



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**CASTERTON, SEDBERGH PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

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## Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School

Full Name of School	<b>Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>909/6005</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>1080672</b>		
Address	<b>Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School Carnforth Lancashire LA6 2SG United Kingdom</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01524 279 204</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01524 279 208</b>		
Email Address	<b>hmpa@sedberghprep.org</b>		
Head	<b>Mr Scott Carnochan</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Hugh Blair</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>158</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (82 boys; 76 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>13</b>	5-13: <b>145</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>110</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>48</b>	
	Full:	<b>22</b>	Weekly: <b>26</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Helen Dootson</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection Dates	<b>03 Dec 2013 to 06 Dec 2013</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection of Sedbergh Junior School was in October 2010.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the 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 boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Penny Horsman	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Alison Edwards	Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, IAPS school)
Miss Caroline Froud	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Jonathan Meadmore	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Eileen Grimes	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Miss Jacqueline Scotney	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School is a co-educational day and boarding school for boys and girls between the ages of 3 and 13 years. It is located in the village of Casterton in the Lune Valley. It opened in September 2013 following the merger of Sedbergh School and Casterton School and is now based in the original Casterton buildings. The head of this new school was previously the head of Sedbergh School. The school is administered by the governors of Sedbergh School.
- 1.2 The school aims to foster the talents and nurture the growth of its pupils through a broad, balanced, challenging and exciting curriculum and, in doing so, create an environment whereby each child is provided with every opportunity to fulfil his or her potential. It believes that emotional and social well-being, self-esteem, happiness and confidence are of prime importance and are in themselves inextricably linked to academic progress.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, 158 pupils, 82 boys and 76 girls, were on roll. This included 13 children, three boys and ten girls in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children under the age of five. Forty-eight pupils are boarders; 22 of them board full-time and 26 board on a weekly basis. In addition, 20 pupils take advantage of the arrangements for flexi-boarding. The school has identified 16 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). All of these pupils receive specialist help. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Five pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and four of these receive additional help. The majority of pupils come from families who live within a two-hour drive of the school and a tiny minority come from families where parents are overseas. Most pupils are from white, British backgrounds with a tiny minority representing a range of other faiths and cultures. The ability profile of the school is slightly above the national average with variations between and within cohorts.
- 1.4 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 Casterton, Sedbergh Preparatory School successfully fulfils its aims to foster the talents and nurture the growth of its pupils. Pupils of all ages, whether they are day pupils or boarders, are well educated, enjoy school and achieve well, making good progress. They have a sense of their own self-worth which is encouraged by the celebration of individual talents, progress and behaviour. All staff are committed to the care and well-being of the pupils in their charge. In the EYFS, teachers plan activities which engage the pupils and enable them to develop their skills. Teaching is good overall. Pupils' exemplary behaviour and positive attitudes to learning also contribute to their success and good achievement. All pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, flourish in a secure and happy community. Sport, music and drama, together with a range of visits, an excellent activities programme and the good curriculum, enhance the pupils' learning and development.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is outstanding throughout the school, including in the EYFS, as a direct result of the excellent pastoral care which they receive. Pupils who board have a very positive experience and are very well supported by the excellent house staff. Overseas boarders are fully integrated into the life of the school community. Throughout the school, the friendly relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are a particularly strong feature. Pupils develop into confident, mature young people who are thoroughly prepared for the next stage of their education. The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are excellent.
- 2.3 The good leadership and management, together with the enthusiastic staff, ensure that the ethos and values of the school are successfully maintained. The newly formed leadership of the EYFS is engaged in a review of the policies and practices of the setting, some of which are in their infancy. Parents' replies to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicated that a very large majority are positive about the education provided and the high standard of care. The school's leaders have ensured that procedures have been devised for the monitoring of teaching and the sharing of best practice within the school although this is not yet fully developed. Arrangements for the monitoring of academic policies and procedures such as those for the most able pupils have been written but implementation has been over a short time frame. Senior staff are not given sufficient time to fulfil their responsibilities in these areas. Governance is excellent. Governors fulfil their legal obligations with regard to safeguarding and welfare, health and safety and, because of regular, often unannounced, visits have excellent insight into the daily lives of the pupils and staff.



## **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. Extend monitoring to ensure that all teaching reaches the standard of the best within the school and provides for all pupils' needs, especially the most able.
  2. Develop further the arrangements for monitoring the implementation of academic policies and procedures throughout the school.
  3. Ensure that all staff have sufficient capacity to undertake necessary preparation, planning and assessment responsibilities.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' learning and achievements is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated and successful in their learning across the curriculum and in their activities. In lessons and in their written work they show good understanding. The school successfully fulfils its aim to foster pupils' talents and nurture their growth. In the EYFS pupils make good progress in relation to their starting points. Assessment data indicates that the majority of EYFS children are working at least at the expected levels by the end of Reception. Throughout the school, pupils listen well to each other. They speak and read with confidence from an early age and often engage in discussion with their teachers, which enhances their learning. Reception children demonstrate a growing knowledge of phonics and can use this knowledge to help their spelling. All children in the EYFS develop a love of books and listen intently at story time. Throughout the school pupils are articulate and confident when speaking with adults. Younger pupils and the EYFS children performed their Christmas plays at a high standard, to the delight of parents and friends.
- 3.3 Pupils acquire good mathematical skills and are able to use these to good effect in other subjects; for example, older pupils were able to use line graphs to illustrate results in science. In the EYFS, children develop their confidence in manipulating money when shopping in the role-play shop. Higher up the school, information and communication technology (ICT) skills are developed well in the discrete lessons and the use of ICT for research or independent learning is beginning, although its use across the curriculum is not yet fully developed. Logical thought is successfully developed, for example when older pupils discussed in history the reasons for the location of Norman castles. Pupils' physical skills develop well in the numerous opportunities for sport and recreational activity which abound both within and outside the curriculum. EYFS children enjoy using their developing physical skills riding a variety of wheeled vehicles from bicycles to wheelbarrows. School teams have entered and gained success in local, regional and national competitions in a number of sports including rugby, netball and running. Boarders are afforded many opportunities for physical development after school and at weekends. Well-developed creative skills are evident in pupils' art work, and around the school attractive and interesting displays demonstrate the use of a wide variety of media. Many of the pupils learn musical instruments and the success rate in individual examinations is good. Numerous opportunities are provided for musical talent to develop, for example in the junior and chamber choirs, and ensembles such as the drum group.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. This includes pupils with SEND or EAL who are given help by the specialist staff in the learning support department. Evidence of good and sometimes rapid improvement in their writing was seen in their books and in conversations with them. The most able pupils are provided with some opportunities which challenge them by individual teachers. A policy for providing for the most able has been developed but is yet to be used consistently across the school. Inspection evidence agrees with the small minority of parents who felt, in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, that the

most able were not always challenged appropriately. As a result of scrutiny of pupils' work, lesson observations and conversations with pupils during the inspection, no evidence was found to agree with a few parents who felt that their children did not make progress. When they leave the school, almost all pupils transfer successfully to the senior school, some with scholarships, with a small minority gaining places at other independent schools.

- 3.5 Pupils have an excellent attitude to their work. They take pride both in their own achievements and those of others, demonstrating a thorough enjoyment of the tasks set. When they are given the opportunity they work well together and generally sustain high levels of concentration in their lessons.

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

- 3.6 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.7 The curriculum is broad and balanced, covers all of the required areas of learning and provides well for the pupils' intellectual, creative and physical development. The EYFS setting makes good provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. Staff plan a range of interesting activities which cover the required educational programmes. From Year 1 upwards, specialist teaching in French, art, drama, music and physical education (PE), contributes effectively to the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. The opportunity to learn Spanish and Latin in the two final years enhances the pupils' linguistic skills. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is well-planned and relevant, and includes support for examination preparation and study skills. Pupils are prepared for Common Entrance and scholarship examinations, and also the standards required for transferring to maintained schools at an earlier age. The pupils' aesthetic development is enriched by opportunities in music, art and drama and they are encouraged to participate in choirs, orchestras and regular school productions. Many opportunities are provided for sport at all levels. In the EYFS children are able to access and use a variety of ICT. Their learning of letter formation is enhanced through the use of the interactive whiteboards. Throughout the school, pupils have access to electronic hand-held devices as well as desktop computers which provide opportunities for independent work and research. The introduction this year of the independent curriculum, intended to give pupils more responsibility for their own learning, is currently under review.
- 3.8 Excellent specialist support is provided for pupils with SEND or EAL, and their needs in the classroom are very well met. The use of setting for older pupils generally provides the opportunity for them to work at a level suited to their abilities. Detailed profiling is enabling a more comprehensive knowledge of pupils and their academic development, supporting the school's aims to know and understand the needs of each child and to provide an environment where talents and growth can be nurtured. In some areas, resources are used creatively to extend the learning of higher ability pupils. Overall, however, the needs of these pupils are not consistently addressed, and the school recognises that they do not yet incorporate challenge and extension sufficiently systematically in the planning and teaching of the curriculum.
- 3.9 The curriculum is enhanced by a number of educational visits to local historical and cultural sites such as the local church and a manufacturer of hydro-turbines. Pupils are offered an excellent variety of extra-curricular activities and participate in them with great enthusiasm. The range is comprehensive, including diverse activities such as horse-riding, golf, mountain-biking, drama, cookery and lacrosse, and

participation in choirs and instrumental ensembles. Many of these activities are provided by the school staff, reflecting both their own and the pupils' interests and making full use of the grounds and facilities available. The library is undergoing reorganisation to create appropriate fiction and non-fiction areas suited to the needs of preparatory school pupils.

- 3.10 The school has good links with the local community. The local vicar is the school's independent listener and there is shared use of the local church. Visits from members of the wider community and specialist speakers, such as those from the local wildlife and river trusts, serve to enrich the pupils' experience, knowledge and understanding.

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

- 3.11 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.12 In the EYFS, enthusiastic staff have high expectations and instil a love of learning in the children. A monitoring system and regular assessments inform staff effectively of the next steps in children's learning. Staff have a good understanding of how children learn and use a range of approaches and resources to suit children's needs. As a result, children immerse themselves in both self-chosen activities and those directed by an adult.
- 3.13 Higher up the school, teachers are knowledgeable and share their enthusiasm for their subject with pupils. This enables the school to fulfil its aim to nurture the growth of its pupils. A feature of many lessons is the enjoyment that pupils derive from teaching which is stimulating and encourages them to learn through collaborative work. In these lessons, teachers are reassuring and give positive praise which enables pupils to make good progress. Effective questioning techniques and self-assessment enable pupils to achieve well. The content is taught at an appropriate pace and challenges pupils' thinking through a variety of methods. On the occasions when teaching is less effective, the pace is slower, pupils have fewer chances to extend their critical thinking skills and less opportunity is given for them to take responsibility for their own learning through independent work. This results in less effective progress. Opportunities are provided in some teaching to consolidate pupils' basic skills. However, for some of the more able pupils in the older years, the revision of these basic skills hinders progress and the furthering of knowledge.
- 3.14 Lessons are generally well planned and teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND and EAL through the activities which are set. They plan appropriate tasks and set targets matched to pupils' abilities, including the provision for pupils who have statements of special educational needs which meets the requirements of their statements. Individual support given in class and reinforcement through homework tasks enable these pupils to make at least good, and occasionally excellent, progress. Pupils with EAL are catered for well in and out of class; for example, books in the library are labelled with stickers if they are suited to international pupils.
- 3.15 Teachers use a range of good quality resources effectively to promote learning. They are adept at using ICT and this benefits learning, for example by the use of film clips to enhance understanding of wider world issues. Interactive whiteboards are available in most classrooms and the use of these helps to capture and maintain pupils' interest.

- 3.16 Systems for monitoring pupils' progress are in the early stages of development and review. A programme of standardised tests to assist staff in assessment has been organised. Much of the marking is informative and gives pupils feedback on the positive aspects of their work. It also gives guidance and sets targets to assist pupils in the ways in which they can improve. Pupils appreciate the personalisation of this feedback by teachers. However, the quality of marking is not consistent across the year groups with some marking being too brief and lacking clear information to pupils about ways in which they can improve.

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

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils appreciate the beauty of the countryside around them, they enjoy performing or listening to music and they develop their understanding of the non-material aspects of life. They are confident and are emotionally mature for their age, in line with the aims of the school. They receive their meals with gratitude for those who have prepared them and converse sensibly at meal times. Through religious education (RE) lessons, where many different religions are studied, pupils develop an understanding of different religious faiths and learn that they all enshrine the values of tolerance, care, forgiveness and empathy.
- 4.3 The moral awareness of the pupils is excellent. From the EYFS upwards, they develop a clear sense of what is right and wrong. The EYFS children know that it is not right to exclude others from their play. Throughout the school, staff work hard to ensure that honesty and decency become a way of life. Pupils appreciate what impact the behaviour of one may be having upon others, because of the expectation that pupils should act with the highest integrity. A code of conduct, written by the pupils this year, and the anti-bullying charter, emphasise that they should treat others as they themselves expect to be treated. Older pupils discussed very effectively the moral implications of the book *Private Peaceful* set in World War 1.
- 4.4 Pupils show considerable social awareness and understand that their actions affect others. They learn self-discipline and responsibility through the range of team sports that they play. They can express their views with confidence, demonstrating a high level of self-esteem. In the EYFS children take on positions of responsibility and enjoy taking turns as the milk or water monitor. They use their developing social skills very well and are well prepared to move on to the next stage of their education. Older pupils also accept responsibility readily. The oldest pupils are able to apply to join the 'S' team which gives the senior pupils the opportunity to serve the school in a variety of capacities, such as peer mentor, charity representative, animal assistant or event organiser. Appointments are made to the 'S' team after formal interviews. Pupils expressed great pride in their charity work. Money was raised for an African charity through a sponsored walk over Casterton Fell and, after the recent harvest festival service, produce was sent to three residential homes locally. Pupils appreciate that some children around the world have lives which are less fortunate than theirs and fill shoeboxes with gifts for them.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. They learn about the cultures of different people from around the world in their RE and PSHE lessons. Western culture was celebrated on languages day and in an assembly pupils learnt about and appreciated how various regions of the earth cannot sustain a lifestyle that they would either recognise or find acceptable. Boarding pupils from this country, who live alongside pupils from Russia and Spain, gain an insight into life in these other countries through informal discussions, and the catering staff provide international food, such as a Mexican meals several times each term.
- 4.6 By the time the pupils leave the school they have an excellent standard of personal development. They are confident, articulate and ready for the challenges which lie ahead.

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

- 4.7 Pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 In the EYFS, staff create a calm and nurturing environment, where children enter happily and settle quickly. All staff know the children in their care well, and key persons maintain regular dialogue with families. This sharing of information is invaluable in supporting children's holistic development. Staff place considerable importance on care routines. In the rest of the school, pastoral care makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development and meets the school's aim to foster emotional and social well-being, self-esteem, happiness and confidence. Both parents and pupils are very appreciative of the care provided, as indicated in the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires and as seen during the inspection. Teachers know their pupils well and provide excellent support through their care of individuals. Pupils will turn to them for help and advice, and know they will be supported in any areas which they may find difficult. Good systems monitor any pupil concerns, which are discussed with staff, recorded and reviewed regularly. Relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves, are excellent and are integral to the very high quality of care provided.
- 4.9 Pupils are aware, from an early age, of the importance of healthy eating, which is promoted well by the school. In the EYFS, children make healthy choices at snack time, choosing from a variety of different fruits, and clearly enjoy their meals. The food provided for all pupils is healthy and nutritious, and pupils speak positively about the food available. Pupils' opinions on food are sought through the food committee which meets with the chef to discuss suggestions for meals and snacks. An excellent range of physical activities, within and beyond the curriculum, provides opportunities for regular exercise and the development of a healthy lifestyle. Throughout the school healthy living is promoted through PE lessons, PSHE and topics such as 'all about me' in the EYFS. The school has an appropriate plan to improve access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.10 The school is effective in promoting good behaviour. A clear reward structure operates to promote success in all areas, and this system is well understood and greatly valued by pupils. Pupils also recognise the fairness and value of sanctions used. Rigorous anti-bullying procedures exist and pupils feel that any bullying, although rare, is dealt with quickly and effectively by staff. In interviews and discussions with pupils, no evidence could be found to suggest that bullying is not dealt with swiftly and appropriately should it occur. Meticulous records are kept of any incidents and the action taken. The recently re-instated school council provides a forum for the opinions of pupils to be heard, as does the suggestion box situated at the heart of the school which is emptied regularly and the necessary action is taken.

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

- 4.11 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.12 Safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough throughout the school, including in the EYFS, and support the school's aims to provide an environment where pupils' happiness, social well-being, self-esteem and confidence are of prime importance. The school regards safeguarding and pupils' safety as a high priority. All staff are trained at the appropriate level in child protection. Close and effective relationships are maintained with local children's services. In the EYFS, children's welfare is extremely well promoted with all staff ensuring the children's safety at all times.

- 4.13 The arrangements for welfare, health and safety contribute extremely well to the personal development of pupils. A comprehensive review of all aspects of health and safety was undertaken prior to the school moving into its current premises earlier this year. All necessary measures have been taken throughout the school in order to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Fire practices take place at regular intervals and appropriate records are kept. Staff receive clear guidelines on fire safety as part of their induction training and are given regular updates. Electrical testing is regular and is recorded appropriately. Thorough risk assessments for all areas of the school are reviewed and updated regularly.
- 4.14 Pupils who are ill or injured are cared for in the well-equipped medical facilities and appropriate records are kept. All staff have received training in first aid with EYFS staff trained in paediatric first aid. A health and safety committee meets termly and carries out its role effectively, keeping detailed minutes of all meetings.
- 4.15 The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored.

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

- 4.16 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.17 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. The high quality of boarding promotes and develops the boarder's personal development, in line with the aims of the school. Boarders are confident and self-reliant. They articulate with enthusiasm the pride they have in their boarding houses which they refer to as 'home'. A strength of boarding is the exceptionally strong relationships which have been established between boarders, house staff and academic staff. Boarders value these relationships from the first day, with formal and informal support networks existing throughout the boarding community. The happy relaxed atmosphere in the house is evident and all boarders are cared for equally according to their needs. Behaviour throughout boarding is exceptionally good. Boarders have a clear understanding and respect for the house rules, and they know what is expected of them. Those spoken to felt that sanctions within the house were completely fair. They have various opportunities to express their views and opinions through the regular house meetings organised by the staff and through the many informal daily meetings and discussions. From these meetings, suggestions have been taken forward and are being implemented, for example the redecoration of the girls' common room and the installation of satellite television.
- 4.18 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders have a detailed induction procedure which is completed on the first day and a buddy system ensures that new boarders always have someone to whom they can turn. Older boarders enjoy this responsibility; it provides an opportunity to establish relationships and fosters a whole house ethos. Boarding staff are aware of the individual needs of the boarders, and, within the boarding accommodation, arrangements are made for boarders who have vision limitations when completing emergency evacuations during dark hours. This supports pupils' independent living and enhances the boarding experience. Arrangements ensure that boarders are able to stay healthy; they have access to medical teams throughout the day and all can access adults at night if they are ill. Healthy meals are provided within the dining room three times a day. Boarders sit together and are encouraged to use this time socially. In addition, they are able to access a wide range of fruit, snacks and drinks within the boarding house, with house staff supporting them in making smoothies. Drinks are freely



available; older boarders are able to prepare hot drinks whilst younger boarders have varying degrees of supervision. Boarders state that they are kept safe in the boarding houses and that their possessions are kept safe. The recent installation of lockable drawers has enabled this, following the suggestion from the house forum. Boarding accommodation is furnished to a high standard, with a range of appropriate furniture. Health and safety measures within all areas of the boarding accommodation are at an exceptional standard. Correct policies and procedures exist which ensure that boarders are protected and kept safe at all times. Detailed risk assessments have been written which encompass both the houses and the many outings and activities.

- 4.19 Pupils are able to access a wide range of activities both in the evenings and at weekends. They comment that they are able to make suggestions for outings through the house forums and these are taken forward by the house staff. Weekly and flexi-boarders will often stay at weekends to access these popular activities. Staff in the boarding houses ensure that boarders are in contact with their parents at least every three or four days. They are able to use their own mobile phones and have access to land-lines within the houses. Overseas boarders are able to access the internet, as well as being encouraged to write letters. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a few parents indicated that contact with the house staff is not always easy. Inspection evidence did not suggest that this is currently a difficulty.
- 4.20 Excellent arrangements exist for the welfare and safeguarding of boarders. Recruitment of staff is rigorous and all staff are trained at the appropriate level in safeguarding. All staff records are detailed and the central register of appointments for staff and everyone who has potential access to boarding houses is carefully maintained. At all times there is a good balance of qualified academic and boarding staff on duty. Effective arrangements ensure that staff know the whereabouts of boarders at all times with appropriate arrangements for signing in and out. A detailed anti-bullying policy exists and boarders commented that there have been very few cases of bullying. Boarders are confident that should any instances occur they would be taken seriously and would be resolved quickly and efficiently. They are all aware of whom they are able to contact both within the school and outside should they have any worries. They are supported by an independent listener who is known to the boarders and has an in-depth understanding of his role and responsibility, and how to discharge these duties.
- 4.21 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent and provide committed leadership to the boarding staff. Staff are well-qualified and effective links are maintained between academic and boarding staff to ensure that all necessary information is shared. This helps the school to fulfil its aim to provide for the social and emotional well-being of each pupil and to help them to develop self-esteem and confidence in a secure environment. A friendly and positive atmosphere within boarding is actively promoted. Policies are comprehensive and form the framework within which the house staff operate. Alongside daily, informal contact there are regular meetings, some of which are recorded in writing. House staff meet weekly to discuss pastoral issues and evaluate the impact of boarding on the pupils. The school development plan includes areas for development within boarding.

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

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

- 5.1 Governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The school is strongly supported by the governing body which provides a valuable blend of experience and expertise. New members are recruited with care to preserve a balance. Governors have provided invaluable help during the recent merger of the two schools. They have ensured that the new school provides an effective education in line with the pupils' needs and the school's aims. They exercise prudent financial control and have ensured that the buildings, previously used by a senior girls' school, have been made suitable for a co-educational preparatory school. They have oversight and input into the strategic plan for the development of the school.
- 5.3 Governors are aware of their legal responsibilities and the governing body regularly reviews all policies and procedures including those for safeguarding and safer recruitment. All governors have received training in child protection. They make regular, often unannounced, visits to all sections of the school, including the EYFS where their involvement is effective, and have an excellent insight into the daily lives of the pupils and staff. This enables governors to understand the development of the school and gives them evidence to use when they question and challenge the school's leaders both in their regular meetings and informally. Groups of teaching and support staff are invited to meet governors informally over a meal before their termly meetings.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.5 Parents, staff and pupils respect the way in which this newly formed school is led and appreciate the work which has gone into creating the welcoming and friendly atmosphere which pervades the school. This is a result of the culture of mutual respect, trust and consideration for others. The effective quality of the education offered and the excellent personal qualities of the pupils demonstrate that the school is making good progress towards its aim of fostering the talents and nurturing the growth of the pupils through a broad, balanced and exciting curriculum. Leadership is successful in ensuring that the aim to care for the emotional and social well-being, self-esteem, happiness and confidence of the pupils is met. Academic policies, such as those for assessment, for the most able pupils and for curriculum development have been devised but the systems to monitor and evaluate them are in their early stages. Monitoring of teaching and learning is not fully developed and, at present, staff do not have sufficient time to carry this out.
- 5.6 The school's leaders have ensured that all staff are trained at the correct level in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, and that safer recruitment procedures are followed when new staff or governors are appointed. The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are excellent and are overseen by both the preparatory school's leadership and that of the senior school. Arrangements for staff appraisal are at an early stage of development and opportunities for individual professional development are limited, although some whole-school training has been

arranged. A comprehensive development plan sets out clear targets and timescales for the future improvement of the school.

- 5.7 The leadership of the EYFS is newly formed due to the recent merger of the two schools. The changes mean that systems, such as self-evaluation and departmental development planning, are currently under review. Staff demonstrate a keen desire for continual improvement and hold regular meetings with the EYFS management to discuss issues concerning the well-being and development of the children in their care. The time available to staff in the EYFS to plan, prepare and assess is sometimes limited. Systems to monitor planning and assessment have been developed but implementation is yet to be fully established given the short time frame involved.
- 5.8 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent and enables the school to meet its aim of promoting pupils' social and academic development. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the majority of parents are fully supportive of the school and appreciative of the nurturing environment it creates for their children. A few parents indicated that they could not easily access information about the school and its policies. Parents of current and prospective pupils are now able to access relevant policies and information through the school's website and hard copies of documents are also available. A detailed and informative weekly newsletter gives parents news of the week ahead as well as photographs and information about activities from the previous week, and recognises the achievements of pupils through listing success in curricular as well as extra-curricular activities.
- 5.9 Parents are given feedback about their children's progress and attainment through termly parents' evenings and detailed written reports. These reports highlight pupils' achievements, and targets for future learning are explained. Parents are given the opportunity to respond to these reports and any concerns are disseminated to staff. Well-attended meetings are held to give parents curricular and pastoral information, for example, meetings about Common Entrance, scholarships and cyber-bullying. Inspection evidence did not support the view of a few parents who, in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, indicated that they felt they did not get enough information about their child's progress.
- 5.10 EYFS parents are very positive about the provision at the school. They appreciate that staff care for the children and know them well. They are pleased that their children love coming to school and enjoy being encouraged to play an active part in the children's learning. Regular opportunities are provided for discussion about the children's progress and achievements. Termly progress checks alongside information about their children's development in learning also provide parents with a good knowledge of how well their children are doing.
- 5.11 All families new to the school are contacted by telephone before the start of term by the pupil's form tutor in order to give reassurance about arrangements. These parents are given the opportunity to find out how their child has settled in at an informal meeting within the first few weeks. This also provides them with a chance to meet other new parents and to feel part of the school community. They are invited to a variety of school events which take place regularly throughout the term, for example assemblies, music concerts and fund-raising events. Parents of both boarders and day pupils support these occasions as well as the regular fixtures in the sporting calendar.

- 5.12 The school handles parental concerns with care and it has clear procedures for handling and recording them including an appropriate formal complaints policy. The inspection team scrutinised the comprehensive records kept by the school of parental concerns and found no evidence to support the view expressed in a small number of parent questionnaires that the school does not handle concerns well. Informal concerns receive prompt responses via email, telephone or in person. Parents are able to visit the school and speak to relevant staff members as and when they wish. Parents are contacted regarding behavioural incidents related to their child and are informed of the steps the school is taking in order to move forward.
- 5.13 An active parents' association enriches the home-school partnership. Fund-raising and social events are organised, for example the recent Christmas fair and curry evening were well supported by parents and staff.

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