounting, budgeting and health and safety for all its schools. Prudent financial planning and allocation of funding ensures continuous investment in human and material resources such as the new extension for the Pre-prep, which is nearing completion.
- 5.3 Since the previous inspection the trust has supported the leadership in building appropriate management structures and the principal has developed liaison with members of staff to better provide insight and support. The trustees take a keen interest in the EYFS and have been instrumental in ensuring plans for a new Nursery building have come to fruition. Several officers of the trustees, in particular, the principal, visit the school regularly to provide oversight of health and safety and educational matters, and give helpful support to the leadership. The headmaster and the principal provide the trustees with informative reports each term which are considered at meetings held at each of the trust's schools in rotation. This ensures that trustees are fully informed of the strengths as well as challenges encountered by the school.
- 5.4 The trustees carry out much of their monitoring role with careful regard, particularly in relation to health and safety and recruitment. However, inspectors found that there were some inconsistencies in their monitoring of all regulatory requirements across the school, for example in the EYFS. Since the previous inspection, recruitment procedures have been tightened so that the school has a rigorous system to ensure the correct checks are undertaken for the appointment of staff. These are accurately recorded in the single central register held at the trust headquarters. The trust has appointed a compliance officer to ensure the fulfilment of the statutory requirements for health and safety and the principal is the trust's nominated officer to monitor safeguarding arrangements. He ensures that the trustees receive an annual report on the school's safeguarding and welfare arrangements which are duly considered and ratified by the entire board.

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 leadership and management are highly committed to maintaining the school's ethos and since the previous inspection have ensured improvements to all areas of the school's provision. As a result pupils receive an excellent educational experience, achieve well and develop first-class personal qualities. This is particularly reflected in the excellent quality of pupils' boarding experience.

- 5.7 Good leadership and management in the EYFS demonstrate a strong commitment to the setting. This ensures that it is welcoming, safe and stimulating and that safeguarding and welfare requirements are met. The setting has made good progress since the previous inspection and regulatory requirements and recommendations have been addressed. Policies are reviewed and updated as necessary and staff meet weekly to discuss their planning, in-service training priorities, timetabled events and children's progress. A detailed development plan highlights priorities and helps determine actions necessary for improvement. Staff are provided with suitable opportunities to discuss their practice and specific concerns on a regular basis. Specific training to support staff in the implementation of the EYFS framework has been identified as a priority. A positive and effective partnership has been established with parents, the local authority and other external agencies to ensure children receive the support that they need. Leadership and management of the setting demonstrate a commitment to evaluating practice and securing continuous improvement. They have not monitored all policies and practice with sufficient rigour to ensure any deficiencies are identified and addressed promptly.
- 5.8 The school's progress arises from excellent educational direction which places pupils' welfare at its heart, and a drive for school improvement. This is realised in a comprehensive school development plan which is constantly revisited and updated. It is based on self-evaluation involving all members of staff, whose ideas are welcomed in the open forum of staff meetings. Since the previous inspection and in response to a recommendation, leadership roles have been clarified to allow clear dissemination of information and better monitoring of the work of the school. Senior management roles are clearly defined and exercised efficiently. Meetings at varying levels of management take place regularly and are minuted to provide a record of discussions and required actions.
- 5.9 Senior managers form a cohesive and collegial team who are keen to share appropriate responsibilities with heads of department. Since the previous inspection middle management roles have been developed and expectations clarified. Consequently, many areas of the curriculum have been reviewed and improved. The school is developing closer liaison between heads of department and subject leaders in the Pre-prep, promoted by joint meetings. Heads of department manage their budgets, observe their colleagues, monitor schemes of work and teachers' planning, and in conjunction with senior managers, scrutinise pupils' work. This has led to useful initiatives, such as that to improve the quality of marking across the school. Administrative, catering and maintenance staff play an important and committed part in ensuring that the school runs efficiently in a busy boarding school environment.
- 5.10 The requisite procedures to recruit suitable staff are well-established and their checks are correctly recorded, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Staff are appropriately trained in their roles to ensure the safety and welfare of the pupils. Safeguarding training and health and safety procedures play an important part of the induction programme and all staff are given a mentor to guide them through their first term at the school. The biennial appraisal system, which includes EYFS staff, has been reviewed recently to ensure it effectively meets the needs of the staff and school. It enables staff to discuss their future professional development and they are encouraged to undertake further training to improve their professional effectiveness.

- 5.11 The quality of links with parents is excellent. The overwhelming majority of parents from across all sections of the school who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very happy with the education and support provided for their children and would recommend the school to another parent. The school has established a strong partnership with parents and deals promptly with concerns that are raised in accordance with its published procedure. A suitable complaints policy is in place but concerns are invariably addressed informally without recourse to it.
- 5.12 The school is keen to work closely with parents and provides numerous opportunities for them to be actively involved in the life and work of the school. Boarders' parents are notified of all their weekend activities and photographs of these are posted on the website to keep them well-informed. Parents are invited to refreshments when they collect or return boarders to school following an exeat. Parents are also involved through assisting at open mornings, participation in social and charity events, spectating at sports fixtures and attending match teas. In the Pre-prep, including the EYFS, parents are invited to class assemblies and contribute to religious and cultural services and celebrations. When children learn about the public services, parents with relevant expertise are invited to talk to them, such as when a parent spoke about life in the army and visits from medical professionals. A recent talk arranged by the school and given by an outside speaker, entitled *Teenagers Translated*, was very well attended by parents.
- 5.13 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school. Regular and informative newsletters, letters from the headmaster, the area on the school's website for parents, the comprehensive annual magazine, departmental handbooks and a termly calendar ensure parents have ready access to significant information. Sports tour information and a number of booklets, for example the Pre-prep and EYFS parents' handbook, provide essential information for parents about daily routines, the curriculum, staffing and food and drink. The school operates an open door policy and parents are welcome to speak to staff by appointment, or when children are dropped off in the morning or collected at the end of the day. All parents, including those with children who board, have access to electronic communication such as email or text messaging. Important information such as policy documents and dates for the diary are made accessible via the area of the school's website for parents.
- 5.14 The school arranges information and curriculum meetings for parents throughout the school. Informative and detailed written reports across the school, grade cards in the prep school and parents' consultation evenings ensure that parents are kept very well informed about their child's work and progress. In the EYFS parents attend termly consultation meetings with teachers and also receive two informative written reports. The end of year report for children in Reception is detailed and each child's level of development is assessed against the early learning goals indicating whether children are meeting, exceeding or not yet reaching expected levels. Parents are kept well informed about their children's achievements and progress.

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