



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION THE CHELTENHAM LADIES' COLLEGE

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Cheltenham Ladies' College

Full Name of School	The Cheltenham Ladies' College		
DfE Number	916/6036		
Registered Charity Number	311722		
Address	The Cheltenham Ladies' College Bayshill Road Cheltenham Gloucestershire GL50 3EP		
Telephone Number	01242 520691		
Fax Number	01242 227882		
Email Address	enquiries@cheltladiescollege.org		
Principal	Ms Eve Jardine-Young		
Chair of Governors	Ms Lisa Arnold		
Age Range	11 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	878		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	11–18:	878	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	195	
Number of Boarders	Total:	683	
	Full:	683	
Inspection Dates	14 to 17 October 2014		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2008.

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

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

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.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the Chair of the Governing Body, 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 Graham Sims	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Lynda Billinge	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA School)
Mr Anthony Duffield	Team Inspector (Head of Science, HMC School)
Ms Pauline Edgar	Team Inspector (Head, GSA School)
Mr Andrew Gillespie	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, Society of Heads School)
Mr Geoffrey Hill	Team Inspector (Former Director of Music, HMC School)
Mr Nigel Hunter	Team Inspector (Director of Art, HMC School)
Mr Jason Lewis	Team Inspector (Director of Academic Administration, HMC School)
Mrs Rosemary Martin	Team Inspector (Former Head, GSA School)
Mrs Fiona McGill	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA School)
Mr David Pritchard	Team Inspector (Head of Classics, HMC School)
Mr Roger Tapping	Team Inspector (Director of Academic Development, GSA School)
Mrs Susan Meek	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Dr John Godwin	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Head of Classics, HMC School)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Cheltenham Ladies' College is an independent boarding and day school for girls aged 11 to 18. Around four-fifths of the pupils are boarders. The school's mission is to support and guide girls in becoming self-determining, fulfilled and resilient women who value, serve and enrich the communities to which they belong. It seeks to honour its pioneering heritage through challenge and innovation in the pursuit of academic excellence. The school strives to promote mutual respect, integrity, courage and the productive exchange of ideas, and to nurture intellectual curiosity, creativity, confidence and an enduring sense of belonging.
- 1.2 The college operates under Royal Charter and was founded in 1854 in order to give the same educational opportunities to girls enjoyed at that time by boys. It moved to its present site near to the centre of Cheltenham in 1873. The day and boarding houses are situated in nearby streets a short distance away from the main site, as are the playing fields and sports centre. Significant improvements to the school's accommodation have been made since the previous inspection through a rolling programme of refurbishment of classrooms and boarding accommodation, and the commissioning of the new Parabola Arts Centre. The school is a registered charity and members of Council (the school's governing body) are trustees of the charity and administer the school. The principal was appointed in September 2011.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 878 pupils on roll, of whom 683 were full boarders and 195 were day pupils. Of these, 325 pupils were in the sixth form. The school is arranged as Lower College (Years 7 to 9), Upper College (Years 10 and 11) and Sixth Form. Girls are accommodated in nine junior houses for ages 11 to 16 (six boarding and three day), and six sixth form houses (five boarding and one day). Pupils come from over 40 different countries, and around one-third of boarders come from outside the UK. Many pupils are multi-lingual. Just under one-third speak English as an additional language (EAL). Of these, 60 pupils receive additional language support, but none is at an early stage of learning English.
- 1.4 Nationally standardised aptitude and ability tests indicate that the average ability of the girls, including those entering the sixth form, is well above the national average and close to the average for those entering maintained selective schools. The school introduced the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma alongside A levels from September 2008. Around one-fifth of pupils follow the IB programme in the sixth form. The school has identified 52 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

College	NC name
LC1	Year 7
LC2	Year 8
LC3	Year 9
UC4	Year 10
UC5	Year 11
SFC1	Year 12
SFC2	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Cheltenham Ladies' College is extremely successful in meeting its aims of supporting and guiding girls to become self-determining, fulfilled and resilient women who exhibit intellectual curiosity, creativity, confidence and mutual respect. The pupils' achievements are exceptional. Pupils achieve very high standards in GCSE, IGCSE, and A-level examinations and in the IB Diploma. The large majority proceed to their first choice universities in the UK and overseas, including many with highly selective entry requirements. The pupils are highly articulate and have excellent literacy, mathematical and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Their achievements in music, art, drama, sports and many other activities are often outstanding. Pupils of all abilities, including the able, gifted and talented, together with those who have SEND and EAL, make excellent progress throughout the school in response to teaching of the highest quality. The teaching is often inspirational, engages pupils in wide-ranging debate and discussion and, in many subjects, takes pupils well beyond the confines of the examination syllabus. The range of additional activities available to pupils at lunchtime, after school and at weekends is extremely wide.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. The pupils have highly positive attitudes to learning, engage fully with their teachers, and take great pride in their work. They are confident, self-aware, courteous and considerate. Responses to the parental and pupil questionnaires praise the school's internationalism, social awareness and secure, caring environment. The pupils develop a real appreciation of the non-material aspects of life, and have a firm understanding of major world religions and respect for other cultures. They show a keen awareness of right and wrong, and develop an excellent sense of responsibility, as well as civic and social awareness. The staff know the pupils extremely well and provide an excellent standard of care, guidance and support. The quality of relationships between pupils and staff is excellent, although some pupils feel that not enough consideration is given to their views and opinions, and that sanctions are not always consistently applied. This is because the rationale behind changes and new initiatives is not always communicated clearly enough to pupils or fully understood by them. Excellent attention is given to the pupils' welfare, health and safety throughout the school.
- 2.3 The provision for boarders is excellent. The boarders are extremely well cared for by a dedicated team of staff who are committed to supporting them and promoting their well-being. There are numerous avenues for boarders to receive additional help and support, should they require it. They receive an appetising choice of nutritious food, and the medical centre provides excellent care for any who are ill. The boarders have a vast choice of recreational opportunities. Provision for boarders is monitored regularly and meticulously. The school has started a major programme of refurbishment of boarding accommodation and the two newest houses reflect an exceptionally high quality of accommodation.
- 2.4 The quality of governance is excellent. Governors have an excellent oversight of the life and work of the school, discharge their responsibilities very successfully and provide valuable support and guidance for the school's leaders. They play an integral part in shaping the school's development. They have overseen many improvements to the school since the previous inspection and have adopted ambitious, far-reaching, long-term development plans. The school's leaders, at all

levels, are highly successful in ensuring the school fulfils its stated mission and objectives; the senior leaders provide strong and effective direction. The school is managed exceptionally well, the roles of many teams of staff dovetailing seamlessly and enabling the very complex daily schedule to run like clockwork. Links between the school and parents are excellent. Parents are extremely pleased with the school and what it offers their children and their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that they have no major concerns. They are particularly pleased that their children are happy, that they are safe and that they are well looked after. They greatly value the very wide range of educational opportunities offered to their children, the quality of boarding and the information about the school and its policies, which are readily available.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.5 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.6 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
 - 1. Take further steps to involve pupils in decision-making processes and to explain the rationale behind new initiatives and changes to the school's procedures.

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 exceptional.
- 3.2 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims to encourage intellectual curiosity and a love of learning through the development of self-motivated, enthusiastic, successful young women.
- 3.3 Pupils exhibit an extremely high level of understanding and knowledge in their lessons and written assignments. They have highly developed critical thinking, reasoning and decision-making skills. Pupils are meticulous in the presentation and organisation of their work, and are lively and articulate during class discussion. Their application of literacy and mathematical skills is excellent, and they explore scientific and philosophical ideas with confidence. Pupils analyse in depth and have well developed ICT skills that they use effectively to research and present assignments. A large number of pupils display exceptional flair in aesthetic or creative areas, and musical and dramatic skills are often outstanding. They develop a high level of skill in a wide range of team or individual sports.
- 3.4 The achievements of the many very able students are of an extremely high quality. These range from qualification for the national final of the UK Senior Team Maths Challenge in 2014, to the publication of an Extended Project dissertation in a prestigious undergraduate research journal in the USA.
- 3.5 Pupils' achievements in extra-curricular activities are exceptional, reflecting their determination to take full advantage of the very wide range of opportunities available. The largest number of girls from any single school has achieved the gold award in chemistry Olympiads, and an extremely high number gain the Gold Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Pupils excel in public speaking and debating competitions, and a significant number of pupils achieve drama or music with distinction at the highest level annually. The school has recorded numerous successes in county, regional and national competitions for a wide variety of individual and team sports.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are available. Results at GCSE are far above the national average for girls in maintained schools and well above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Results for IGCSE are higher than both international and UK averages. Results at A level are far above the national average for girls in maintained schools and well above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Results for the IB Diploma for 2014 place the school within the top five in an independent IB schools league table.
- 3.7 Pupils of all ages make excellent progress in their lessons and over an extended period of time. This progress is evident in the public examination results achieved and is reflected in the fact that the large majority of pupils gain places at their first choice universities at home and overseas, many of which have very demanding entry requirements. Pupils with SEND and EAL achieve very well, both in public examinations and in lessons, because teachers are fully aware of the needs of individual pupils and help them in appropriate ways. Pupils, and many parents, speak most warmly of the quality of support. The school's able pupils distinguish themselves in a variety of additional activities as well as achieving excellence in their

public examinations, reflecting the high standards of teaching and additional provision that they receive.

- 3.8 The girls have excellent attitudes to learning. They settle readily to work, engage fully with their teachers and are very keen to rise to any challenge. They co-operate easily and are eager to support each other. Pride in their work is evident in the impressive organisation of files and the depth and detail of written tasks. They participate freely in debate, but with clear respect for the views of others and with highly developed intellectual curiosity. Application and perseverance are widespread and form part of the pupils' determined, honest and reflective approach. They are very effective independent learners and set a high value on education.

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 school's aim that every girl should have access to an intellectually challenging and coherent curriculum is met extremely well. The school takes great care to ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils. For example, the excellent provision of additional lessons for pupils with SEND or EAL takes place outside the normal teaching curriculum so as not to affect their access to the full curriculum. Additional provision is also made for able, gifted and talented pupils to enable them to achieve at the very highest level.
- 3.11 The school reviews, evaluates and adapts its curriculum continuously to ensure that it covers all requisite areas as fully as possible. Since the previous inspection, it has broadened the range of modern foreign languages on offer, introducing a language acquisition skills course for pupils in Year 7 and a free choice of languages for older pupils. The inclusion of Latin in the core curriculum enables pupils to take an external examination in Year 9 and they also have the option to study Greek. A new philosophical enquiry course has been introduced in Year 7 as part of the school's aim to develop pupils' ability to work independently and develop their thinking skills. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is delivered extremely effectively through subject teaching and in conjunction with an extensive range of enrichment activities which take place on Saturday mornings. Pupils commented how much they appreciate hearing their teachers delivering sessions on topics beyond the examination specifications.
- 3.12 The IB Diploma Programme has been introduced very successfully since the previous inspection, and its philosophy has had a significant impact on other areas of the curriculum. For example, the introduction of the Extended Project Qualification gives all pupils in the sixth form the opportunity to undertake a substantial piece of independent research. New subjects have been introduced to the IB programme as well as additional subjects to the extensive range available at GCSE and at A level. Pupils receive excellent advice on courses from the professional guidance centre, of which the pupils speak extremely highly. University classes prepare sixth form pupils most effectively for the next stage in their education. Sixth formers cannot praise highly enough the support and opportunities available to them. The library is an extremely well-used resource which pupils praised enthusiastically. It provides a conducive working environment and pupils appreciate the extensive range of books and other resources and the willingness of the staff to obtain any additional book they request.

- 3.13 The programme of extra-curricular activities is outstanding. The school offers an exceptionally wide and diverse selection of well-attended activities, clubs, societies and trips. Many clubs are run by the pupils themselves. The music department offers a huge variety of activities at the highest standard, as well as giving four major public concerts a year. Likewise, the drama department performs a variety of plays to a very high standard. A comprehensive sporting programme, including polo and equestrianism, is available throughout the year. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is also offered to Gold level and is very popular with the pupils.
- 3.14 Over 200 pupils spend an hour each week helping in a wide range of activities in the local community. The Star Lab (an inflatable planetarium) is taken into local primary schools where pupils give informative presentations. Some pupils have made a significant impact on developing the reading skills of primary school pupils by visiting their school and listening to them read. They are also seen as excellent role models for the primary school pupils. The Academy Choir, which the pupils help to run, is provided for local school children. Local prep schools attend drama sessions in the school's new Parabola Arts Centre. The science department has links with local schools, and there are community links through the departments such as economics, history and geography. There are links with primary schools overseas, exchange visits to schools in Ecuador, Spain, Italy and Germany, and many opportunities for trips and expeditions abroad.
- 3.15 Each year pupils raise considerable sums for local, national and international charities. Not only does this indicate high levels of vigour and commitment, it also displays the pupils' leadership skills.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 The school's aim of producing intellectually curious, self-motivated, enthusiastic, successful women who will develop an enduring love of learning is most effectively supported by the contribution of teaching. Since the previous inspection, there has been a strong focus on learning, targeted in professional development and reinforced by the introduction of the IB. Teachers are highly qualified and have excellent subject knowledge, which instils a great love of learning in the pupils. The excellent public examination results reflect the effectiveness of the teaching. Classroom facilities are excellent, giving a positive environment for learning.
- 3.18 Teachers are very aware of the needs of individual pupils and adopt specific, well-directed strategies to support them. The provision for individual pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent and is delivered very sensitively. Scholars have special programmes on a Saturday morning, gifted and talented pupils are challenged within lessons and beyond, and all departments run sessions for entry to the most competitive universities. Pupils' progress is monitored very carefully by senior leaders and within departments.
- 3.19 Much of the teaching throughout the school is of the highest quality, allowing the pupils to make excellent progress and rapidly develop their skills, knowledge and understanding. Teachers are extremely ambitious for their pupils and, at the same time, they are supportive and encouraging. Excellent use is made of a comprehensive range of teaching strategies and resources, and the use of ICT by teachers is often impressive, significantly enhancing learning. Lessons are very well planned with great clarity of purpose. Lessons often start with a stimulating brief

activity, which immediately engages the pupils, setting the tone for the rest of the lesson. The volume of work covered is impressive, as is the level of analysis. Occasionally, lessons do not challenge pupils sufficiently and a few pupils commented on this in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The school is responsive to this and regular lesson observations lead to the sharing of good practice.

- 3.20 Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent throughout the school and, in lessons, there is often a collaborative approach with much participation by the pupils. The positive, inclusive, yet relaxed learning atmosphere encourages very good behaviour. Pupils listen to each other very well and respect the contributions and opinions of others. Lessons successfully encourage independence and are not confined to preparation for public examinations. Pupils often become passionate about their learning, relishing research, debating ideas and asking probing questions. Many lessons are intellectually charged as pupils engage in high-level debates. Pupils often take the lead in lessons giving excellent presentations to their peers or working together in pairs or groups. Teachers are enthusiastic, often inspirational, and they are committed to going well beyond the syllabus. They stimulate a love of learning in their pupils, not least through the plethora of intellectual societies they lead.
- 3.21 Appropriate and stimulating homework is set. In their questionnaire responses, a small number of pupils and parents commented on there being an uneven spread of homework. The school acknowledges that this needs improvement. Marking and assessment are very effective, providing encouraging and constructive feedback for the pupils both within lessons and on their written work. The school is working to ensure that commenting is done consistently across all departments. Academic reporting is excellent. Reports reflect the school's emphasis on learning and provide extremely constructive comments.

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 are confident, self-aware, and sensitive to the needs and views of others. They are courteous, friendly and considerate, demonstrating a high degree of emotional, social and intellectual maturity and a sincere engagement with the learning experience. The degree of personal development is remarkable, arising from a culture in the school which promotes self-reliance, independence, initiative, and collaboration. As a result, the school fully meets its aims of providing an inclusive, fulfilling education for its pupils in whom a belief in making a positive and meaningful contribution to the communities in which they live is firmly inculcated. This strength is validated by the parental and pupil questionnaire responses, which praise the school's internationalism, social awareness, its secure and caring environment, as well as the development of a self-determining and resilient character.
- 4.3 The pupils develop an excellent appreciation of the non-material aspects of life. They frequently lead and organise the daily prayers. They show an acute ability to reflect on a wide range of topics, while the calm and respectful atmosphere helps the whole school to contemplate on the topics covered. The pupils develop a secure understanding of the importance of positive and stable relationships, and consider diverse and personal values through many of the academic and other programmes to which they are exposed. They use spaces set aside by the school for calm reflection and contemplation. They deepen their spiritual development through exposure to the wide range of cultural experiences in art, music and drama.
- 4.4 The pupils' awareness of and sensitivity towards contemporary issues is strongly in evidence in lessons. The pupils take delight in sharing experiences and testing ideas in what they know is a supportive, non-judgemental but positively challenging environment. They show a keen awareness of right and wrong, understanding the need for rules, and appreciating that there need to be structures both to reward and sanction.
- 4.5 The pupils develop an excellent sense of responsibility as they carry out a whole range of supervisory and organisational responsibilities. The peer mentoring system is much praised as a way of pupils being able to share concerns and worries. The house is seen by the pupils as a sanctuary, in which there is camaraderie, support and friendship across year groups. They appreciate the vital role of the house staff in providing a stable and supportive environment.
- 4.6 The pupils develop a strong sense of civic awareness, including a good knowledge of the public institutions and services in England. They are sensitive to the needs of others less fortunate than themselves. The pupils support, both financially and in person, a range of local, national and international charities with great vigour and enthusiasm, often instigating and running initiatives themselves. Extensive outreach and thriving overseas partnership programmes are a significant strength of an outward facing school.
- 4.7 The pupils have a firm understanding of major world religions and tolerance of other cultures. The relationships between all pupils, regardless of nationality, culture or faith, are harmonious, supportive and mutually encouraging. International

mindfulness and the achievements of cultural diversity are celebrated, including those of the Western cultural tradition. Through the growing International Society within the school, pupils stand as ambassadors and mentors, representing their country within the school and offering support and advice to other pupils should they need it. Through events to celebrate cultural diversity, such as the annual international evening, the pupils develop an excellent understanding of the challenges and responsibilities of global citizenship.

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

- 4.8 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 Major refurbishments and a greater commitment to pastoral staffing are indicators of constructive improvements in pastoral care since the previous inspection. The school meets its aim to educate the whole person and to promote a sense of lasting fulfilment through the pupils' personal development and self-determination.
- 4.10 Academic and pastoral staff provide a very high standard of support and highly effective guidance for individual pupils. Teachers and house staff, both day and boarding, know their pupils extremely well and are adept at helping them to take advantage of opportunities provided by the school. Great care is taken to support pupils with SEND and EAL, and the school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for disabled pupils. The pupils have a wide variety of people to whom they can turn for help, including easily accessible independent counsellors. Induction arrangements for all new pupils are comprehensive. Older pupils often lead advice sessions for younger pupils, making an important contribution to the success of pastoral care.
- 4.11 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is excellent, as are relations amongst the pupils themselves. Pupils and their teachers respect each other, and a genuinely warm and harmonious atmosphere prevails within the school.
- 4.12 The school's pastoral arrangements are based on securely embedded policies and procedures which are well known to all. The scrupulous logging of contacts with parents ensures continuity of care. Weekly pastoral meetings highlight any concerns about individual pupils which are immediately shared with relevant staff. Pupils who suffer from the pressure of school are supported well, both through the medical centre and the tutorial system.
- 4.13 Pupils consider the recently introduced behaviour, discipline and rewards policy to be fair and reasonable, although a minority feel that sanctions are not always consistently applied or proportionate. A minority also expressed dissatisfaction with the school's willingness to ask for their opinions and to respond to their views. Inspectors judge that there are many well-used channels for pupils to communicate their views. For example, prefects and other student leaders are a key bridge between staff and pupils. Nevertheless, the school's leaders are aware that more could be done to involve pupils in decision making and to explain the rationale behind decisions.
- 4.14 The school is highly effective in promoting high standards of personal behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying. Serious disciplinary issues are rare. Heads of division carefully log and swiftly follow up any complaints of bullying and agree action to be taken. Pupils around the school are courteous, well mannered and often joyful. The school embraces the benefits of being an international community.

- 4.15 A wide variety of good quality and nutritious food is provided. Pupils are also encouraged to be healthy by taking part in regular physical activity.

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

- 4.16 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.17 The school has extremely thorough arrangements for dealing with safeguarding issues. These arrangements include a rigorous recruitment procedure and appropriate measures for child protection. Any welfare matters are managed sensitively and effectively; pupils' well-being is paramount. Staff at all levels take their responsibilities extremely seriously and take swift, supportive action if they identify a need. All members of staff have received appropriate training in child protection and receive regular updates.
- 4.18 All the required policies relating to welfare, health and safety are in place, implemented and regularly reviewed. Effective measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. The school has appointed a full time health and safety adviser with a comprehensive, dynamic brief to assess risk and minimise its possible impact on the whole school community. In addition, a governor has oversight of all welfare, health and safety matters. As a consequence, this aspect of the school is constantly improving and, combined with an exemplary caring and supportive attitude by staff and pupils, results in a very secure, excellently managed, safe environment. Since the previous inspection the school has made significant financial investment to improve welfare and safety even further.
- 4.19 Detailed and thoughtful risk assessments are undertaken for boarding and departmental activities in school and for trips and visits; all are particularly well documented with an exceptional eye for detail.
- 4.20 A centralised, well-equipped and welcoming medical centre, staffed by qualified nurses, provides for pupils who are ill or injured or who wish to discuss health or well-being concerns. The school nurses are closely involved in pastoral and welfare discussions so that key staff are made aware of pupils with acute medical or welfare needs. The school is aware that a few pupils struggle to cope with the wealth of opportunities on offer and has systems in place to deal with such cases. In addition, there is also a very large number of trained first aiders. Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and stored.
- 4.21 Welfare and safety are woven into the fabric of the school.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.22 Outcomes for boarders are excellent.
- 4.23 Boarders show confidence, maturity, independence and tolerance. They demonstrate high standards of courtesy and consideration towards each other and towards staff and visitors. They enjoy the boarding experience, appreciate their friendships and greatly value the sense of belonging to their school and house communities.
- 4.24 Boarders make extremely positive contributions to school life, showing eagerness to take on roles of responsibility and leadership, supporting and mentoring younger boarders, directing clubs and activities and leading or performing in prayers. They

- are staunchly loyal to their houses, and a spirit of friendly rivalry exists between houses, such as in the recent house music competition.
- 4.25 The congenial and constructive relationships which exist between boarders themselves and with the boarding staff continue to be a significant strength of the school. Those with EAL are supported where needed, and international ambassadors assist with the integration of pupils from overseas.
- 4.26 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent.
- 4.27 The boarders are extremely well cared for by a dedicated team of staff, committed to supporting them and promoting their well-being. Communication and liaison between house staff and tutors is outstanding, and careful tracking of boarders' progress and development academically, socially, emotionally and physically is a key contributor to the boarders' overall happiness and success.
- 4.28 The well-equipped medical centre, run by a team of highly efficient and caring qualified nurses, provides 24-hour-a-day medical cover and drop-in sessions for advice or a chat at break times, which is greatly appreciated. Medicines are stored, dispensed and monitored meticulously, both in the houses and in the surgery, thus addressing a recommendation in the previous inspection. A local doctor visits every weekday, and appointments are arranged as required with dentists and other specialist consultants.
- 4.29 Boarders said that there is a wide range of people available to them if they need help, including two counsellors, a mental health nurse, a life coach, independent listeners, the chaplain, house staff, tutors and peer mentors. They feel safe in the boarding houses, and they have lockable drawers to keep their belongings secure.
- 4.30 The school provides an appetising choice of nutritious, hot and cold food in the house kitchens. Boarders are particularly appreciative of the international evenings to celebrate festivals of different cultures, including Nigerian Independence Day, Chinese New Year and British patron saints. 'House Choice', when boarders can make special requests for supper on Wednesday evenings, is a highlight of the week. In their responses to the questionnaire, a small minority of boarders expressed dissatisfaction with the food, but inspectors found the food to be varied and of excellent quality. Boarders can make themselves snacks and hot drinks in the evenings and weekends, and special dietary requirements are met. Boarders can make their views known by giving feedback on meals on a daily basis in the comments book or by making suggestions for menus or special occasions at forum meetings.
- 4.31 A vast choice of stimulating and challenging recreational opportunities is available to boarders in the evenings and at weekends. They develop culturally and creatively through an impressive programme of extra-curricular music, drama and dance, often directed by older boarders. They keep physically fit through an extensive range of sports and activities, including fencing, polo, horse-riding and rowing.
- 4.32 The junior and sixth form boarding houses all have their own unique ethos, atmosphere and character, and provide exceptionally comfortable, well-furnished bedrooms and common rooms for relaxation and study. Boarders take great pride in their houses and enjoy personalising their rooms with memorabilia from home.
- 4.33 Regular contact with family and friends is maintained via mobile phones, email and video links, although some boarders said that internet access can be unreliable at

times. The school communicates effectively with parents and guardians by email or through the parent portal, and parents are regularly invited to the school to attend special events and support matches.

- 4.34 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.35 Arrangements are extremely effective in ensuring that all of the National Minimum Standards are met. Safeguarding measures are rigorous and implemented with care, and all staff receive regular safeguarding training. The school operates thorough and efficient procedures for recruiting staff and checking their suitability to work with children.
- 4.36 Efficient policies are in place to combat bullying. Boarders state that incidents are rare but if they do arise they are taken seriously and dealt with quickly and effectively. They do not tolerate intimidating behaviour of any kind, and the school and internet peer mentors take positive steps to counter e-bullying and warn against the dangers of social websites.
- 4.37 The published list of agreed sanctions, common to all the houses, is generally considered to be fair. Some boarders feel, however, that these are inconsistently applied at times. Boarding staff promote good behaviour through a range of ingenious initiatives: 'Random Acts of Kindness' awards and dormitory tidy points succeed in fostering positive attitudes towards community life.
- 4.38 Every house has a written risk assessment produced by the house staff in consultation with the health and safety adviser, and fire drills and alarm tests are regularly undertaken. There is a rigorous procedure for checking boarders and visitors in and out of houses. Boarding staff have a highly effective system for knowing a boarder's whereabouts and have a clear plan of action should a pupil go missing.
- 4.39 Boarders are taught to be responsible, resourceful, self-regulating and to keep themselves healthy and free from harm. They stated that they feel happy, comfortable, safe and secure at the school.
- 4.40 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent.
- 4.41 The school is fully committed to boarding and undertakes highly reflective evaluation of provision in order to maintain consistently high standards of care and support. An impressive programme of refurbishment and improvement to boarding accommodation is already in progress, and the two newest houses reflect the excellent standard of accommodation planned for all houses.
- 4.42 Boarding policies and procedures are meticulously monitored and published on the website. In response to the questionnaire, some boarders indicated that the rationale behind recent changes to routines concerning use of laptops during prep had not been clearly explained to them. Staffing in the boarding houses is generously resourced, and staff are regularly trained to ensure that the many good practice is shared.
- 4.43 Responses to the questionnaire indicate that the vast majority of parents and boarders are highly satisfied with the boarding provision, although a small minority of boarders feel the need for more free time in the evenings and at weekends. Inspectors judged that the school maintains an excellent balance of planned and

free-time activity, in keeping with its aim of providing wide-ranging opportunities which nurture intellectual curiosity, creativity and confidence.

- 4.44 The school has maintained and built upon the excellent standard of boarding provision which was praised in the previous inspection report.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors provide an excellent oversight of the life and work of the school. They discharge their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources very successfully. They have well-established monitoring systems. Governors are reflective and open in their approach, regularly reviewing the processes of the governing body (known as Council) to maintain its very high standards of governance. Extensive benchmarking, training and appraisals are important aspects of this well-designed system of governance.
- 5.3 Governors work closely with the leadership team, providing valuable support and guidance. The governing body benefits from the wide range of experience and high level of expertise of its members. Its skills base is reviewed regularly so that it can fulfil its duties effectively now and in the future. Governors play an integral role in shaping the clear vision and strategy that are in place. They assess and challenge strategic and operational decisions from a range of perspectives to ensure these are secure, and to establish short- and long-term priorities. Very well considered, detailed plans have been developed in conjunction with the leadership team. There is an extensive programme of investment and development to enable the school to fulfil its long-term aims. Governors are highly committed and have an excellent insight into the life of the school through established reporting systems, attendance at school events, lesson observations, staff representatives on the governing body and meetings with staff. As part of the school's strategy, a greater focus has been placed on making the work of the governing body more visible and transparent.
- 5.4 The governing body has a well-developed framework of checks and balances. Governors play a vital role in reviewing the school's comprehensive range of policies and ensuring these are fit for purpose. The governing body is highly effective in discharging its responsibilities for statutory requirements, including the annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.6 At all levels of responsibility, leaders are highly effective in ensuring the school fulfils its stated mission to support and guide girls in becoming self-determining, fulfilled and resilient women who value, serve and enrich the communities to which they belong. They also very successfully fulfil the school's objective to honour the school's pioneering heritage by providing challenge and innovation and pursuing academic excellence. Leaders at all levels discharge their delegated responsibilities extremely well, ensuring that policies are implemented rigorously, especially those for the safeguarding of pupils. Leaders inspire others to adopt a whole-hearted commitment to the highest standards and to meeting the academic and pastoral needs of the pupils. They have established a culture and ethos in which every girl matters and where their progress and well-being are paramount. The very strong

leadership, vision and determination of the senior leadership have successfully gained the full support of staff, parents and pupils.

- 5.7 All aspects of the school were judged to be excellent at the previous inspection and, since then, improvements have been made in many areas: clear articulation of vision; detailed and far-sighted strategic planning; investment in facilities; and a major increase in the funds available for providing bursaries through means-tested support. Examination results have improved. The curriculum has expanded and pupils' achievements have improved. Pastoral care has been strengthened, the tutorial system has been refined, and there is a greater commitment to peer mentoring. The quality of food has improved through an enhanced catering budget. There have been improvements to medical care and significant additional mental health resources.
- 5.8 Leaders provide clear educational direction, as reflected in the excellent quality of the pupils' education and the high standard of their personal development. Management of the logistics to ensure pupils are safe and well cared for is extremely impressive and on an enormous scale; catering, maintenance, administration and extra-curricular managers lead teams which take pride in actively supporting the school, its ethos and traditions and in ensuring the school runs extremely efficiently day by day.
- 5.9 Priorities and targets to guide the further development of the school are thoughtful, far-sighted and clearly set out and justified in the comprehensive development plan. There is a strong culture of positive self-evaluation and members of the leadership team are very responsive to changing situations. The school's self-evaluation, monitoring and review processes are extensive, thorough and well conceived, involving many layers of both internal and external review and feedback. Monitoring and evaluation of pastoral matters, the curriculum and the quality of teaching are highly effective and thorough. Senior staff are very much aware of what happens in the classroom, around the school and in the houses, and are constantly assessing and responding to the changing and varied needs of pupils who range from the highly competitive and robust to those who need extra support to cope with the vast array of academic, social and extra-curricular opportunities. Senior prefects and the teams they lead assist and support in this. Heads of department not only manage their departments highly effectively, but also provide strong and, in many cases, inspiring leadership. The remarkably wide range of policies and procedures that work in practice are continually monitored and evaluated.
- 5.10 The school enjoys an outstanding range of resources, and staff-pupil relations are excellent. The school has been in a position to recruit some inspirational and highly motivated staff in recent years. There are effective systems for the induction of new staff, on-going training and guidance, and a comprehensive programme of performance review. Resources are deployed to very good effect, and pupils benefit from high-quality accommodation and teaching materials. There is careful financial management. Highly effective support is provided by the many teams of dedicated non-teaching staff. The appointment of a full-time health and safety adviser ensures meticulous attention to the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
- 5.11 Links between the school and parents are excellent. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the education and support provided. Parents feel very strongly that their children are offered an appropriate range of subjects and that the school provides a good range

of extra-curricular activities. Almost all parents feel that their children are happy, that they are safe and that they are well looked after.

- 5.12 The school has strengthened links in a variety of ways since the previous inspection, facilitated by the increasing use of technology, and has excellent systems for communicating with parents. A fortnightly newsletter is sent to parents by email. The parent portal on the school's website is the avenue for much other information, including timetables, policies and reports. A paperless calendar is produced and a hard copy has been commissioned in response to parental requests. Although a few parents would like greater email contact with teachers, the school has been trying to channel communication through the tutors and housemistresses to ensure that there is comprehensive oversight of every individual pupil.
- 5.13 Parents have excellent opportunities to be involved with the school from the very outset of their journey of application. Housemistresses and tutors contact parents and guardians to provide contact details at key points of the year. There is a programme of events to which parents are invited, including a dinner for new parents. An annual parents' evening complements the progress reports that are issued regularly and are used to inform discussions. An annual full report is produced after internal exams. Reports are helpful documents and provide targets for improvement. A social committee of parents meets for lunch, with the organisation of the event facilitated by the school. It is anticipated that this will be a model for further parent social gatherings.
- 5.14 A suitable complaints policy is available via the parent portal. There have been no formal complaints regarding the education of the girls in the last 12 months.

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