



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST JAMES SENIOR BOYS' SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St James Senior Boys' School

Full Name of School	St James Senior Boys' School		
DfE Number	936/6016		
Registered Charity Number	270156		
Address	St James Senior Boys' School Church Road Ashford Surrey TW15 3DZ		
Telephone Number	01784266930		
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Email Address	mailing@stjamesboys.co.uk		
Headmaster	Mr David Brazier		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Jeremy Sinclair		
Age Range	11 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	364		
Gender of Pupils	Boys		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	350	
Number of Boarders	Total:	14	
	Full:	0	Weekly: 14
Inspection dates	15 Oct 2013 to 18 Oct 2013		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 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. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with 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 George Fisher	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Colpus	Team Inspector (Headmaster, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Susan Court	Team Inspector (Former head of department, ISA school)
Mr Ian Daniel	Team Inspector (Principal, ISA school)
Mr Thomas James	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St James Senior Boys' School is a day and boarding school in Surrey for pupils aged from 11 to 19. The school was founded in 1975 and moved from its previous site in Twickenham to a thirty-two acre site in Ashford in September 2010. The school is part of the St James Independent Schools group, which shares an overarching governing body. Day-to-day oversight of aspects of governance of the senior boys' school is taken by the Ashford governors' committee.
- 1.2 St James' aims are to offer an holistic education that allows each boy to achieve 'more than he thinks is possible' whilst simultaneously helping his character to evolve. This philosophical education, inspired by eastern and western traditions, is intended to allow pupils to recognise their responsibilities and contribution towards care and service in a spirit of unity. Academic and extra-curricular provision is designed to allow the natural growth of a boy towards adulthood so that he can develop physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Daily periods of 'Quiet Time' and meditation are at the heart of the school's ethos.
- 1.3 The school does not select its pupils on academic ability. The overall ability range is slightly above the national average, with about one-third of pupils being academically able. Around one-quarter of the pupils have some form of special educational need and/or disability (SEND) and most of these receive additional learning support. The school has four pupils with a statement of SEND funded by the local authority. Thirty-three pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) of whom two receive support for their English.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster has been appointed, the curriculum within the sixth form has been expanded to include a broader range of academic courses, and the pastoral structure has been changed so that there are three heads of year. A careers coordinator has been appointed and there is now a programme of careers advice and work experience. There is a new design and technology laboratory and the school makes full use of its new facilities, including deep water swimming in the lake.
- 1.5 The school has 364 pupils on roll including 65 within the sixth form. The pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Three-quarters of the pupils live in West London and travel daily to the school but, increasingly, some are travelling from a wider area including Berkshire. Fourteen pupils are boarders at the school. Boarding is provided from Monday to Thursday nights only and the accommodation is split into junior (Years 7 – 9) and senior (Year 10 and above) sections.
- 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 St James Senior Boys' School is highly successful in meeting its primary aim of providing an education which is, 'fully holistic, achieving growth in a boy's physical, mental, emotional and spiritual worlds'. The distinctive and far-reaching implications of its ethos are fully met, as envisaged by its founder. Achievement is good overall, with pupils performing strongly in external examinations at both GCSE and A level. Teaching is good and makes a significant contribution to pupils' overall attainment. In the best examples, there is a fast pace and varied activities are incorporated into the lessons. The relationship between the pupils and their teacher is excellent. Teachers provide helpful advice on what pupils need to do to improve the quality of their work, but this approach is not evident across the entire curriculum. The unreliability of the computer network and the slow speed of the internet inhibit the use of information and communication technology (ICT) within teaching. Pupils also commented adversely on the ICT provision within the pre-inspection questionnaire.
- 2.2 Pupils have very mature attitudes to study; they settle to work quickly and enjoy the various challenges which are placed before them. They are very articulate and confident at expressing their ideas, either in front of their peers or to larger groups. Pupils with SEND and the most able also achieve in line with expectations. The curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent, offering challenge for the most able as well as additional support for those who require it. Since the previous inspection the provision for technology has been improved significantly and pupils thoroughly enjoy this subject area. Pupils also achieve success in extra-curricular activities, including drama, music and sport.
- 2.3 Pupils' personal development is excellent. They are engaging, self-assured, polite and enthusiastic about their experiences at school. Relationships between pupils and with staff are characterised by mutual respect, warmth and good humour. The daily periods of reflection and meditation contribute very positively to pupils' development, and, whilst some variations of practice were observed, the 'quiet time' does contribute very positively to pupils' demeanour and sense of belonging. This represents a significant change since the previous inspection. Responses by pupils to the pre-inspection questionnaire were largely very positive although some did express concerns about the fairness of sanctions and the willingness of the school to listen to their opinions. Inspectors noted that sanctions were awarded according to agreed procedures, but that greater prominence was given to sanctions than to rewards. The school council listens actively to the views of pupils though sometimes the reporting back process is not sufficiently clear. A large number of pupils commented adversely on the quality of the food at lunchtime and inspectors supported the view that choice is sometimes restricted and staff do not always take active steps to encourage pupils to eat more.
- 2.4 The boarding experience is a very positive one for pupils. The accommodation is well maintained, there is excellent support from boarding staff and a strong sense of community prevails. The overall quality of boarding is good.
- 2.5 Most aspects of governance are sound. Day-to-day monitoring and support is substantially delegated to a local Ashford Committee containing a small number of governors, together with members of the school's senior management team. Although this is effective in ensuring that the Ashford committee is kept abreast of developments within the school, there is only limited contact with the school or its

staff and the full governing body has not assumed full responsibility for reviewing safeguarding arrangements within the school. The move to the new school site in September 2010 was well planned and executed and governors support the ethos of the school very strongly. Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders have a high profile within the school and academic and pastoral managers are effective in their roles. Senior managers are pro-active in looking at ways to develop the school further, for example through the school improvement plan, and are very mindful of making sure that staff and pupil welfare is carefully considered. Management of health and safety is undertaken by a number of people, including members of the teaching and support staff, as well as by the bursar. This mechanism is complicated and leads to lack of clarity over the responsibility for the monitoring of provision. Links with parents are excellent and have been further strengthened since the previous inspection.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.6 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:
- ensure that the full governing body approves an annual review of the school's child protection policies and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged [Part 3 Regulation 7 (a) and (b), and Regulation 8 (a) and (b) under Welfare, health and safety], National Minimum Standard 11;
- 2.7 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, and therefore it must:
- provide boarders with meals which are adequate in nutrition, quantity, quality, choice and variety [National Minimum Standard 8.1, under Provision and Preparation of Food and Drinks];
 - Ensure that the fire alarm system in the boarding house is regularly tested and recorded. [National Minimum Standard 7, under Fire Precautions and Drills]

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.8 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the actions to improve educational access for SEND provision includes the measures by which success will be determined and the timescale for implementing individual actions;
 2. Ensure the principles and practice of boarding arrangements are made available to pupils, parents and staff
 3. Improve the reliability and accessibility of provision for ICT.
 4. Improve the consistency in the assessment of pupils' work so that a high quality of feedback is provided across the curriculum.
 5. Improve the effectiveness of the management of health and safety.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 The pupils are well educated in line with the school's principal aims to enable them to achieve their very best and to create a love of knowledge and learning. The pupils demonstrate good overall levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in curricular and extra-curricular activities. Creativity is evident within both art and design and technology and literacy is highly developed, for example in history and English. Numeracy and logical thought are both apparent within mathematics and the sciences. Initiatives such as the whole school literacy programme and the gifted and talented scheme have helped to raise standards and improve the consistency of pupils' work. When encouraged to do so, pupils use ICT efficiently and effectively, for example in demonstrating their ability in programming and in using laptops to make notes. Pupils achieve well in individual and team pursuits such as rowing and climbing and they are prominent in association events. They also achieve high levels in public speaking, drama, art, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the Combined Cadet Force (CCF).
- 3.3 Pupils who need additional support make good progress as they move through the school and provision is good for these pupils, with thorough individual educational plans in place and worksheets that are well-matched to their needs, as seen in English and music lessons. In most curricular areas, there are opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to make good progress and be sufficiently challenged by extension activities. Sixth-formers achieve notably high standards and on occasions make excellent progress as was evident in English lessons, where the pupils were alive, engaged and able to articulate ideas and express inter-textual links.
- 3.4 Attainment for the period 2010-12, the most recent period for which comparative data is available, is good. Pupils' performance at GCSE is consistently above the average for boys in maintained schools and comparable to that of boys in selective maintained schools. Where comparisons are available, IGCSE results are above the worldwide average. A-level results over the same period have been similar to the national average for boys in maintained selective schools, and in 2011 were above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. At GCSE level, these results show that pupils make good progress over time in relation to their ability profile, and evidence from lessons and pupils' work shows that this progress is maintained into the sixth form. Most pupils go on to higher education, the majority gaining places at selective universities and with an increasing proportion securing their first choice of institution.
- 3.5 Pupils have highly positive attitudes and show perseverance and application towards their work. Throughout the school, pupils are eager learners with many developing sophisticated cultural and philosophical understanding. Pupils speak confidently and articulately when putting forward their viewpoints. They enjoy learning and produce good quality and well organised work. Pupils' commitment to and interest in their studies were reflected in their willingness to discuss their work with inspectors. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent and they work very effectively with each other, in pairs, in groups and as a class; this attitude contributes significantly towards their overall achievement.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 The curriculum is underpinned by a particular approach, namely the philosophy of Unity or Oneness. It is expressed throughout the school's curriculum and is consistent with the school's aim to achieve mental, emotional, physical and spiritual growth where as far as possible every need is catered for. There is a strong emphasis on philosophical and spiritual education with 'Quiet Time' and the associated pause enabling pupils to access their inner being. Every pupil has a philosophy lesson once a week tailored to their developmental stage. In addition, philosophy is offered at GCSE and A level.
- 3.8 The curriculum covers all the requisite areas of learning. Since the previous inspection the school has introduced design and technology and has made significant investment into the department. The subject is currently available to Years 7, 8 and 9 with some Year 10 pupils taking it as a pilot GCSE. Another development from the previous inspection is the introduction of a BTEC in business studies.
- 3.9 In Year 8 a range of subjects is offered including classics, Greek and Latin as well as ICT, so that pupils can make informed choices about their GCSE subjects which they begin studying in Year 9. All pupils study English language and literature plus one language, one humanities subject and at least one science. Sixth-formers benefit from general courses, a choice of academic subjects and individual programmes suited to their capabilities and interests. The studying of Sanskrit is a particular feature. There is a generous amount of time allocated to physical education for pupils at all levels in the school and an extensive range of sports is introduced throughout the year. Careers guidance is well planned and there is a biennial careers day for pupils from Year 9 and above. Pupils in Year 10 also take part in a highly-regarded work experience programme.
- 3.10 The academic curriculum is designed carefully so that pupils of all abilities can experience depth as well as breadth and the individual needs of pupils with SEND are well recognised. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a few parents commented negatively on some aspects of SEND provision, but most stated they were delighted with the individual approach and attention which had been provided for their child. Pupils are assessed from the start of Year 7 and are offered regular support, either individually or within a small group. The school's special needs staff co-ordinate learning support, which is well focused and effective. Cross-curricular initiatives, such as the 'art of science', also help pupils with special educational needs to achieve well. There is a programme for gifted and talented pupils on Friday afternoons and parents are included as well, for example, in trips to the British Museum. Pupils with EAL and those with statements of special educational needs receive constructive and carefully targeted support both through specialist provision and within normal lessons.
- 3.11 The curriculum is supported by a suitable range of extra-curricular activities and links with the community. There is a timetabled extra-curricular activities period after lunch in which clubs and societies are offered such as chess, debating and public speaking, music and reading clubs. In addition there are subject clinics in which pupils can gain further support for their studies. A variety of trips is offered, all of which have a direct impact upon pupils' studies. Activities week in March enables

pupils to benefit from cultural enrichment across Europe: pupils in Year 7 visit Pompeii, Year 8 go to Greece, Year 9 to Paris and Year 10 to Florence and Lucca.

- 3.12 Links with the local community are established through work experience, service, for example within the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the CCF, and events for the elderly, including hampers at Christmas time and a Valentine's tea dance. With regard to the wider community, the pupils support the 'Street Child of Sierra Leone' and raised £30,000 to build a school near Free Town.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.14 Teaching is effective in helping pupils achieve their potential and so supports the aim of the school to enable pupils to achieve more than they think is possible. A significant proportion of teaching is of the highest quality. The best teaching enthuses pupils through its fast pace and varied activities. The school is seeking to achieve these high standards in all lessons through an appraisal system which includes lesson observations. Teaching is successful in enabling the pupils to make good, and sometimes excellent, progress.
- 3.15 Teaching is well planned and demonstrates a shrewd understanding of pupils' needs. The relationship between staff and pupils in the classroom is excellent. For example, in a design technology lesson, the rapport encouraged the pupils to apply themselves to their work, and so promoted effective learning. Pupils feel that teachers provide excellent support, both in lessons and through the various subject clinics and clubs.
- 3.16 Small class sizes and committed teachers contribute positively to pupils' academic progress. All teachers have good subject knowledge and make use of a variety of resources to enhance their teaching. The whole-class teaching methods employed in most lessons engender application and the development of logical thought. Pupils are encouraged to think independently, for example in a Year 13 drama lesson where students took the lead, or in a philosophy lesson where pupils were encouraged to consider whether it is good to believe your own thoughts. The school wishes to develop further the independent learning skills of its pupils and is at the planning stage of becoming a "thinking" school.
- 3.17 Teachers make use of ICT, for example using data-loggers in physics and presentation software, but the more widespread use of ICT within teaching is limited by lack of access to facilities and the slow speed and unreliability of the internet connection. The school has started to develop a virtual learning environment, which has the potential to support teaching across the school, although at present pupils do not have full access to it.
- 3.18 Cross-curricular programmes have encouraged the pupils to be enthusiastic about each subject. For example, there is an annual poetry week during which all subjects commit teaching time to poetry.
- 3.19 Departments also come together to enhance the teaching of their subjects. For example teachers in the SEND, art and science departments work together effectively in running the art of science club which enables less academically able pupils to make physical models relating to the science curriculum so as to improve their learning.

- 3.20 Lessons are planned well, with the variety of activities and the pace of the lessons ensuring that pupils remained focussed. Staff are aware of the pupils' individual needs. For the most able pupils, this is met through setting by ability and curricular provision, for example extension questions being provided within mathematics lessons. Pupils with SEND, including those with statements, have appropriate individual education plans of which all teaching staff are made aware; learning support assistants also provide effective help during lessons to these pupils. Pupils with EAL are well supported by the teaching and staff recognise their responsibility for helping these pupils to develop their language skills and to overcome any barriers to learning caused by the use of specialist terminology or vocabulary.
- 3.21 Strategies to improve the quality of assessment have recently been introduced. In the best examples of assessment, pupils are provided with constructive advice for further improvement together with encouraging comments. In spite of efforts to ensure more consistency, there is still some inconsistency over the quality of marking of pupils' written work. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils stated that homework did not help them to learn; inspection evidence did not support this view.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, social, moral and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Pupils are self-reflective and self-aware and this is underpinned by the philosophy of Unity or Oneness, the cornerstone of the school's ethos. Two, ten-minute periods of quiet time are built into the school day allowing the pupils to come together in peace and stillness. Pupils state that they find this helps them to become self-aware and step back from thinking. Pupils have strong self-knowledge, a sensitive awareness of themselves and others and secure self-confidence, which is nurtured in their weekly philosophy lessons. At all levels, pupils state that they feel valued by their teachers. Sixth form monitors meet with pupils in the lower school to support and encourage them in meditation. Pupils say that they find this immensely valuable.
- 4.3 The pupils' excellent moral development is reflected in their behaviour, their attitudes to right and wrong and in their respect for the civil and criminal law. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of pupils expressed the view that there were insufficient opportunities for taking responsibility, but inspection evidence does not support this view. Pupils of all ages assume responsibility willingly, and are represented on the school council which has a newly created charity committee. A major role of the school council is to combat bullying and pupils state that they feel that bullying is not a problem in the school and that, if it did arise, it would be dealt with effectively.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is excellent and their social awareness is strong. They consider the needs of others, and are courteous in their conduct and relationships, whether with their peers, teachers, administrative and support staff or visitors. This was observed in lessons, in extra-curricular activities and in their behaviour around the school. This aspect was emphasised in an assembly on the Golden Rule in which concern for one's fellow man was highlighted as a fundamental precept in all major religions. Pupils make a willing and successful contribution to activities in the wider school community. They are involved in projects to assist the elderly, the various activities of the CCF and the project in which sixth-formers teach Latin at local primary schools. Senior pupils willingly serve as school prefects, librarians, mentors for younger pupils, captains and ambassadors for sport. They are significant role models, admired and respected by younger pupils. Pupils demonstrate heightened cultural awareness. They show respect for their own beliefs and values and those of other faiths and traditions. This was demonstrated in an excellent assembly on Muslim festivals and pilgrimages, in which a pupil read in Arabic. The pupils' appreciation of other cultures is significantly enriched by overseas trips to centres like Pompeii, Paris and Florence.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate an excellent standard of personal development. Pupils enhance their empathetic qualities through visits to theatres and galleries, and through discussions in class they learn to appreciate and develop a balanced view of a range of ideas. Above all, they take responsibility for their actions and make the most of the diverse opportunities to contribute to the school community.

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

- 4.6 The quality of pastoral care is good.

- 4.7 The tutor system is a particular strength of the school and provides very effective individual support, in line with the school's aims. Form tutors know their pupils well and effectively communicate any pastoral concerns with all relevant staff, whilst being sensitive to issues surrounding confidentiality. The relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils are excellent. The teachers demonstrate genuine warmth and concern for the pupils they teach. The atmosphere in class is very positive and collaborative.
- 4.8 In the pupil questionnaires there were a large number of negative responses with regard to the quality of food, these views being echoed by comments during interviews with pupils. Observations at lunch-time revealed a significant number of pupils failing to eat a healthy meal and that staff were not actively encouraging them to do so.
- 4.9 The behaviour of pupils is very good, with many teachers using the 'stillness' aspect of the school's ethos to guide pupils' behaviour. There is a system of merits and sanctions to manage pupil behaviour. However, in the pre-inspection questionnaires, around one half of pupils reported that sanctions were not administered fairly by teachers and inspectors detected an imbalance between the prominence given to rewards and sanctions.
- 4.10 The plan in place to improve educational access for pupils with SEND is adequate. However, aims and objectives are not underpinned by explicit timescales for their completion. There is a democratically elected school council where a wide range of concerns can be discussed and solutions proposed to members of staff. As yet, the outcomes of these meetings are not communicated to the whole school. Consequently, there is a feeling, amongst some pupils, that their views are not important.

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

- 4.11 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is sound.
- 4.12 The policy to safeguard the welfare of pupils is thorough, and accurately reflects current practice. The two designated child protection officers, one within boarding, ensure that teaching and support staff have knowledge of their responsibilities for safeguarding, and that regular training updates are provided. There is a system for relaying this information to absent staff, although this is not always sufficiently rigorous. New staff receive essential safeguarding induction training. There are helpful links with local safeguarding boards. Governors review the safeguarding policy annually, although this responsibility is currently delegated to the Ashford group when it should be a responsibility of the full board. Checks on new staff are rigorously undertaken and the recording of these is scrupulous.
- 4.13 There is an extensive health and safety policy which contains much generic information and which is cross-referenced to school-based policies. Within this, the fire policy clearly defines emergency evacuation procedures and fire drills are regularly conducted in all buildings on the school site. An annual report on fire measures is commissioned by the school and the school acts according to the recommended severity of risk. Fire and electrical equipment is systematically tested and deficiencies remedied. However, the testing and recording of the fire alarm system has not been regular within the boarding area.
- 4.14 Risk assessments are appropriately detailed for activities and off-site visits, and the well-being of pupils is always at the forefront of consideration. Risk assessments for

the site itself are also in place, though at times some of the control measures are neglected. The school site is secure and there are good measures to protect pupils and their possessions.

- 4.15 There is good nursing provision for both day pupils and boarders and for sick pupils. Several staff are qualified first aiders and any accidents are appropriately reported. Good channels of communication between the matron and the teaching and non-teaching staff ensure that pupils' medical needs are well provided for.
- 4.16 Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and stored.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.17 The quality of boarding education is good.
- 4.18 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The boarders are full of confidence, self-reliance, self-belief, integrity and tolerance. The boarding community is strongly self-supporting with the senior boarders leading the way by showing kindness and care towards the younger pupils. Behaviour in the house is excellent, with sanctions hardly ever used. The pupils clearly enjoy contributing to the smooth running of the house, for example by helping to prepare breakfast. There is a house council which can make recommendations to the house parents, although formal minutes are not currently circulated so that communication to all boarders is impaired.
- 4.19 All the boarders speak enthusiastically about boarding and particularly about the quality of their relationships with the boarding staff. The boarding community is notably tolerant of others and has a very mature and rounded view of life. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, and during discussions with inspectors, the only concern raised by boarders related to the unreliable nature of the internet, which has an impact on their ability to work in the evenings. The boarders are well supported by their tutor as well as by the boarding staff and there are measures in place to ensure effective communication between the tutors and the house parents. The pupils can name a wide variety of adults they could ask for help, if they had a problem, and they are aware of the independent listener who is available to all pupils.
- 4.20 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. New boarders are supported by a well-designed induction programme. The junior boarders report that the 'buddy' system, involving senior boarders, helps them settle quickly into boarding life. The boarders' handbook is comprehensive and there is an induction check list to make sure that nothing is overlooked. The house mother provides great help to all boarders and there is genuine warmth and affection for her and her family, of which the pupils feel part. The house mother provides both emotional and medical support. At present, two separate systems record a boarder's medical history and this makes it difficult to identify trends and patterns in a particular pupil's needs. Medicines are safely stored and dispensed in line with current protocols. During the day, the pupils can go to the school matron who is a registered nurse. She maintains good individual nursing records. A doctor visits the school once a week and boarders can see the doctor confidentially, thereby gaining access to external medical services. The school and the boarding house have a sick room for sick or injured pupils.
- 4.21 The boarding accommodation is good and the boarders take pride in their rooms, which are personalised with posters and photographs. Linen is clean and changed regularly. The sixth form have their own studies, while the younger pupils share large airy and light rooms. Homework for the juniors is supervised in a communal

room, which also contains large personal and lockable spaces for the boarders. Coded locks on the doors to the boarding house ensure that the boarders are kept safe and sound. A comprehensive and sophisticated CCTV system operates at all entrances and around the grounds. As a result the school is a very safe environment for the pupils to make full use of the grounds and all that the school has to offer. The pupils report that the house staff provide a varied and enjoyable programme of activities.

- 4.22 Fire drills are carried out during boarding time and these are carefully recorded in a logbook. Whilst the school has good procedures for checking the fire alarm system within the main school building, there is no separate logbook to record regular tests of the equipment in the boarding house. The catering service is excellent at looking after those pupils with special dietary needs. However, the meals offer no choice to boarders and they are not always suitably nutritious. In the house, there is a well equipped and well stocked kitchen for the boarders to produce their own snacks.
- 4.23 The pupils can easily contact their parents using their mobile phones. The school communicates very effectively with boarders' families, something which was confirmed by those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. There is a complaints policy for parents and records are monitored by the senior management team.
- 4.24 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is good. There are rigorous systems in place to safeguard the pupils. Recruitment procedures are robust and the school has two fully trained child protection officers, well known to staff. The boarders could identify a number of adults they could turn to for help, but they all named the house mother as the person they would choose to seek support and help. The house staff are suitably trained and have comprehensive job descriptions. As yet there is no appraisal system in place to enable them to develop their skills. The level of supervision after lessons is very good with a number of adults in the boarding house as the pupils return from their lessons. There are regular checks on the whereabouts of the pupils and any absences are quickly and effectively resolved. The boarders have appropriate access to the local shops and this freedom is highly valued by the pupils.
- 4.25 In the evening, there is a suitably qualified adult on duty. The junior boarders (up to Year 9) are under the direct supervision of an assistant housemaster whose self-contained accommodation is close to the dormitories. Consequently, he is easily contacted by them in an emergency. The other boarders (Years 10 and above) sleep in a separate wing of the building. There is no adult sleeping on this wing but the pupils report that, if they felt ill, they could ring the house mother using mobile communication.
- 4.26 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. The management of boarding is very good. The housemaster and his team have worked hard to create a first-class boarding house, where the pupils mature and thrive. The quality of the relationships and the care shown by the young people for each other is outstanding. It is clear that boarding has played a major and positive part in their development. The housemaster is suitably trained and is highly experienced.
- 4.27 Although there is an adequate statement of boarding principles and practice in place arrangements for access by pupils, parents and staff are not yet fully formalised. While the school reports that it is keen to develop its boarding provision, pupils feel

that the profile of boarding within the school needs to be raised including having a representative of boarding on the senior management team. All residential staff are first aid trained. Comprehensive staffing records are maintained and these are monitored by the senior management team.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The governing body fully embraces the very distinctive ethos and philosophy of St James and its sister schools and ensures that St James continues to endorse the aims of its founder, namely to promote unity of all mankind and a sense of oneness. Following the previous inspection the governors completed extensive planning to ensure the orderly transfer of the school to Ashford in September 2010.
- 5.3 The governing body brings much professional expertise to its work, although it gives less oversight to the monitoring of education than to other matters, depending more on reports from senior school staff. Governors attend training sessions and hold an annual 'away day' to enable discussion of more substantive issues. The governing body recently commissioned an external evaluation of its own structure and effectiveness.
- 5.4 Day-to-day governance is delegated to a small group of governors which, alongside senior members of the school staff, constitute the Ashford committee. This receives regular reports from school staff to enable these governors to remain abreast of what is happening within the school, although governors have limited contact with members of staff or academic departments outside this. Monitoring of academic standards is undertaken by the local group and funding for staff and learning resources is allocated sensitively and fairly.
- 5.5 The full board assumes the responsibility for the overall allocation of resources, including funding for capital development and the regular maintenance requirements of the site. There is tight overall control of the budgetary process and governors exercise fully their responsibilities in this regard.
- 5.6 The health and safety policy is presented annually to the full governing body and necessary amendments are made to it prior to its adoption. Governors meet their statutory duties in this regard. The safeguarding policy is reviewed annually but by the Ashford committee not by the full governing body, which does not meet the requirements. All recruitment checks on staff have been completed appropriately.

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

- 5.7 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.8 The leadership and management strongly support the school's aim to provide a philosophical education, inspired by eastern and western wisdom traditions, which inspires pupils through a holistic approach to human development. Responsibility for the management and monitoring of the delivery of the curriculum and pastoral care across the school is divided across the senior management team (SMT). Its members have a high profile and are very involved in the life of the school, both in their teaching roles and as form tutors. They provide clear educational direction for the staff. Heads of department successfully manage schemes of work, systems of assessment, and monitor practice in their departments. A thorough system for the

tracking and monitoring of pupils has been established. Heads of year manage the pastoral care of day pupils very effectively.

- 5.9 Heads of departments actively contribute to curriculum planning, and to the development of learning and teaching, through half-termly heads of department meetings. All staff are encouraged to suggest initiatives to the curriculum development group, which was set up in response to the previous inspection to develop the curricular and academic systems within the school.
- 5.10 Departmental development plans are in line with the recently written school improvement plan and, in a number of departments, reflect initiatives for enhancing pupils' learning. For example, there is a move to reform the setting of homework so that the task acts as preparation for the following lesson rather than as follow up work to the lesson. A school development plan is under construction and is being focussed on the ambitious aims of the newly appointed headmaster and his senior team.
- 5.11 All staff are appropriately qualified. The school has been active in developing ways to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The heads of department are appraised by the deputy head academic and they in turn appraise members of their department, providing formal feedback. Staff undertake peer observations of other teachers in order to share best practice. A teaching and learning group for less experienced members of staff has also been introduced. New staff, including newly qualified teachers, undertake an effective induction programme which provides an introduction to the ethos of the school and creates a forum within which new staff can share practical information. This programme includes training in safeguarding, welfare and health and safety. There are suitable arrangements in place for the checking of new staff.
- 5.12 The school is aware that there is no appraisal system for non-teaching staff and has recently carried out a review of their line management structure. Health and safety within the school is currently managed by a number of staff, including members of teaching and support staff, and the bursar. This results in a lack of clarity in the management arrangements. The school is efficiently supported by the work of the administrative and support staff. All staff work very hard to ensure the success of the school.
- 5.13 The school has developed excellent links with its parents, carers and guardians, and these have been strengthened since the previous inspection. Parents feel fully informed about the school and their son's progress within it. A recent survey and series of working groups confirm the school's desire to engage proactively with the parent body and demonstrates that parents fully endorse the ethos of St James, so acting as a vital support in ensuring that its unique aims are met. The pre-inspection questionnaire confirms the satisfaction of the overwhelming majority of parents; there were no areas of concern raised by significant numbers of parents. Parents were particularly positive about the way their son was looked after, the range of activities and the curriculum, the leadership of the school and the extent to which their child enjoyed being at St James.
- 5.14 Parents have a very positive view of the availability of information about the school, and feel encouraged to become involved. The weekly newsletter, 'The Shell', is a helpful summary of recent events and alerts parents to forthcoming events as well. The recently re-vamped website also contains much useful information and email addresses for all staff are now provided in a secure area of the site.

- 5.15 Parents of new entrants are given extensive information, and an induction day for the new pupils, organised in part through the Friends of St James, has recently been introduced. Parents receive one full report per year, which contains helpful advice on what each pupil can do to improve, as well as half-termly grade sheets which reflect effort and attainment. There are also two consultation evenings per year, one with form tutors and one with all of the pupil's subject teachers.
- 5.16 The Friends group organises three main events per year, including a September Fair and tea dances and cake sales in the summer. Parents are also instrumental in enabling St James to stage a biennial careers fair in conjunction with its sister school with parents acting as the 'experts'. Furthermore, parents help with the work experience programme and with other career-specific opportunities, most recently in staging a mock trial at the Middle Temple.
- 5.17 The school has a comprehensive complaints policy and parental concerns, however small, are addressed promptly and with sensitivity.

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