



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**SHIPLAKE COLLEGE**

## Shiplake College

Full Name of School	<b>Shiplake College</b>
DfE Number	<b>931/6050</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>309651</b>
Address	<b>Shiplake College Henley-on-Thames Oxfordshire RG9 4BW</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0118 940 2455</b>
Fax Number	<b>0118 940 5204</b>
Email Address	<b>info@shiplake.org.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Gregg Davies</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>The Rt Hon Tim Eggar</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>422</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys: 11 to 18 Girls: 16 to 18 (389 boys; 33 girls)</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>269</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>153</b>
	Full: <b>77</b> Weekly: <b>76</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>28 Apr 2015 to 01 May 2015</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations 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.

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.

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

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

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

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

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors, 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

Mr Adrian Underwood	Reporting Inspector
Mr Magnus Cowie	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Lucy Elphinstone	Team Inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Dr Iain Farrell	Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr Julian Thould	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Helen Wainwright	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, The Society of Heads school)
Mrs Sally Cunliffe	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Timothy Bayley	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head of the Senior School, The Society of Heads school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Shiplake College is a day and boarding school for boys from the ages of 11 to 18. Girls are accepted into Years 12 and 13. Situated in 45 acres just south of Henley-on-Thames, the school is built around a nineteenth-century mansion, adjacent to a twelfth-century parish church used for school services. The school was founded in 1959 and is an educational charity. The governors who administer the school are trustees of the charity.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a friendly, supportive and structured environment in which pupils can flourish and are encouraged to realise their full potential, whatever their ability. It seeks to challenge pupils through a wide range of educational opportunities, both within the curriculum and outside it, and to support pupils to achieve a measure of personal success in at least one area of school life. The school strives to give the time, guidance and support to enable every pupil to develop the confidence and self-esteem to lead a full and responsible life in both work and play. It also aims to help pupils to respect the needs of others and exercise tolerance, compassion and humility, to understand the meaning of service and selflessness, and to appreciate the meaning of Christian values.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection in 2010, the school has built a centre for art, music and learning development. This centre also has a study area, an 'e-library' and an area for reflection entitled The Thinking Space. A new building for the Lower School (Years 7 and 8), has been provided and grass sports areas increased.
- 1.4 Of the 422 pupils, 172 are in Years 12 and 13, of whom 33 are girls. Almost two-fifths of pupils live within ten miles of the school, and a very small number are from overseas, with thirteen nationalities represented in the school population. Most pupils are from business or professional families. Boarding accommodation for one hundred and fifty pupils is organised into six houses: five for boys and one for sixth-form girls. All the houses are on the school campus.
- 1.5 The average ability of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is slightly above the national average, with most pupils having ability that is in line with or above the national average. The ability profile of the sixth form is below the national average for pupils in sixth-form education. The school has identified 59 pupils as requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Seven pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Eight pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), five of whom receive support for their English.
- 1.6 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 very successful in meeting its aims throughout all year groups, including the sixth form. The pupils' achievements and learning are excellent. Overall, pupils achieve good results in national examinations and make excellent progress. Pupils are successful in achieving high standards in a wide range of co-curricular activities and their performance in rowing is very strong. Pupils benefit from an excellent curriculum, although encouragement to read for pleasure is limited. The bespoke academic programmes reflect the school's commitment to meeting the needs of individual pupils. Pupils are enthusiastic and committed in their learning, underpinned by excellent teaching and learning support, although not all of the more able pupils are subject to the sufficiently rigorous and demanding questioning of their ideas which are evident in some lessons.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. It is a hallmark of the school that pupils are engaging, are naturally polite and enjoy interacting with adults and each other. Pupils reflect the strength of their spiritual and moral development through activities as diverse as participation in assemblies in the school church and playing by the rules in all their sports. As pupils report, much of the development of their confidence and ability to challenge themselves stems from the excellent pastoral and academic care and support they receive from all staff in the school community. This excellence extends to the arrangements for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The pastoral house structure for boarders and day pupils enables them to mix naturally and to good effect. The quality of boarding and its contribution to boarders' personal development is excellent. Those pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire confirmed that they value the strong community life of the school.
- 2.3 The significant progress of the school since the previous inspection has been supported by excellent governance and leadership and management. The governors have a clear vision for the school's development, and contribute practical support and a high level of challenge to enable this to be realised. Major new buildings in recent years are testament to the governors' investment in the fabric of the school, and they are equally committed to enhancing its academic life. The excellence of leadership and management is apparent at all levels. A strength of the school's leadership and management is their commitment to meeting the needs of each pupil. This is achieved, in part, by the high visibility of senior leaders, so pupils can engage easily with them and discuss any matter. Senior managers also empower middle managers in their roles in departments, pastoral teams and boarding houses so that pupils' needs are met at all levels. Senior leaders' strategic planning is strong, contributing to the many improvements in the school since the previous inspection. The recommendations of the previous inspection have been fully addressed; the monitoring of teaching and learning is well structured, and the library, learning resources and information and communication technology (ICT) contribute significantly to the curriculum. Links with parents are extremely positive.

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

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

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2014.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

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

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Develop a culture of reading for pleasure throughout.
  2. Increase intellectual challenge for the more able pupils in all lessons.



### **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 Pupils receive a high quality of education, consistent with the school's aims to provide a broad education that encourages individuals to achieve their full potential.
- 3.3 Pupils demonstrate depth and breadth in their subject knowledge and have well-crafted learning skills and understanding. In class they are articulate and fluent. They express themselves effectively in their writing and have well-developed reading and listening skills. Pupils exhibit good levels of numeracy and the most able are confident with the manipulation of sophisticated concepts. In a lesson for older pupils, they were able to apply the principles of integration using software to great effect. They have confident ICT skills.
- 3.4 Pupils show strong creativity, performing to a high standard in a wide variety of activities. They perform at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe with their own theatre company, Scruffy Penguin, and contribute to a variety of musical ensembles, including instrumental, jazz, rock and vocal groups. Pupils achieve high levels in art. The displays around the school are arresting and lead to informal discussions amongst pupils. Pupils' physical skills are well developed, with a number performing at regional and national level with particular excellence in rowing, rugby, girls' touch rugby and ballroom dancing. A significant number of pupils develop their physical skills and powers of resilience through participation in the outdoor education programme. Overall, their achievement in co-curricular activities is excellent, and makes a strong contribution to their personal development.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses data from 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Results at GCSE are above the national average for maintained schools. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress in Years 7 to 11 in relation to pupils of similar ability. The A-level results for the same period have been slightly below the national average for maintained schools, indicating that progress in the sixth form is appropriate in relation to pupils of similar ability. However, results for the BTEC, an increasingly significant part of the sixth-form curriculum, with over half of pupils taking at least one BTEC, are high in relation to those for the national average in maintained schools, particularly at the highest grading of Distinction. Almost all pupils in Year 13 gain entry to universities in the UK and Europe, while some move directly to employment with national and multi-national companies.
- 3.6 Progress is excellent. At GCSE, observations of pupils' achievements in class, together with scrutiny of samples of their work and standardised measures of progress, confirmed that good progress is made. At A level, progress is more consistent with the average for pupils of comparable ability in maintained schools, but in the BTEC results, compared with the national average for maintained schools, excellent progress is achieved in relation to the pupils' starting points, a judgement supported by inspection evidence, including the school's own performance data.
- 3.7 Pupils who have SEND or EAL make very good progress. This was observed in all lessons, where attention was always given to their needs. Observation of bespoke learning support lessons and interrogation of the school's data, showing the starting points for these pupils and their public examination results, also confirmed their very

good progress. The more academically able pupils are also well supported through the school's discussion society, Exemplum Docet, with the most able obtaining places at universities which have a highly competitive standard of entry.

- 3.8 Pupils display a very positive attitude to their work. They concentrate well in class, working with purpose and high levels of motivation. They settle quickly to the tasks at hand, respond positively to questions, work effectively in groups and are very supportive of each other. Pupils' files are generally well organised and many are neatly presented, with a good volume of work. Independent learning is strong, particularly through the use of the innovative and popular Thinking Space and the growing use of the e-library. Encouragement to read for pleasure is limited, although pupils in the Lower School actively support the Readathon.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The quality of both the curriculum and co-curricular programmes ensures that the school's aims to allow all pupils to develop self-confidence, achieve a measure of personal success and be challenged inside and outside the classroom are met.
- 3.11 The curriculum has been well developed to ensure that pupils of varying needs and abilities can follow challenging courses. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 study a broad range of subjects and a wide choice of GCSE options is available. In the sixth form, pupils are offered both A-level and BTEC courses, which give them the foundations and qualifications for the next stage of their life. The small classes, subject clinics and individualised timetables support academic needs and progress very well. Pupils confirm that investment in ICT facilities, including the improved wireless network, has improved their use of ICT.
- 3.12 The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and theology and philosophy lessons inform pupils about the wider world and encourage them to discuss contemporary issues. The sixth-form society, the debating society and the current affairs society complement the PSHE programme and are forums where opinions and ideas can be explored. On all issues there is a balanced presentation of views. An effective careers guidance programme allows pupils to focus on all the opportunities available to them following school. It is highly rated by the pupils and they value the support given to them in making career decisions. The planning of the PSHE programme ensures that topics are appropriate for each age group, and pupils are encouraged to voice their opinions on these topics. Across the whole curriculum the school actively promotes fundamental British values.
- 3.13 The excellent support for pupils with SEND or EAL, a statement of special educational needs or an EHC plan is a strength of the curriculum. Pupils with SEND or EAL have a 'strategy', a plan for their support in all lessons, in bespoke learning support or EAL lessons and in their homework. This plan is reviewed regularly and is available to all teachers. The close liaison between the learning development department and subject teachers contributes to the excellent progress for these pupils. Pupils of higher academic ability are supported in many curriculum areas and by dedicated programmes. The Extended Project Qualification gives pupils the opportunity to develop their skills of independent learning and provides additional academic challenge.
- 3.14 Pupils benefit from a full and wide-ranging co-curricular programme in which they develop a range of interests and skills, whether in music, sport, drama, art, climbing

or cookery. Two afternoons each week are set aside for these activities, and pupils' programmes are monitored to ensure that they are not overloaded and that they choose a variety of pursuits. Sports provision for girls has been developed since the previous inspection, with a greater range being offered and an extended fixture list for girls' teams. Good support is provided for elite athletes through a high performance programme. Many pupils are actively involved in the outdoor education curriculum. Facets of the programmes of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award contribute to the challenge of outdoor education.

- 3.15 The wide variety of links with the local community allows pupils to contribute strongly to wider society. They volunteer in local care homes, charity shops and primary schools. The Lower School art club works with the Royal British Legion. Pupils raise funds for local charities, and every other year the whole school completes a 20-mile walk to raise money for good causes of the pupils' choosing. School musical groups support local organisations by giving charity concerts and playing for a wide range of events. The curriculum is further enhanced by many expeditions, both within the UK and overseas, cultural visits to France and Spain, and sports tours to South Africa and Antigua. Pupils reflect their excellent understanding of the needs of others in their involvement in a number of local and international projects, including visiting communities in Africa to offer practical and financial support.

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

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 A large majority of the teaching observed makes a very positive and effective contribution to pupils' progress, and amply fulfils the school's aims to unlock the potential in all pupils, enabling them to become familiar with the skills, knowledge, principles and vocabulary of their subjects. The school has made excellent progress in this area since the previous inspection. Teachers use an open and questioning approach in the classroom and encourage pupils to have high aspirations for their learning. The use of department cluster meetings and the regular focus on the most effective teaching strategies within the school have done much to engender enthusiasm for new approaches to teaching and learning.
- 3.18 Most of the teaching observed showed very good levels of subject knowledge and employed a range of techniques to make learning stimulating and absorbing. Many lessons were marked by a focus on pupils taking charge of their own learning. Lesson planning is detailed and thorough. Lessons reflect this with a brisk pace, clear structure and an exemplary focus on the needs of individual pupils. In their responses to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils expressed the view that homework is not always effective in helping them to learn. No evidence was found to support this view. Pupils confirmed in discussions that the homework sessions in their houses give them access to support, whether from teachers or older pupils. Inspectors found that homework ranges in purpose. Much is based on personal research in preparation for the next lesson. Other tasks include reinforcing ideas developed in class and learning material such as vocabulary. The quality of homework is high and reflects the school's commitment to making this a purposeful activity.
- 3.19 Teachers work very diligently to support their pupils, particularly through their ready availability in revision clinics and through online support, to ensure that the pupils produce their very best work. However, in some cases, particularly in the sixth form, this can limit the scope for independent learning. In some cases, more able pupils

are subject to rigorous and demanding questioning of their ideas and assumptions, observed in some of the best teaching. For example, in sixth-form mathematics, pupils were pushed to their intellectual limits in practice questions, and in psychology, pupils were challenged in a 'pass the baton' exercise to cement their understanding of key terms in psychological research. Not all of the more able pupils receive this level of challenge, however, as they prepare for study in higher education. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and respectful. Teachers work hard to encourage their pupils, balancing sympathetic support with firm expectations.

- 3.20 The quality of marking and assessment is good, with a number of examples of excellence. Most files and books inspected showed effective use of the recently revised assessment policy, with logical departmental variations, and pupils have a secure understanding of their progress. The monitoring of pupil progress is effective, particularly through the recently introduced 'traffic light' system, which has done much to target under-performance in a timely and effective manner.
- 3.21 Teachers know their pupils very well and use a range of strategies to develop the talents of those they teach. This applies equally to pupils with SEND or EAL. Accommodation of different abilities and respect for the views of others are hallmarks of all lessons. Teachers address the needs of these pupils in lessons with carefully tailored approaches to ensure that they benefit from a learning experience of high quality. For those pupils with statements of special educational needs or EHC plans, the teaching strongly meets their requirements. Teachers use high quality resources very effectively. The school has made significant progress in meeting the recommendation of the previous inspection to improve library provision.

## **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' spiritual awareness is excellent. In discussion with pupils they confirmed how much they value the services in the parish church as a focus for reflection and exploration of faith, including considering the traditions of other faiths through visiting speakers. Pupils have strong self-esteem and are confident in their personal values, appreciating the sense of belonging and significance which the small community engenders. They display a heightened sense of self-knowledge through their performances in the challenging activities of the school's outdoor education programme. Of note is the high degree of teamwork, self-discipline and decision making demanded by rowing, in which over a quarter of the school participates. In their appreciation of the beauty of their surroundings and their sense of responsibility for the maintenance of their site, the pupils demonstrate a good understanding of stewardship.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They display a mature awareness of right and wrong, and what constitutes a happy and harmonious community. For example, in discussion with pupils, they appreciated the need for school sanctions for serious wrong doing, confirming a clear understanding of the law of the land. The school actively promotes fundamental British values through assemblies and talks from visitors, such as a serving local magistrate, a prison chaplain and a parole officer, which gives them a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services. Pupils confirm that their moral compass is enhanced by courses in PSHE, such as The World Around Me, which explores local government and the community, and sessions on the rights and responsibilities of the child. The recent visit of all constituency candidates ahead of the general election enhanced pupils' insight into the workings of central government. Pupils' behaviour towards one another is excellent. They listen carefully to each other's views and are supportive of one another.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is excellent. They display a cheerful confidence and ready courtesy to all members of the community, and flourish in the school's nurturing and supportive atmosphere. They welcome visitors, are sensitive to others' needs and show a distinctive composure, conversing confidently yet unassumingly with adults. Pupils enthusiastically take on a wide range of positions of responsibility across many aspects of school life, so they develop their character, confidence and leadership skills. They have many responsibilities in the houses and are active in assemblies. They show a high level of social responsibility in their roles as peer mentors, chapel wardens, and house and school prefects. Pupils support the local community through their voluntary work in charity shops and residential homes of the elderly, as well as mounting drama productions for the local primary school. Relations between older and younger pupils are outstanding. Pupils are very proud of their school and would strongly recommend it to their friends, regardless of their interests or ability levels.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural awareness is excellent. They are strongly aware of different faiths and cultures. Prayers of different faiths are read by pupils in assemblies, and pupils visit centres of faith to enhance their religious awareness. Pupils have a strong sense of equality and respect for all. They understand that discriminating against anyone because of their background or belief is never acceptable. Pupils explore

cultural traditions in theology and philosophy classes, and the whole community enjoys monthly themed meals from cultures around the world. Pupils are conscious of the rich cultural experience around them and speak animatedly, for instance, about the effect of drama and musical performances.

- 4.6 Pupils attain an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave the school. They display a marked growth in self-confidence through many supportive and nurturing opportunities, and in their imaginative and creative paths into higher education and the world of work, demonstrate enterprise and self-awareness.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Staff throughout the school know the pupils extremely well and are fully committed, in accordance with the school's aims, to providing pupils with the individual support required to encourage them to realise their full potential, regardless of their ability. In questionnaire responses, pupils and parents expressed strong appreciation of the care pupils receive from all staff at the school. The pastoral structure is based on the six houses, to which all pupils, whether boarders or day pupils, are attached. Pupils say that teachers help them to learn and their tutors care for them as individuals, enabling them to keep on top of all their commitments.
- 4.9 Relationships, founded on mutual respect, are excellent across the entire school community. The school is highly successful in maintaining a friendly atmosphere, which enables pupils and staff to enjoy their busy working lives. The conduct of the pupils is exemplary, reflecting the commitment of staff, the effectiveness of the pastoral management structures and the clarity of behavioural expectations. Throughout the school a good balance of rewards and sanctions promotes positive behaviour. The concern registered by a small minority of pupils in response to the questionnaire that teachers are unfair in giving sanctions is not supported by inspection evidence. Pupils in discussion confirmed that teachers are fair. Inspectors found that the recording of all behaviour, both positive and negative, is comprehensive, and for the current academic year, slips for excellence significantly outnumber those for misbehaviour, confirming the school's commitment to reward and praise. The school is effective in minimising harassment and bullying, with pupils believing instances are rare and those that do occur are dealt with swiftly and fairly.
- 4.10 Pupils understand the importance of healthy eating and keeping fit. This is reflected in their enjoyment of well-balanced and nutritious meals and their enthusiastic involvement in a broad range of sporting options. An appropriate plan is in place to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.11 In their questionnaire responses, a minority of pupils said that they do not feel the school listens to concerns. Considerable evidence collected throughout the inspection confirms that the school has well-established communication channels to enable its leadership to listen to the views of the pupils. This includes house councils, year group forums and the school council. School leadership either acts on issues raised by the pupils or provides them with reasons why actions cannot be taken at that time.

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

- 4.12 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.13 The systems to safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety are well developed, robust and regularly reviewed. Risk management is a priority, particularly as the school is committed to challenging pupils through outdoor activities. These challenges and the care with which they are managed were observed during rowing and canoeing sessions. Fire prevention is a priority. Fire drills are held regularly and appropriately recorded, and all staff are trained in the use of fire equipment. Security is unobtrusive but carefully monitored and the pupils reported that they feel safe in the school. All health and safety issues are monitored by the health and safety committee.
- 4.14 Registration of pupils is appropriately managed and recorded, and the school has effective procedures for following up promptly any unexpected absences. The admission register contains all the required entries, and is backed up and stored correctly. The medical centre supports all pupils who are ill or injured. The first-aid policy is effective in practice and includes good provision for specialist areas such as challenging sports and expeditions. The provision for pupils with SEND is excellent.
- 4.15 The school's arrangements for safeguarding, including its policy and procedures, are implemented successfully. All members of staff are regularly trained in child protection; the higher level training of the school's designated safeguarding leads is up to date and safe recruitment protocols are undertaken. Appropriate records are kept and are fully detailed, including recording links with external agencies as necessary.

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

- 4.16 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.17 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The school works extremely hard to nurture, encourage, challenge and support every boarder in its care, in line with its stated boarding principles and practice. Boarders are confident, courteous and self-reliant, demonstrating a high level of maturity. Their personal development is clearly promoted by their boarding experience, and they are proud of their school and all the opportunities available. In response to the questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of boarders confirmed how much they enjoy their boarding lives. A small minority of pupils commented that there are few chances to take on responsibilities. Inspectors found that a wide range of opportunities exist that help prepare boarders for adult life. As well as other pupil leadership roles in the school and houses, the chapel wardens play a significant role by listening to boarders in their regular visits to the houses. Pupils from overseas are well integrated, individuality is respected and different cultures are celebrated. Those with SEND or EAL are extremely well supported by staff who offer help outside teaching hours. In addition to the school councils, boarders can contribute their views through suggestion boxes and house councils. Feedback to boarders is prompt and minutes are prominently displayed. In response to boarders' suggestions, they have benefited from changes to the daily menus and a more relaxed Wednesday. Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are excellent, built on mutual trust. Boarders are well known by their house teams, with every attention given to meeting and promoting their individual needs.

- 4.18 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders are confident in knowing there is someone to whom they can turn for help. In addition to adults, specially trained peer supporters have responsibilities for younger age groups and make valuable contributions to pastoral care. Boarding staff at all levels show interest and pride in boarders' achievements and are keen to support them in furthering and widening their skills. A well-structured induction and mentoring programme for new boarders helps them to settle in quickly. In the six boarding houses, boarders are supported by an integrated pastoral team. Housemasters and a housemistress, resident and visiting tutors, matrons, the chaplain, the medical team, the school counsellor and the independent listeners all work together in the best interests of boarders.
- 4.19 Senior houses provide a mixture of accommodation, and individual and shared rooms are allocated depending on age. Dedicated sixth-form houses offer an element of independence, which eases the transition to life after school. The standard of boarding accommodation varies from house to house, but all houses are clean, comfortable and well maintained. The rolling refurbishment programme of improvements is evident in the updated bedrooms and social areas. Common rooms are well furnished and equipped with a range of facilities, including televisions and games consoles. The daily laundry service is efficient and senior boarders learn to do their own laundry. All boarders have a suitable lockable space. Access to houses is secure and only for those who are authorised.
- 4.20 The new activities initiative on two afternoons each week provides a wide range of opportunities for the development of pupils' interests, such as a rock choir, an image editing software club, the CCF and canoeing. In their responses to the questionnaire, a small minority of boarders stated that there are insufficient weekend activities. In discussion with inspectors, boarders did not support this view. At weekends, boarders balance their commitments with free time and relaxation, appreciating the many available recreational areas within the campus which enable them to maintain a high level of fitness. Boarders appreciate the excellent medical provision. Male and female boarders too unwell to attend school have 24-hour care in separate rooms. Doctors from a local practice visit the school twice a week and boarders have access to other health professionals, including a weekly visit from a physiotherapist. The arrangements for health and safety are excellent, with unannounced fire drills taking place as standard practice, and records accurately maintained. Electrical checks are completed annually.
- 4.21 Boarders enjoy well-balanced menus with healthy options, and provision is made for special dietary needs. Kitchens are hygienic and the dining room is spacious and comfortable. Boarders can make drinks and snacks during the evenings and at weekends in house kitchens, with ample supplies of fruit and milk. The catering manager receives feedback from the school council. A small minority of responses to the pupils' questionnaire indicated dissatisfaction with the food. Interviews with boarders, observations of menus and sampling of meals did not support this concern. Boarders can contact their families using mobile telephones, landlines and internet devices.
- 4.22 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent. Procedures and practices ensure that the safety of boarders is well promoted and managed at all levels. All staff recruitment procedures are appropriately undertaken. The response to the recommendation of the 2011 Ofsted boarding welfare inspection on staff recruitment has been robustly tackled. Regularly reviewed risk assessments are carried out. All boarding staff receive regular training in safeguarding and are



confident in responding, in accordance with the procedures, should a child protection issue arise. Senior pupils receive a basic level of safeguarding training and those in positions of responsibility have enhanced training. Arrangements for monitoring the whereabouts of boarders at any time are excellent. The behaviour of boarders is exemplary; rules are clear and understood. The management of behaviour is excellent and, in response to a recommendation of the 2011 Ofsted boarding welfare inspection, no unusual sanctions are published in any handbooks. Bullying incidents are rare, including cyber bullying, and should they arise are dealt with quickly and effectively. Internet usage is effectively controlled and monitored. Pupils speak very positively about how well they are cared for and how they feel safe in the boarding environment. The level of staff supervision in the houses is good, both during the day and at night. Boarders confirmed that they know how to seek staff support should they need it during the night. They know how and when to report concerns and are confident that any concerns will be addressed positively.

- 4.23 The effectiveness of leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. The school is committed to improving boarding, with regular reviews of its provision and practice. Since the previous inspection, the boarding management structure has been enhanced. A new role of senior housemaster has been developed and new heads of houses have been appointed, resulting in a highly dedicated and professional team. All boarding staff have appropriate training, and senior boarding staff demonstrate excellent leadership and management qualities. The house teams, including matrons, meet regularly to discuss the needs of the boarders. Job descriptions are clear, and procedures for training and appraisal are effective. Boarding documentation and policies are regularly reviewed and clear priorities have been identified to ensure ongoing improvement. Significant progress is being made in the use of self-evaluation as a valuable tool to support the long-term development of boarding. A particular strength is the tutorial system. Academic tutors are attached to houses and this further enhances the support for boarders. The communication between pastoral and academic staff is highly effective in encouraging boarders to fulfil their potential at all levels. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were highly satisfied with the school's boarding life and recognised the outstanding contribution it makes to the boarders' progress and development.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The aims and values of the school are strongly supported by a board of committed governors who bring expertise in many fields germane to education. The governors listen to pupils, staff and parents, and promote consultation, as in the soundings taken on the shape of the new school week. Most governors live locally and regularly attend school events, taking a keen interest in all aspects of the life of the school. Governors' presence at school events enable them to engage with all members of the school community informally, ensuring their contact in person.
- 5.3 The governing body's two committees for discrete areas of the school, which report to the full governing body termly, ensure that all governors are well informed about current issues and planned developments. As well as receiving reports about the school's life and developments, governors discuss with staff issues of note, such as the recent report to them on the revisions to the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Governors have their tenure reviewed every five years to ensure that they are giving active and relevant support to the school's development.
- 5.4 The governors have developed an extremely effective working relationship with the school's senior leaders. They participate in 'away days' when they can talk through strategic planning, such as the next stage of boarding development. This culture of planning was behind the building of the new art, music, learning development and study centre, which has enhanced the education of all pupils. In relation to their statutory duties, the governors review policies regularly, including those for welfare, health and safety, and the full governing body conducts an annual review of child protection procedures. Through their committees and close liaison with senior leaders, governors discharge their responsibilities effectively for prudent financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources.
- 5.5 The governors are very committed to the original aims of the school, but equally recognise the need to ensure that its education and direction in all its aspects are fitting for future generations of pupils, by providing the stimulus for growth and improvement.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 The senior managers uphold the aims of the school and offer strong leadership in all areas. They provide strong educational direction and have a very constructive working relationship with the governing body. The senior managers have clearly defined roles and co-operate very effectively as a team, with a shared caring educational vision. They are a visible presence across the school and engage readily with all members of the community. They are open and transparent in their willingness to respond to reasonable requests and constructive criticism from pupils, parents and staff. Two new middle management roles have been created in the past year to strengthen the management of the academic life of the school and these have had a positive impact on support for pupil learning and academic planning. Policies and procedures and their implementation are regularly reviewed. The school's values, which include respect for others and democracy, are seen in all aspects of its life and are reflected in the relationships amongst all members of the school community.
- 5.8 Responding to a recommendation of the previous inspection, excellent progress has been made in relation to the monitoring of teaching and learning. A comprehensive teacher appraisal system has become well established and includes input from pupils. A new ICT co-ordinator has been appointed and, with the support of the digital strategy group, including pupils, ICT use is increasingly supporting learning. Electronic communication provision is powerful and extends across all areas of the school. Documentation can now be accessed by staff at any time and by pupils as appropriate.
- 5.9 An ambitious and well-considered three-year whole-school development plan has been created following wide-ranging consultation of staff and is under continuous review. The recently opened building is a highly successful development. It strongly enhances the pupils' learning opportunities in music, art, learning support and independent study, and provides high specification ICT equipment, which pupils access to improve their skills in modern technology. A rolling development plan for buildings and grounds has been produced and the refurbishment of existing facilities is being prioritised.
- 5.10 Heads of department feel both strongly supported by senior managers and robustly held to account for their pupils' results. They are encouraged to be imaginative and creative in their departmental planning. Their meetings have been restructured in consultation with senior management to reduce routine administration in favour of a focus on educational themes such as marking and feedback or teaching and learning, and this has had a marked positive effect on teaching and pupils' progress. Departmental annual reviews are now much more data rich, which enables the linked senior manager to analyse performance with greater precision and to recommend appropriate actions for improvement. Professional development of staff is a key feature of the appraisal system and development planning. This has created a learning culture amongst staff which has led to positive outcomes for teaching and learning.
- 5.11 Staff recruitment is thorough and robust, and successfully implemented. New staff are expected to offer a significant contribution to co-curricular activities as well as

strong academic teaching, and to engage fully with the community ethos. The school seeks to appoint staff who aim to develop their teaching and other skills and so may move on after a few years, thus creating opportunities for change and a sense of dynamic development. Senior managers are diligent in applying safeguarding principles to all appointments and ensure that the appropriate safeguarding training is given. All staff are trained in their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Equally, senior managers are assiduous in their management of this area. The management of boarding is excellent, with clear lines of accountability.

- 5.12 A recent independent survey of parents reflected a very high level of satisfaction with the education, support and communication provided by the school, and this high level of support was confirmed in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. From first association, parents enjoy the links forged with them by senior leaders, heads of houses and teachers, stating that any concerns and complaints are dealt with swiftly, sensitively and fairly. Sports competitions involving parents are enthusiastically supported and they enjoy the weekly coffee mornings hosted by the leadership team. The parent teacher association is active in arranging social and fund-raising events, such as the summer fete.
- 5.13 Information for parents is easily available. High quality publications provide all the required information for the parents of current and prospective pupils, and discrete booklets ensure that relevant material is easily accessed by the appropriate audiences. The *Weekly Bulletin* informs parents about key school events, whilst the website is updated daily with news of pupils' successes and co-curricular events. The school has an extremely active presence on social media, indicative of its grasp of the contemporary communication systems accessed by both parents and pupils. Its website enables the parents of current and former pupils to keep in touch. The *Riverbank* magazine has recently become an interactive online publication, published twice a year, enabling the school to include a range of digital content, notably examples of pupils' creative talents.
- 5.14 Parents welcome the twice-termly progress reviews that give a clear indication of both attainment and effort in all subjects. Termly full reports are comprehensive and cover all aspects of a pupil's school life. Subject reports give good guidance for further development. Annual parent-teacher meetings have been improved in organisation to ensure greater time and space for pupil issues to be discussed, and subject fairs are held for parents and pupils to consider GCSE and A-level choices. The parent portal enables parents to access their children's progress reviews, reports, timetable and co-curricular activity information.
- 5.15 Parents appreciated the full consultation offered over a forthcoming significant change to the structure of the school week. The new timetable, moving Saturday lessons to the mid-week programme, has been widely welcomed. It is intended that this will increase teaching time during the week and offer a better programme of activities for boarders at weekends. Support and praise for the school from parents are overwhelmingly strong.

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