



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
PORTSMOUTH HIGH SCHOOL GDST**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Portsmouth High School GDST

Full Name of School	Portsmouth High School GDST
DfE Number	851/6003
Registered Charity Number	306983
Address	Portsmouth High School GDST 25 Kent Road Southsea Hampshire PO5 3EQ
Telephone Number	023 9282 6714
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Email Address	headsec@por.gdst.net
Head	Mrs Jane Prescott
Chair of Governors	Mrs Anne McMeehan-Roberts
Age Range	3 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	421
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 21 5-11: 93 11-18: 307
Head of EYFS Setting	Mr Paul Marshallsay
EYFS Gender	Girls
Inspection Dates	28 Apr 2015 to 01 May 2015

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 October 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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations 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.

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 chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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 Colette Culligan	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Kathryn Burrows	Team Inspector (Head of Juniors, GSA/HMC school)
Mrs Christine Edmundson	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Anton Kok	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr Stephen Roberts	Team Inspector (Principal, HMC/GSA/IAPS schools)
Mrs Eithne Webster	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Portsmouth High School, situated in the Portsmouth suburb of Southsea, is a school for girls aged between 3 and 18. It is one of a group of schools owned and managed by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST); the trust has overall responsibility for the governance of the school, in which it is supported by a board of local governors. The senior school was opened in 1882 and moved to its present site almost 130 years ago. The junior school, Dovercourt, was opened in 1927 and occupies its own grounds close to the main school site. The opening of a Nursery in 2005 extended its Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision.
- 1.2 The school aims to promote a positive, secure and supportive environment in which girls can thrive, achieve academic success and be encouraged to develop their own voice and opinions. It seeks to provide girls with the opportunities to challenge themselves, to grow in self-knowledge, to learn to value themselves and to respect others, and to develop their own strengths so that they have the confidence to go forward into a changing world.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 421 pupils enrolled at the school. In the junior school, 21 children were in the EYFS and 93 in Years 1 to 6. There were 307 girls in the senior school, of whom 77 were in the sixth form. The ability of pupils throughout the school is above the national average, with a slightly wider spread in the sixth form than in other year groups. The school identifies 39 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mostly mild to moderate dyslexia or mild dyspraxia. Nineteen of these pupils require specialist support and one pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Of the forty pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), extra support is required by three. The majority of pupils are of white British origin, and from families with a professional, military or business background. Pupils come from a wide area around Portsmouth, extending as far as Southampton, Chichester and the Isle of Wight.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, the senior leadership team (SLT) has been restructured and an assistant head responsible for whole-school assessment and performance management has been appointed. The current head was appointed in 2011 and the head of the junior school in 2013. A new food technology classroom has been built and many facilities refurbished, including laboratories, an assembly hall and junior school classrooms. French is now taught from the Nursery and computing from Reception. The curriculum for the junior school has been redesigned to include more cross-curricular work, more subject specialist teaching for Years 4 to 6 and increased time for science. A full curriculum review has been undertaken for the senior school, with outcomes including the introduction of classical civilisation, Mandarin and thinking skills lessons, and the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) through curriculum subjects.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school is highly successful in providing an excellent education and fully meets its aims to encourage pupils' academic success and personal development within a positive and supportive environment. The excellent curriculum provides a wide range of choices, beyond requirements, accounting for the needs of pupils of all ages, including those in the EYFS, and for those with SEND or EAL. Great efforts are made to meet the subject choices of pupils at GCSE and A level. From an early age pupils demonstrate excellent literacy skills. They speak confidently, with an increasingly sophisticated vocabulary. They show excellent understanding of mathematical, scientific and technological concepts, and their creative work is mature, imaginative and skilful. They are eager and well-organised learners. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities for physical exercise, reaching good standards in a range of sports. Teaching is excellent, and often inspirational, although children in the EYFS are not always fully stretched, nor are the most able pupils in other sections of the school invariably challenged to take intellectual risks and extend their thinking further.
- 2.2 The pupils' excellent personal development is evident in their growing self-assurance and sense of themselves as unique individuals with specific talents. Relationships throughout the school are excellent; mutual respect, friendliness, courtesy and tolerance permeate the atmosphere. Pupils are keen to volunteer for election to posts of responsibility and discharge their duties dependably. They constructed the school's code of conduct and abide by it cheerfully; their behaviour is excellent. They say that bullying is extremely rare and, should it happen, is managed swiftly by staff. Staff know their pupils extremely well and support them with kind honesty. Welfare, health and safety measures are robust, ensuring that the school premises are very well maintained and that any potential risk is minimised.
- 2.3 Excellent governance is provided by the GDST, ably supported by the local governing board. The trust ensures that all legal requirements, including those for safeguarding, are fully met. Governors show an excellent awareness of their responsibilities, supporting the school fully in the articulation and implementation of its ambitious vision. Changes in the leadership structure of the EYFS have resulted in the delay of some proposed actions but leadership overall is excellent. It is highly successful in driving forward improvement, in line with the school's aims, while remaining alert to the needs and ideas of the staff. Staff are well qualified and well trained in matters of safeguarding, health and safety. The school actively promotes the pupils' understanding of issues of equality, tolerance and the rule of law in a democracy. An overwhelming majority of parents expressed high levels of satisfaction in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Pupils are proud to belong to the school and are grateful for the opportunities and encouragement it provides.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that all teaching consistently provides appropriate challenge for the most able and encourages pupils of all ability levels to take intellectual risks.
2. For the EYFS, ensure that inside and outside areas have activities that consistently extend the children's development.
3. Support the continuous professional development of EYFS staff by implementing fully the planned system of coaching.

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 is highly successful in providing an atmosphere in which the pupils thrive personally and academically, in accordance with its aims. Pupils of all ages and abilities are articulate; they speak confidently, listen attentively and write fluently. Children in the EYFS develop secure foundations for their future learning; they are confident speaking to adults. They show a good understanding of mathematical language for their age, the youngest recognising numbers and the oldest able to perform simple addition and subtraction. Pupils in the junior school have an excellent vocabulary, seen in their discussions of human geography, music and social issues. In the senior school, pupils confidently apply mathematical skills to scientific tasks such as sampling a habitat with quadrats. They have an excellent grasp of scientific concepts and theories. The quality of pupils' art, music and creative writing throughout the school demonstrates lively imagination and considerable skill.
- 3.3 Pupils demonstrate extensive interests and skills beyond the classroom in a wide range of activities. Many pupils, from the junior school to the sixth form, successfully enter for external examinations in music and drama. Pupils of all ages enthusiastically engage in sports competitions, with those in the senior school achieving good success at local and national levels in several pursuits, including trampolining, sailing, cross-country, gymnastics and swimming. Pupils successfully embark on The Duke of Edinburgh's Award at all three levels, some completing the gold award while still at school. Pupils are highly successful when applying to competitive universities for demanding courses in a wide range of subjects.
- 3.4 All children in the EYFS reach or exceed the levels of development expected for their age, performing very well in relation to their starting points. They make good progress in learning to read and write. In the junior school, attainment cannot be measured against average performance in national tests, but on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. This is supported by the results of standardised tests, along with inspection evidence such as lesson observations, scrutiny of the pupils' work and discussions with them. This evidence shows that junior school pupils make progress that is at least appropriate, and in some instances, good, in relation to pupils of similar abilities.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparable statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been above the average for all maintained schools, and similar to the average for maintained selective schools. International GCSE results have been above national norms. A-level results are above the national average for selective maintained schools and have improved since 2011. Public examination results and work observed show that senior school pupils make progress that is high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities.
- 3.6 At all ages, those with SEND or EAL make swift progress and achieve their full potential as a result of the support they receive. The progress of more able pupils is good; in the rare lessons when teaching does not provide them with sufficient challenge, their own strong work ethic means that progress is maintained. In questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of parents and pupils alike expressed satisfaction with the progress that pupils of all abilities make.

- 3.7 Pupils of all ages show great enthusiasm for all aspects of their work, both inside and outside the classroom. Children in the EYFS arrive at school happily, eager to embark on the day's activities. Older pupils throughout the school demonstrate an extremely positive attitude to learning. They settle quickly to work and make efficient use of time. Highly motivated and committed, they persevere and complete tasks to a high standard. Written work shows good organisational skills and pride in presentation. Pupils react thoughtfully and productively, whether working independently, or in pairs or groups, sharing ideas and challenging each other supportively. Their excellent attitude, self-discipline and determination to succeed result in swift 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 school's aims of providing opportunities for girls to develop their own strengths and achieve academic success are effectively met through a curriculum that covers all the required areas of learning. The curriculum and timetable are carefully planned and appropriate for all ages and abilities. The EYFS provision enables all children to reach or exceed the expected levels of development. The specific needs of pupils, including those with SEND or EAL, are catered for well, with additional support available both in individual or small group sessions within lessons in the junior school and in timetabled specific skills lessons in the senior school. The support is tailored for each pupil in order to encourage her to achieve her full potential. The curricular and extra-curricular arrangements almost always also provide well for more able pupils and those with particular gifts and talents.
- 3.10 This personalised, flexible approach is a hallmark of the school in every area of curriculum organisation. In the EYFS, children's interests are noted and activities are devised that reflect these, such as smoothie making. The GCSE and A-level examination options vary each year; the school goes to considerable lengths to ensure that all chosen subject combinations can be met. Co-operation with a local college further extends subject opportunities in the sixth form. Pupils take between eight and ten GCSEs and most study three subjects at A level. Sixth-form pupils are encouraged to take the Extended Project Qualification.
- 3.11 In ICT, coding and programming are introduced in Reception, as is French, while Latin and Mandarin teaching begins in Year 6. In the senior school, two modern foreign languages are offered; in Year 7, pupils continue to study both Mandarin and Latin before choosing one to continue. Extension activities provided currently include Italian and Russian clubs. A fluid system of grouping pupils helps to ensure that their confidence grows and their progress is supported. Setting by prior attainment in science starts in Year 8 and separate sciences are taught from Year 9. Pupils may move between sets in English and mathematics at any point according to their needs in Years 5 and 6, and in mathematics in Years 7 to 9. Provision for ICT has improved since the previous inspection, with the creation of a virtual learning environment (VLE) and ICT skills now integrated within each subject area.
- 3.12 Thinking skills and philosophy are introduced in the junior school, continuing in the senior school with the 'Sophia' programme for Years 7 to 11 and the sixth-form enrichment programme. There are well-constructed programmes for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE). These prepare pupils successfully for the responsibilities of adult life in modern Britain and ensure that any discussion of opposing political views is balanced. The PSHEE programmes also include

careers guidance for senior school pupils. This is further supported by an annual careers fair and encouragement of pupils to undertake work experience.

- 3.13 The curriculum is further enhanced by subject-specific trips and visits. Children in the EYFS enjoy visits from “People who help us” in the local community. Local authors visited the junior school to encourage pupils’ involvement in a creative writing competition organised by the trust. In the senior school an academic fortnight draws on visits from external speakers, including some from universities, to broaden the pupils’ experiences and thinking. Trips include a junior school visit to a nearby Roman palace, and challenging destinations for senior pupils’ residential trips are as far afield as Iceland, China and Morocco.
- 3.14 A wealth of extra-curricular opportunity is provided, with sporting, creative and academic activities available so that there is something to capture the interest of every pupil. New options are added in response to pupils’ suggestions. Opportunities for involvement in community service projects and charitable events further enhance the educational experience offered by the school.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.16 Teaching is highly effective in supporting the aims of the school to encourage girls to be committed to academic excellence, creative and independent, and to develop their own strengths within a caring and friendly environment. It has improved since the previous inspection.
- 3.17 Lessons are almost always very well planned and designed to meet the needs of all pupils, including those with SEND or EAL, and those identified as being more able or having particular abilities. Assessment information, more readily available than at the time of the previous inspection, is used well to support learning. The pupils are confident that they know what they need to do to improve and they appreciate individual feedback from their teachers, although the quality of some marking is inconsistent. A few pupils said in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire that they do not think their homework helps their learning. Inspectors judged that the homework tasks set are useful and appropriate.
- 3.18 Teachers are well qualified and have high levels of subject knowledge. Lessons proceed at a swift pace, with a variety of activities and tasks to stimulate both co-operative and individual learning. Clear and purposeful questioning by teachers enables assessment of the pupils’ understanding of a topic, and challenges them to think independently and to engage with subject-specific vocabulary. Pupils in the junior school discussing descriptive poetry were encouraged to use correct literary terminology, extending beyond simile and metaphor to include oxymoron and onomatopoeia. In senior school religious education classes, teaching ensured that pupils expressed their ideas using correct philosophical and theological vocabulary. Some teaching consciously encourages pupils to take intellectual risks but this is not consistent practice. Occasionally, lessons are managed too closely by the teacher, reducing opportunities for pupils to think for themselves.
- 3.19 Resources are generally used well. Eggs being incubated in the EYFS classroom provided an additional stimulus for children to think about growth, but their interest is not fully harnessed or developed with related activities and resources in the classroom or in the outside play area. Vibrant displays in corridors and classrooms in both the junior and senior schools encourage and inspire pupils. The use of ICT in

teaching has improved since the previous inspection. The VLE is used well to provide learning materials produced by teachers and email support for pupils.

- 3.20 Those with SEND or EAL are well supported through a range of activities, and effective provision is made for any pupils with a statement of special educational needs. For example, photographs of the school displayed in the Nursery classroom help children with limited English understand where to go and what is expected. While most teaching meets the needs of the range of pupils, in a small number of cases at all levels of the school, it does not always challenge those who are most able sufficiently well. This is especially so in the EYFS. Careful questioning and sorting of groups for different activities help to support the progress of pupils of all ability levels in senior school lessons. In some subjects, opportunities for independent research into topics that particularly interest individuals help to extend the learning of more able pupils.
- 3.21 Teaching is very effective in promoting tolerance, respect and non-partisan awareness of political issues. Junior school pupils have learnt to be sensitive to disabilities, for example, including mental health. Mock elections in the senior school required pupils to become advocates for their own created political parties, replicating real procedures and discussing current issues such as expenditure on public services. Pupils therefore gained an appreciation of the election process, including voting rights.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school takes active steps to support the personal development of the pupils, in accordance with its aims. Pupils throughout the school are well-balanced, thoughtful individuals with values that extend well beyond the material. Children in the EYFS are friendly, confident and happy to talk with visitors. Older pupils take quiet pride in their personal achievements, such as learning to play a musical instrument, and they are quick to praise others' successes. Junior school pupils speak and perform to peers and parents with assurance. Senior pupils are equally confident in expressing their views and questioning issues of philosophical significance. Discussions on matters such as the fundamental nature of God demonstrate their mature willingness to debate complex issues of faith. Their music making demonstrates sensitivity and their artwork shows a willingness to challenge stereotypes; both demonstrate the pupils' inherent awareness of aesthetic beauty.
- 4.3 The pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong. Careful questioning in the EYFS ensures that good behaviour is maintained, and the children consider the consequences of misbehaviour, learning to take responsibility for their actions. Junior school pupils have a broad understanding of the working of the legal processes within the country. Older pupils speak out firmly against discrimination in any guise. Senior pupils engage thoughtfully in considering ethical issues, such as the morality of capital punishment for murder. Throughout the school pupils are invariably kind and sensitive to the feelings and needs of others; frequently they described the school to inspectors as a caring family. Their commitment to creating a supportive, well-ordered and self-regulating community is reflected in the codes of conduct they created. Behaviour is almost invariably excellent, self-disciplined and courteous, a view unanimously supported by parents in their questionnaire responses.
- 4.4 The pupils develop a strong sense of social responsibility. Through careful discussion about their own and their friends' feelings, the children in the EYFS develop the ability to see another's point of view and learn to take turns and share. Older pupils show a lively awareness of issues of equality, and demonstrate respect for all and awareness of the challenges being faced by those with different needs. Participation in mock elections demonstrated senior pupils' understanding of the political process and of the responsibilities of those in government. Junior and senior school pupils alike eagerly apply for responsibility posts within the school. They take pride in their roles as prefects, school councillors or peer mentors. Pupils of all ages raise funds for various local good causes, such as a food bank and a mental health charity. Pupils also enthusiastically initiate activities in support of national and international causes, often choosing those related to children, education or women's issues.
- 4.5 Pupils show an excellent awareness of cultural traditions, including those of Western culture. They enjoy the music of many genres, ranging from opera to contemporary musicals, from Irish folk songs to Japanese music. They develop a firm understanding of their own and other faiths; junior school pupils understood the importance to Muslims of the ritual of washing before praying, and older girls spoke respectfully of others' rights to different beliefs and religious practices. Pupils

understand the freedoms and responsibilities that are part of being British, contrasting this with those with an agenda contrary to the rule of British law.

- 4.6 As they move up through the school, pupils show a growing willingness to make suggestions and take responsibility. Year 13 pupils say that they are genuinely sad to be leaving and will miss the school. They comment, however, that thanks to the school's encouragement they have grown into assured, empathic and strong-minded young women, and feel well equipped to face future challenges with confidence.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Very effective pastoral structures and close lines of communication ensure that pupils throughout feel known and supported at all stages of their school lives. In questionnaire responses, parents expressed total confidence in the school's care of their children. The school succeeds in its aim of helping pupils to learn to express their opinions, respect others and grow in confidence.
- 4.9 Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are excellent. Mutual respect and a warm, family atmosphere are key features of the school. The children in the EYFS enjoy each other's company; they trust their teachers and readily turn to them for help. Similarly, junior school pupils have excellent relationships with their classmates and teachers. In the senior school, pastoral care measures includes a successful mentoring system, peer supporters and 'supportive friends' training, in addition to a staff 'open door' policy. These all foster supportive relationships and help pupils to settle quickly on joining the school. Pupils say that there is always someone to turn to for support.
- 4.10 The school is highly effective in promoting good behaviour. A comprehensive anti-bullying policy includes clear guidelines for countering cyber bullying. Pupils are clear that bullying is not a concern, and are confident that if it did occur it would be dealt with swiftly and sensitively. The rare occurrences of unacceptable behaviour are recorded and appropriate actions taken. In their questionnaire responses, a few pupils felt that teachers are not always fair in giving rewards and sanctions. Inspectors found no evidence to support this. The school's amendment of its awards process demonstrates its commitment to being fair to all its pupils.
- 4.11 Pupils are aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle and benefit from many opportunities for exercise. Children in the EYFS take responsibility for their personal hygiene and enjoy their mealtimes. Junior school pupils' understanding of good eating habits was demonstrated in a lively song on food groups in an assembly. The school has a suitable accessibility plan to provide for those with SEND.
- 4.12 In questionnaire responses, a few pupils said that their opinions are not valued by the school. No evidence was found to support this. Inspectors found that pupils throughout the school are actively encouraged to make their views known, for example in school councils, food forums and group meetings. Change is brought about as a result, such as alterations to the menu, the provision of a Year 11 common room and greater transparency in the issuing of awards.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The school has an excellent understanding of its safeguarding responsibilities so that all the required policies are in place, implemented and regularly reviewed. Training for all staff is carried out at the required intervals and levels, and good links are maintained with local agencies. The welfare of children in the EYFS is given the highest priority so that the children feel safe and cared for by their teachers. Welfare matters raised concerning pupils at any stage are sensitively and effectively managed by the school. The school demonstrates an excellent awareness of pupils' personal circumstances and how these may affect their well-being. Minor concerns raised by staff or pupils are carefully noted and monitored to ensure alertness to any potential patterns.
- 4.15 Measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are strong. Equipment is tested regularly and evacuation drills carried out at least termly. Thorough risk assessments for activities on or off school premises are undertaken. Health and safety measures are extremely thorough, with any concerns identified receiving immediate attention. General site maintenance is excellent and safe walking areas are clearly marked in areas where traffic enters. Appropriate safety procedures and first-aid kits are in place for all areas with increased risk levels, including science laboratories and design and technology workshops. The needs of pupils with SEND, including any with a statement of special educational needs, are carefully considered and appropriate extra support put in place.
- 4.16 The current medical room in the junior school is adequate. If necessary, junior pupils are brought to the well-equipped medical room in the senior school. Every incident requiring medical attention is recorded and parents alerted as appropriate.
- 4.17 Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governance is provided by the Council of the GDST, with the school governing board providing local support and challenge. Governors bring an exceptional range of expertise to their support of the school and provide highly effective oversight of its progress in meeting its stated aims. The trust and local governors have a clear understanding of their roles and work closely together with the head and SLT to ensure that the school maintains high standards in its academic and pastoral provision. Finances are carefully managed by the trust to ensure appropriate investment in staff, premises and learning resources. The local board contributes to the strategic plan and to the allocation of the budget devolved to the school.
- 5.3 Those responsible for governance have a very accurate insight into the working of all sections of the school, from the EYFS to the sixth form. This enables them to provide suitable challenge and support. Regular school audits, detailed analyses of pupil outcomes, reports, presentations and discussions are used to monitor and evaluate standards and to help forward planning. Governors are conscious of wider matters that might affect schools, for example the issue of radicalisation. This has resulted in the school identifying potential risk factors in order to take appropriate steps.
- 5.4 The two-tier governance is highly effective in ensuring that all statutory requirements are fully met, with particular emphasis on child protection, welfare, health and safety. The trust carries out the required annual audit of safeguarding arrangements rigorously, ensuring that policies and procedures are up to date and effective. Local governors are trained in this area and ensure that they are kept aware of any safeguarding matters affecting the school or its pupils.

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 Strong leadership and a clear vision created by senior leaders and the trust are evident in the school's tangible sense of purpose and considerable effectiveness in meeting its aims. The school's leadership is particularly successful in promoting a culture of high achievement, commitment to the development of pupils' various talents and their overall excellent personal development. Leadership has established a culture of genuine concern for every pupil; pupils' progress and well-being are paramount. The school has a clear mission statement, developed in conjunction with the pupils, and the impact of its ambitious goals is visible throughout.
- 5.7 Each section of the school has an extended senior leadership team and the most senior leaders of both sections come together into a combined SLT that meets weekly. In addition, a senior management team in the senior school brings together senior leaders, heads of department and staff volunteers. This open, inclusive approach inspires staff to adopt a whole-hearted commitment to the highest standards in order to meet the academic and pastoral needs of the pupils. It also

provides considerable support to staff. All leaders are aware of the needs of those for whom they have responsibility and take these into account when making decisions.

- 5.8 The SLTs convene regularly; each meeting has a defined focus, in addition to dealing with strategic and day-to-day issues. This ensures that all aspects of the school are scrutinised and helps support those who have specific responsibilities. Senior leaders are very aware of what happens in the classroom and around the school, and are constantly assessing the school's provision for the pupils. They manage specific-subject leaders and conduct small-scale inspections, support strategic planning and evaluate the success of initiatives. The leadership of the EYFS is currently in a process of transition, with a new structure intended to be set in place in the second half of the summer term.
- 5.9 A well-organised approach to strategic planning requires all those with managerial responsibilities to evaluate their work and prioritise future actions. This results in challenging and realistic development targets. A supervisory structure has been devised to enable EYFS staff to identify any professional concerns and be coached to improve their effectiveness, although its full implementation has been delayed until this new system is wholly in place. At present, staff in the EYFS do not always undertake sufficiently rigorous self-evaluation. Junior and senior academic departments produce development plans that are detailed and ambitious. The resulting targets, regularly reviewed both by the senior leadership and by the trust, are well known by staff, who share a commitment to implement them successfully.
- 5.10 The school recruits well-qualified and able staff. The suitability of all staff and governors to work in schools is carefully checked and a comprehensive induction programme for new staff includes thorough safeguarding training. All staff receive regular and relevant training for their roles in safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. An effective staff review system supports identification of the training needs of staff throughout the school. There is also a programme of peer observation and professional discussion. Lesson observation carried out by senior and middle leaders contributes to the review process, each department producing a written quality assurance review. Systems are in place for monitoring the quality of marking, however they are not uniformly effective. Assessment data is used well to track pupils' progress and this ensures swift intervention when potential under-achievement is identified. Heads of year and the head of learning support meet regularly to review the well-being and progress of pupils. This contributes further to the school's excellent pastoral care. Since the previous inspection, stronger links between the senior and junior schools have been established, improving the continuity of education as pupils progress through the school.
- 5.11 There is strong, consultative and caring leadership throughout the school and high levels of respect are evident throughout the school community. Leadership ensures that the values of tolerance and respect for the rule of law in a democracy are strongly promoted. Both the senior and middle leadership ensure that the school is well run and has a calm, purposeful and vibrant atmosphere. Policies and procedures are well known and implemented by staff. Resources are deployed effectively and pupils are benefiting from the steady investment in the facilities made possible by careful financial management.
- 5.12 The quality of links with parents is excellent. Responses from parents of pupils at every level of the school show an extremely high level of satisfaction with all that the school provides, particularly the care shown for pupils, the curriculum and extra-

curricular provision, the high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and the leadership and management of the school. Leadership and management have improved since the previous inspection.

- 5.13 The school maintains an extremely constructive relationship with parents and deals swiftly with any concern raised. Its formal complaints policy meets requirements. The school makes significant efforts to seek and respond to the views of parents, utilising its own and commercially produced questionnaires. Parents and grandparents are welcomed into the school, for example by attending junior assemblies and helping pupils to emulate lawyers in a trial role play. Parents of older pupils also contribute to their children's school life, sharing insights into a range of careers and achievements, including the film industry.
- 5.14 Parents of current and prospective pupils are easily able to access the required information about the school and its policies from the school's website, and email contact with staff is straightforward. Informative weekly newsletters and a head's "blog" share school news and events. A computerised system is used effectively to send out messages to specific groups about any unexpected changes in arrangements. Informative parents' workshops and booklets are also provided, for example for parents of younger children on how to support their children's learning in mathematics and phonics, and for parents of older pupils on issues of e-safety.
- 5.15 Regular helpful reports providing an excellent, clear summary of pupils' progress, attainment and targets are sent from the EYFS onwards. Regular parents' meetings with staff and informal conversations provide parents with further insights into their children's progress and development. The school welcomes parents to discuss any matters of concern at any time.
- 5.16 The Parents' Association supports the school by organising social events, such as a Christmas shopping evening, film evenings, and Christmas and May fayres. These all contribute to a positive and supportive relationship between home and school which immensely benefits the pupils and the school as a whole.

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