



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**TUDOR HALL SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

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## Tudor Hall School

Full Name of School	<b>Tudor Hall School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>931/6001</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>2995266</b>		
Address	<b>Tudor Hall School Wykham Park Banbury Oxfordshire OX16 9UR</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01295 263434</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01295 253264</b>		
Email Address	<b>admin@tudorhallschool.com</b>		
Head	<b>Miss Wendy Griffiths</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr John Gloag</b>		
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>336</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>		
Numbers by Age	11-16	<b>240</b>	
	16-18	<b>96</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>78</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>258</b>	
	Full:	<b>258</b>	Weekly: <b>0</b>
Inspection dates	<b>01 Oct 2013 to 04 Oct 2013</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2007.

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](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. 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 the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions. They attended a meeting of the governors' education committee. 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

Dr Joe Tierney	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Penny Goodman	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Adrian Meadows	Team Inspector (Head, Society of Heads school)
Mr David Pritchard	Team Inspector (Senior Teacher, HMC school)
Mrs Lorraine Winch-Johnson	Team Inspector (Senior Teacher, GSA school)
Mr Matt Williams	Team Inspector (Assistant Head, GSA school)
Ms Alison Horton	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Jan Scarrow	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Head, GSA school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Tudor Hall is a boarding school for girls from the ages of 11 to 18. Situated near Banbury in Oxfordshire, it was founded in Salisbury in 1850. In 1908, the school moved to more spacious accommodation in Kent and, in 1939, to near Chipping Campden. With the need for further expansion, it moved in 1946 to its present site, Wykham Park, which has 46 acres of grounds.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a high standard of education for girls in a boarding environment, and to develop the pupils as individuals with regard to the whole person, their intellectual, physical and creative potential, and their emotional and spiritual development. The school seeks to encourage girls to use their talents for the benefit of the community around them, whether family, school, or the wider world. It strives to equip pupils for life after school, with the foundation of sound values and faith based on Christian teaching, but not exclusive of the religions or traditions of other cultures.
- 1.3 The school is run as a charitable trust, and governance is administered by a main board, with assistance from three committees - education, finance and general purposes, and pastoral. These meet on a termly basis, with other committees meeting as and when required.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 336 girls on the roll, with 256 boarders and 96 in the sixth form. The majority of pupils are white British and based in the UK and less than one out of every ten girls are from overseas. Seventy-five girls have some form of special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) and 32 receive additional support from the school. Of the 25 girls for whom English is not their first language, 20 are taught English as an additional language (EAL). There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs. Boarders are accommodated in six boarding houses, organized according to the girls' ages.
- 1.5 Most pupils enter the school at the age of 11 or 13, and some at 16. The school is selective, with pupils given tests in verbal reasoning, mathematics and English, as well as being interviewed by the head. Places are offered at aged 13 conditional upon a pupil's Common Entrance results, or their GCSE results for entry into the sixth form. The ability profile of the school is above the national average, with around three-quarters of pupils in Year 7 having ability above the national norm. The ability profile of the sixth form is similar to the national average of pupils in full-time education.
- 1.6 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.

### ***Senior School***

School	NC name
Todd	Year 7
IIS	Year 8
IIIS	Year 9
IVS	Year 10
VS	Year 11
Inglis	Year 12
Ashtons	Year 13

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 Tudor Hall is highly successful in meeting its principal aims, and its pupils' achievements are excellent in all aspects of school life, including the academic. They make a high level of progress during their time in the school. They attain very good standards both at GCSE and A level. The curriculum offers them a broad education, and a wide-ranging extra-curricular programme allows further opportunities for success. Teaching is excellent, a significant factor in the pupils' achievements. There are excellent examples of the marking of pupils' written work, but some inconsistency overall. Since the previous inspection, the school has embarked on a policy of encouraging pupils to be more independent in their learning in lessons and this is beginning to bear highly promising fruit. The school is reviewing its provision for the more able pupils to develop it further. In this regard, the use of the library's stock of books is a potentially strong support.
- 2.2 A particular strength of the school is the individual care and attention given to pupils, resulting in girls who are articulate, confident and high achieving yet aware of the needs of others. The high quality pastoral care offers results in girls' excellent personal development. This means the girls are happy to be in the school and proud of what it achieves. Their excellent boarding education enhances their experiences, both academically and pastorally. They are housed in mainly good accommodation, some of which is outstanding, and are happy to mix with their peers, both in lessons and socially. Girls are cared for extremely well, both by the teaching staff and others. They enjoy food of outstanding quality and excellent arrangements are made for their medical care.
- 2.3 These significant strengths are also the result of excellent governance and leadership and management at all levels. Practices and policies are fully embedded in the life of the school, particularly those relating to child protection and health and safety. Communication with parents and arrangements for reporting girls' progress are strong. Parents' views of the school are overwhelmingly positive. Good planning and the atmosphere created by senior managers means that the school is in a good position to move forward. It has made good progress since the previous inspection, for example in improving the accommodation, curriculum and teaching.

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

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

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

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

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Further develop the programme to engage pupils more in their own learning, particularly with the more able pupils.
  2. Increase use of the book stock in the library.
  3. Spread as widely as possible the existing excellence in the marking of pupils' written work.



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

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

- 3.1 Pupils' academic and other achievements are excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are extremely well educated, in accordance with the school's aims to develop the whole person. A consistently high standard of learning is maintained in their academic work, and girls reach high levels of attainment in sport, music, drama and in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. This degree of excellence is promoted by the individual attention given to girls by teachers and other staff, which allows the development of the whole person, in line with the school's aims.
- 3.3 Articulate, personable and overwhelmingly positive in outlook, pupils speak fluently, write in a coherent, lucid way, and are highly capable of logical, independent thought when given the opportunity. They listen attentively both to their teachers and to their peers. Pupils cope proficiently with the mathematical demands of subjects, such as geography and economics. They readily demonstrate creativity in a range of contexts, as was seen in poetic work based on music and in rehearsals for a house dance competition. Girls are skilful in using information and communication technology (ICT).
- 3.4 Success in extra-curricular activities is particularly strong. Girls regularly play representative sport at regional or higher level and have won awards for music and drama. They are regularly commended for their debating skills at the Model United Nations and have achieved in academic competitions, including a commendation for science writing and first prize in the Salter's challenge for chemistry.
- 3.5 In the period from 2010-2012, when national comparisons can be made, results at GCSE were well above the average for maintained schools and similar to those for maintained selective schools. In 2013 there was a notable improvement in the GCSE results. Almost all pupils gained higher grades (A\*-C) and two-thirds of grades were at A\*/A level. This shows that pupils are making excellent progress to Year 11.
- 3.6 At A level, results have been above those of maintained selective schools over the period from 2010 to 2012, with over three-quarters of entries gaining A\*-B grades. In 2013, results were similar to those of 2012. Hence pupils make excellent progress in the sixth form. Almost all leavers won places at university, with a significant number going to institutions with a high standard of entry, and the vast majority gaining their first choice.
- 3.7 Pupils with SEND benefit from generous support and good teaching; as a result they become confident in their abilities and achieve excellent success, often well beyond expectation. Similarly, data shows that pupils with EAL also make strong progress and perform very well in examinations. Those recognised as able, gifted or talented, such as sports or arts scholars, are encouraged to take part in external clubs and competitions, where they are successful, for example in a national poetry competition.
- 3.8 Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning, being attentive, interested in what they do, curious, and diligent. They work well on their own, but are also at ease when collaborating and supporting others. Most pupils develop good study skills, take pride in their work and are eager to do their best. Pupils have productive

relationships with teachers and only rarely drift off task. They communicate easily and naturally with each other, but sometimes are a little hesitant to speak up and offer their own ideas in class.

- 3.9 The school has made efforts to promote independent learning since the previous inspection. Nearly all pupils agreed that they were being encouraged to do things for themselves and to work independently. Younger girls in particular show a willingness to think flexibly and question what they hear, and the work for the extended project qualification (EPQ) in the sixth form is leading some pupils to conduct extensive research.

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

- 3.10 The curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 It enables the pupils to make good progress and is well planned, ensuring continuity of education and meeting the school's aims to develop pupils' intellectual, physical and creative potential. The extra-curricular provision also makes a strong contribution to this aim.
- 3.12 The curriculum has recently been reviewed and Saturday morning lessons have been introduced for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The curriculum is extensive, covering all National Curriculum subjects, with the provision of ICT, dance, design and technology and thinking skills in Years 7 to 9. French and Latin are studied in Year 7, while pupils in Year 9 may study German or Spanish in addition to French. Pupils choose from a wide range of subjects at GCSE, with more able pupils taking separate sciences. Pupils may choose to study religious education at GCSE. There has been significant investment in the ICT infrastructure and all pupils work towards a Level 2 qualification in ICT.
- 3.13 A wide range of 28 subjects is available in the sixth form, including further mathematics, government and politics and Greek at AS Level. The academic programme is usefully supplemented by life skills and lectures on contemporary issues; this involves visiting speakers and is valued by pupils. In addition, there are lessons on thinking skills and a *Habits of Mind* programme, whereby pupils are encouraged to develop key independent learning skills. The EPQ has recently been introduced in the sixth form and is developing.
- 3.14 Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught as part of the core curriculum and effectively develops a series of life skills. The programme is adapted to take into account relevant issues, for example alcohol abuse in the local area, as discussed in an observed lesson.
- 3.15 The curriculum is easily accessible and offers suitable challenge for all. The provision for pupils with SEND or EAL is appropriate to their needs, with some pupils receiving extra tuition in place of Latin or a modern foreign language, if appropriate. They are supported individually and in classes; communication and recording about their progress are excellent. Able pupils are provided with a wide range of visits, lectures, competitions and societies, although this programme is yet to be formalised following the appointment of a new co-ordinator.
- 3.16 The provision for careers is well planned and provides effective advice through a range of activities, including regular careers fairs, the use of outside speakers, and independent advice through external careers organisations. Pupils gain valuable

work experience in Year 11 and participate in community work in the sixth form. Pupils speak highly of the careers advice given to them by staff.

- 3.17 Opportunities for extra-curricular activities are extensive. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 attend at least two activities per week and enjoy sports activities such as swimming, lacrosse and horse-riding, achieving much success at local, regional and national level. Pupils are very appreciative of the extra-curricular provision. Dance, drama and music are very popular and provide opportunities to excel. There are many other activities including several subject societies. The Model United Nations is a popular and successful activity and allows pupils to travel to various parts of the UK, developing their skills of debate.
- 3.18 Further afield, pupils experience a rich array of cultural experiences with visits to Bolivia, India and South Africa. The outdoor education scheme allows pupils to develop confidence and leads to the Duke of Edinburgh's award, where a significant number achieve the gold level. Links with the community are strong through local volunteer work.

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

- 3.19 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.20 The teaching supports the school's aims of providing a high standard of education and allows the identification and development of the individual girl's intellectual, physical and creative talents. Lessons are carefully planned and classes are small, so teachers have a sharp insight into their pupils' needs and abilities and give them effective guidance. The proportion of good and excellent lessons is high. Pupils with SEND are given individual treatment, taught well, and consequently make good progress.
- 3.21 A particularly strong feature of the teaching is the mutual respect and strong rapport between pupils, and between pupils and their teachers. This gives the girls the confidence to ask questions and produces an atmosphere highly conducive to study, which fosters high achievement; in a Latin lesson this allowed purposeful and effective discussion on Roman life in Pompeii. The teachers' excellent subject knowledge, allows them to present interesting and focused lessons. Teaching in the best lessons uses varied resources and strategies to challenge pupils and allow them to develop and articulate their own ideas. Most lessons are conducted at a good pace.
- 3.22 The previous inspection recommended the greater use of ICT. The improved provision of ICT facilities, coupled with training, has extended the use of ICT within the school. It is now used effectively in lessons, resulting in a strong visual and auditory impact, as seen in a biology lesson where the teacher engaged and supported pupils' progress. There has been outstanding and innovative cross-curricular practice such as the creation of a web-based encyclopaedia.
- 3.23 Teachers are enthusiastic and committed in lessons, but girls' learning is also supported by the teaching of additional sessions and clinics which resolve any areas of difficulty, or to extend the curriculum. Teaching of examination groups focuses closely on the syllabus and the skills needed to achieve high grades. In a number of lessons, helpful study skills were embedded into the activities to promote the girls' learning. Responses to the questionnaires indicated almost all pupils feel that they make good progress, are helped as individuals, are encouraged to work

independently, and their teachers help them learn. All the parents agreed that their child made at least good progress.

- 3.24 The best teaching features opportunities for pupils to learn independently, something which the school is developing. It is currently reviewing provision for the more able, for the use of private study, and the opportunities for extended study. These initiatives are ways of raising still further the current standards of teaching. The school library is a pleasant, welcoming area and managed with efficiency and enthusiasm, but borrowing rates are low.
- 3.25 The marking of written work is regular and contains constructive, evaluative and encouraging comments. In some cases, peer-marking and pupil-teacher dialogues are used, and in the best there is valuable advice given on how to improve work. Sensitive and targeted questioning in some lessons allows teachers to identify difficulties and provide opportunities for the pupils to develop their reasoning and to reward progress.
- 3.26 The school has responded to the recommendations at the time of the previous inspection and has established a programme of lesson observations to extend good practice.

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

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

- 4.1 The personal development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school succeeds in its aims of educating pupils with regard to the whole person and of providing outstanding spiritual development that fosters respect, courtesy and kindness.
- 4.3 The pupils' strong appreciation of non-material aspects of life is exemplified in their enthusiastic participation in art, drama, music and sport. They are emotionally mature and demonstrate high levels of confidence, self-esteem and very positive attitudes to learning. They are loyal towards, and very proud of, their school, and are able to articulate its values. Furthermore, pupils' feelings are enhanced by the ambience of the buildings and facilities, as well as inspired by the quality of the art work and beauty of the school's grounds. They have knowledge of and respect for the religious beliefs of others, and the thriving Christian union invites pupils to participate in religious debate. Pupils' spiritual awareness is enhanced by their attendance at house or whole-school assemblies, or chapel services that have a Christian basis. A Christian Eucharist service is held on Sundays and Roman Catholics may attend Mass at a local Catholic church. Pupils are prepared for both Anglican and Roman Catholic confirmation.
- 4.4 The monitoring of each girl ensures that a firm framework for moral development and a clear sense of right and wrong are imparted. Pupils have a strong understanding of moral issues which are discussed in the PSHE programme, in lessons, and in extra-curricular activities, such as annual visits to memorial sites of the World Wars.
- 4.5 Pupils are confident, without arrogance, and have a well-developed social awareness, both within the school community and beyond. They move around the buildings with exemplary manners. Pupils respond to questions with a calm reflection and a strong sense of responsibility. They uphold excellently the school's motto, 'Habeo ut dem', 'I have that I may give', particularly in the organising of fundraising and through the pupil-led charity committee. They take seriously the school council and the election of members, and enjoy representing the school in sporting events, public speaking and overseas trips. Pupils gain further responsibilities as they move up through the school. The buddy system allows sixth formers to help and support new pupils in Year 7. Likewise, the excellent vertical house system provides opportunities for older pupils to advise and mentor younger ones. Social cohesion among the year groups is enhanced by the allocation of day pupils to the boarding houses where they share a common room.
- 4.6 The presence of boarders in the school allows additional opportunities for cultural awareness and exchange that builds on that seen in lessons. Pupils show excellent understanding of the wider world and discuss British values and institutions in PSHE. Their strong cultural awareness is enhanced by the programme of visiting speakers, as seen with a visiting actor leading a workshop in drama. Their participation in a variety of activities, such as a musical ensemble, a drama club, or through foreign exchanges which cover three continents also enhances their cultural development, as does their work in art which includes trips to the architectural highlights of Europe, such as Barcelona. Thus the girls have an excellent standard of personal development when they leave school.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 In accordance with its aims to develop the whole person, the school's pastoral system is extremely successful in supporting both day and boarding pupils. Pupils receive guidance that helps them to maximise their personal strengths and valuable individualised careers advice. The pupils are very well known by staff who give them considerable time and individual attention on a daily basis. The well-being of girls is actively and thoroughly monitored and communicated to parents and others, with any concerns followed up effectively and promptly.
- 4.9 Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and characterised by high levels of mutual respect and warmth. The chaplaincy, counselling service and medical centre provide sources of support and are readily accessible by pupils. They are also very comfortable talking to house and group staff if they have concerns or worries. Pupils treat each other with respect and willingly help each other, both in lessons and around the school, with older pupils making a meaningful contribution towards the happy experience of new ones. Staff provide holistic care, achieved by effectively integrating boarding and academic provision. This results in happy, confident and enthusiastic pupils.
- 4.10 School meals are characterised by food of a high quality, attractively presented, and served in superb accommodation. Pupils are offered healthy choices and a good variety of options, including salads and vegetarian choices. They spoke very highly of their meals and the very extensive opportunities for exercise and sport, which accommodate their firm interest in healthy, energetic lifestyles.
- 4.11 The school fosters exemplary standards of behaviour, with respect for all members of the community emphasised and universally shared. The school rewards pupils for their positive attitudes and consideration of others. Measures to guard against bullying are highly effective, supported by procedures to deal appropriately with rare incidents. Pupils believe any bullying is taken seriously and dealt with quickly.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable policy to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities.
- 4.13 Through the pupils questionnaire most pupils report they are consulted about initiatives and given opportunities to propose changes, which are then effectively implemented, for example, in adding zumba, pilates and yoga to the extra-curricular provision.

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

- 4.14 Arrangements to promote the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.15 Safeguarding arrangements are secure; any concerns are dealt with effectively, and appropriately recorded. The child protection officers and other staff, including those new to the school, have had appropriate training in child protection. Staff are aware of their responsibilities regarding the reporting of any child protection concerns. Governors regularly receive an oral report on child protection from the head.
- 4.16 Arrangements for all aspects of pupils' health and safety are extremely thorough and detailed. This is aided by the work of a risk management consultant who advises on procedures and visits the school each month. Comprehensive risk assessments

cover all aspects of school life, from potential injuries in sporting activities to possible accidents within subject areas.

- 4.17 All fire prevention measures are in order. Equipment is checked and fire practices are held according to requirements so that pupils are aware of the procedures to follow. These fire drills are properly logged, along with the time taken and any relevant comments.
- 4.18 The provision for pupils who are ill or injured is excellent. The well-equipped medical centre provides full-time care and is staffed by registered nurses. It includes sick bays with en-suite bathrooms, overnight accommodation for the nurse, a well-equipped treatment room, and a consultation room where a local GP holds a weekly surgery.
- 4.19 The admission and attendance registers are accurately completed and kept for the required period.
- 4.20 All parents who responded to the parental questionnaire said that the school keeps their child safe.

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

- 4.21 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.22 Boarders have an excellent level of personal development. They are articulate, and very positive about their boarding experience, and clearly enjoy the opportunities to develop their independence, self-reliance and resilience as they progress from year to year. They are keen to express their views in a sensible and friendly way, relating to both fellow boarders and adults with easy confidence. In conversation, they are both interested and interesting. Each house has its own identity, but a common ethos, based on the boarding principles, pervades them all, so enabling a smooth transition throughout a pupils' school life.
- 4.23 Girls of all ages contribute to the smooth running of their houses in many ways: they organise events and activities across year groups, such as the recent dog show, and are rewarded for their general helpfulness. Boarders value the friendships they make; girls new to the school are clearly very comfortable in their relationships and appreciate the well-established buddy system. In their responses to the pupil questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of boarders said that they enjoy boarding and that boarders get on well together in the house. Relationships between house staff and boarders are outstanding. In all year groups staff have an excellent and natural rapport with the boarders in their care and know individuals extremely well. Although aware of a range of people to contact if they have worries or concerns, most boarders said they would go first to one of the staff with boarding responsibilities. As girls move up the school, house staff encourage them to develop increasing self-reliance, whilst maintaining close relationships with them.
- 4.24 Boarders are well cared for and feel safe and secure in their houses. Their individual needs are supported effectively and they are encouraged to be healthy and fit. They are accommodated in houses based on year groups. Since the previous inspection, a programme of refurbishment and an upgrade of the Year 10 house have resolved some of the disparity in accommodation. The sixth-form houses are outstanding, but some younger boarders have less spacious rooms. Boarders can personalise their own living space and most rooms are warm and pleasantly furnished. They have adequate storage for personal belongings and a

- lockable space for valuables. Pupils have access to computers, televisions and newspapers in each house. Bathroom and laundry facilities are good.
- 4.25 Boarders have good contact with their parents and families through using their mobile phones at designated times and through electronic communications. They have clear access to help lines, should the need arise, and the contact details, 'phone number and email address of an independent listener. Boarders are very positive about the quality of meals taken in the light and pleasant dining hall. Year 7 pupils enjoy breakfast in their house. Kitchens are available in each house for pupils to make their own snacks and drinks, and in the sixth form girls are given the opportunity to gain further cookery skills.
- 4.26 A wide range of clubs and activities is available after school and at weekends, but boarders can also opt to relax. At the weekend pupils enjoy trips such as kayaking, cinema visits, socials with other schools, as well as activities in house. Boarders' views are sought in developing these programmes and also in an annual questionnaire.
- 4.27 Arrangements for boarders' health and welfare are excellent. The school implements effectively the safeguarding policy and all other policies relating to welfare, health and safety. All house staff show a sensible awareness of their responsibilities for those in their care, and all have been appropriately trained. Strong structures are in place via school policies for all areas of safeguarding. The close and open relationships with pupils enable staff to notice any emerging friendship problems before they escalate to more serious situations. Girls confirm that the system of rewards and sanctions is clear and fair.
- 4.28 The medical provision and care for boarders who are injured or unwell are excellent. Access to other medical specialists, dentists and ophthalmic practitioners is available locally, and girls are escorted to appointments, as is necessary and age appropriate. Over-the-counter medicines and prescription medicines are stored correctly. The administration of medicines is properly recorded, and medical staff communicate effectively on the timing of any medication given. Thorough risk assessments are completed before a pupil is deemed able to self-medicate. Fire drills are carried out termly during boarding time and are clearly documented. Trips and activities are carefully assessed for risks and appropriate permission is sought from parents. Staffing levels are always more than sufficient.
- 4.29 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent. Leadership of the boarding team is of a high quality, placing a strong emphasis on matters concerning the welfare and safeguarding of boarders, and the sharing of good practice. Support from the senior boarding staff is very effective. There is a half-termly meeting of the whole boarding team and regular staff meetings in each house. The excellent relationships between housemistresses enable more informal sharing of boarding matters and expertise. There is excellent support for staff new to boarding; they have a thorough period of induction, are suitably mentored and attend a range of appropriate courses. In addition, they are mentored by a senior member of the boarding staff.
- 4.30 Communication between boarding and academic staff is highly effective; comments on pupils' progress, behaviour and attitude are logged on the school database as they occur and house staff meet with pastoral and academic staff at least weekly.
- 4.31 Nearly all parents who responded to the parental questionnaire say that their children enjoy boarding and that the school keeps them safe. They are also all



happy with the ease of contact they experience with the boarding staff and fully agree that the organisation and management of boarding is effective. A small minority of parents say that the boarding accommodation is not comfortable. Inspectors are aware of a variability in the provision, and that this is being resolved through the rolling programme of refurbishment.

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

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

- 5.1 The governance of the school is excellent.
- 5.2 Since the previous inspection, the governors have maintained and improved the school's provision in many areas, in line with the school's aims. The bedrock of this improvement has been astute financial planning, which has allowed surpluses to be wisely invested in facilities. This includes not only the accommodation, but also an investment in staffing and resources. The result is that teaching is being improved and teachers have excellent facilities. In particular, governors have recently improved the sixth-form boarding accommodation and purchased a local preparatory school.
- 5.3 Governors have a good range of expertise, such as in the areas of education, finance and property. They have had appropriate training to aid their work and familiarise themselves with the work of the school by observing lessons, attending social and other functions, and receiving presentations from teaching staff on areas of school life. They are further informed by reports from the head on school development and child protection and by the bursar on financial matters. Each year, examination results are analysed at the education committee. Hence governors have a good insight into the working of the school. They have a useful strategic plan for future developments and are challenging yet supportive of the head and her staff in their pursuit of school improvement.
- 5.4 Governors take their responsibilities for statutory requirements seriously. Matters relating to the health and safety of pupils are dealt with most rigorously and recorded well. The safeguarding of pupils is ensured by the effective measures in place, including appropriate measures in the appointment of staff and a review of policies.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management in the school is excellent.
- 5.6 The school establishes high standards in all areas and achieves its aims. The strength of the pupils' educational experience and the quality of care provided is testimony to the management and leadership of the school. Practices and policies are well established, with a particular emphasis on the welfare and safeguarding of pupils.
- 5.7 Planning for development is good. The school development plan sets out the main educational objectives and is supplemented by good departmental plans. The implementation and review of these plans helps to maintain and improve standards. Senior staff are fully engaged with heads of department in their ambition to improve standards. For example, discussions are held on examination performance and issues arising are identified for action. The senior management team are open, accessible and supportive of staff, so creating an atmosphere conducive to the development of the school.
- 5.8 Heads of department are committed and effective in their role. They plan well, are enthusiastic, and have established a range of appropriate policies in their

handbooks. These handbooks are good overall. The school has very good staffing levels, a significant factor in providing the extensive range of courses, extra-curricular activities, and individual care. Staff are suitably qualified and deployed and have excellent opportunities for professional development. Effective training for pupils' safeguarding and matters relating to welfare, health and safety has been undertaken. The induction of newly qualified teachers and those new to the school is thorough and highly valued. They receive a professional and welcoming introduction to school life. The arrangements for the recruitment of staff are rigorous in implementation. The system of appraisal, where staff are reviewed and targets for improvement set, is thought by them to be helpful and aids their professional development. It is thorough and well-considered, and includes self-reflection and the involvement of pupils.

- 5.9 The results of the parents' questionnaire showed that they are extremely satisfied with all that the school provides. They are particularly pleased with their children's progress, safety, happiness, the way in which they are treated as individuals, and the management of boarding and the whole school. Against this overwhelmingly positive background the only relative concern was the variability in the boarding accommodation. Inspectors agree with this and note that the school is continually seeking to improve boarding facilities, as it has done recently.
- 5.10 There is a strong, positive relationship between the school and its parents. Communication is effective, with parents having access to staff emails. The excellent parent portal, which is used by the majority of parents, carries essential information. In addition, they receive a weekly bulletin of news, and emails from housemistresses. The care and attention given to individual pupils mean that parents make very few complaints and those that are received are dealt with quickly and efficiently. The policy regarding complaints is easily available to parents.
- 5.11 The provision of information for parents is good. For parents of prospective pupils, much is to be found on the school website and in the school prospectus. A comprehensive handbook for new parents is available and housemistresses will maintain contact with them by email in the months before admission. Questionnaire results indicated that parents feel that information about the school and its policies is readily available.
- 5.12 Parents receive termly reports on their child. They contain detailed assessment information as well as comments on progress in subjects, manners and pupils' attitude. Parents are encouraged to comment on these reports. Almost all parents are satisfied with the information given about their child's progress. The school has also developed the monitoring of pupils' progress through the 'traffic lights' report, which summarises engagement, organisation, quality of independent work and attainment, in each subject every half term, by including agreed objectives on termly reports and by the use of helpful comments and targets on marked work.
- 5.13 The school has made good progress since the previous inspection. For example, the senior management team has been restructured, key staff have been appointed, and the curriculum reviewed.

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