



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**WEST BUCKLAND SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

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## West Buckland School

Full Name of School	<b>West Buckland School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>878/6032</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>306710</b>		
Address	<b>West Buckland School West Buckland Barnstaple Devon EX32 0SX</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01598 760281</b>		
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Email Address	<b>enquiries@westbuckland.devon.sch.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Mr John Vick</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Alan Parker</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>652</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (338 boys; 314 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>143</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>25</b>	11-18: <b>484</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>567</b>	
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>85</b>	
	Full:	<b>85</b>	Weekly: <b>0</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mr Andrew Moore</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>22 Jan 2013 to 25 Jan 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 March 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Deborah Forbes	Reporting Inspector
Mr Philip Capes	Team Inspector (Former Head, HMC school)
Mr Sean Hamill	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Clive Holder	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Clare Margetts	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, ISA school)
Mr Julian Thould	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Flora Bean	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Jonathan Shaw	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Jenny Clayphan	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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

- 1.1 West Buckland School is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils aged three to eighteen years. It aims to help all its pupils to develop the personal qualities, abilities and values that will enable them to make the most of their own lives and to contribute to society. Its moral and spiritual values are based on its Christian foundation. It seeks to provide a broad and stimulating curriculum which challenges all pupils throughout, encourages intellectual curiosity and independence, and prepares the way for learning throughout their life. The school, which includes a senior school, a preparatory (prep) school and a Nursery, is a charitable trust with a governing body, at least two members of which must be parents of pupils currently in the school at the time of their appointment. Other former pupils and parents also serve on the governing body. There are separate heads of the senior and preparatory schools but the head of the senior school holds overall responsibility.
- 1.2 The school was founded on the edge of Exmoor on its present 100-acre site in 1858. The preparatory school has its own premises but shares some facilities with the senior school. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) classes are part of the preparatory school and occupy adjacent classrooms, with a shared all-weather outside classroom. The senior school has four boarding houses, one each for boys and girls from Year 7 to Year 12, and one each for boys and girls in Years 12 and 13. Since the previous inspection the '150 Building' for art, design and drama has been opened.
- 1.3 There are currently 652 pupils in the school, of whom 143 are in Years 1 to 6 of the prep school and 25 in the EYFS, the numbers of boys and girls being approximately equal. A total of 85 pupils are full boarders but the school also accommodates flexi-boarders. There are 3 pupils who have a statement of special educational needs and the school has identified a further 109 as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Of these, 51 receive learning support from the school. There are 56 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 43 receive support for their English.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the senior school is above the national average, with around a quarter of the pupils having ability well above average, and very few having below average ability. In the senior school, more than half of the boarders come from Asian countries, with other nationalities also represented. A growing number of day pupils have converted to boarding. The day pupils are drawn from a range of economic backgrounds in north Devon and some of them travel a considerable distance to the school.

- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used by the school for the EYFS and senior school and throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the prep school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

***Prep School***

School	NC name
Prep 1	Year 1
Prep 2	Year 2
Prep 3	Year 3
Prep 4	Year 4
Prep 5	Year 5
Prep 6	Year 6



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

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

- 2.1 The high quality of pupils' achievements in academic and other pursuits successfully fulfils the school's aim of balancing academic provision with a wide range of sporting, cultural, intellectual and other activities. The pupils achieve very well academically, and are able to progress from the prep school to the senior school or from the senior school to university with appropriate qualifications. Year 13 pupils receive careful guidance on universities and careers. Pupils in the EYFS and Years 1 to 6 of the prep school achieve particularly high standards. Throughout the school, pupils make at least good progress which is supported by effective teaching. Sixth-form pupils gain good grades at A level, benefiting from close attention to their needs. Those with SEND or EAL are given much individual support to assist them to achieve to the best of their ability. The curriculum is excellent and pupils' extra-curricular achievements are of a very high quality. At all ages, the pupils are well motivated and keen to do their best. Their level of participation is strong and they achieve particularly high standards in sport and music. The range of opportunities is appreciated by pupils, who participate enthusiastically, whether in teams or choirs or in individual pursuits, and the holistic approach to education is a strength of the school.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent throughout. At all ages they are self-confident, friendly and articulate. They have a strong sense of right and wrong, and are helped by their personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and other guidance given by the school to be socially aware and to understand their current and future responsibilities. They are able to appreciate their own culture, particularly music, and also to have an insight into other cultures, as a result of friendships with the international boarders. The pupils feel well cared for and in response to pre-inspection questionnaires indicated that they liked being at the school. Boarding contributes well to the personal development of those who experience it.
- 2.3 The school's aims and ethos are well supported by good governance. Governors are aware of their regulatory responsibilities, including safeguarding, and have suitable systems to ensure that they fulfil them. Their careful financial management has enabled the school to continue to invest in excellent new facilities and plan for the future. Leadership and management of the school are committed and effective. Members of the senior leadership team (SLT) work well together and implement clear policies for both staff and pupils. There is not as yet a school development plan with specific targets and review dates, although there are good channels of communication for staff and pupils to express their wishes and views. Since the previous inspection, the school had acted on the recommendation that it should make greater use of its management information system.

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

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

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

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

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Further develop systems for fully integrating international boarders and taking account of their views.
  2. Improve development planning to ensure that all aspects of the school's provision are incorporated into a unified plan rooted in widespread consultation with published targets and review dates.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are very well educated in accordance with the school's aims and ethos to develop the personal qualities, abilities and values to prepare them to make the most of their own lives and contribute to society. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop extremely well. In the EYFS younger children are eager to talk and they speak with increasing clarity and complexity. They start to recognise letter sounds and identify which ones their names begin with. Most children in the Nursery count in chorus beyond six, and in Reception they understand what the hands of a clock represent and tell the time in hours. In Years 1 to 6 of the prep school, pupils read expressively and are articulate. They have a good vocabulary and write effectively. They manipulate numbers confidently, tackle puzzles successfully and manage shape and spatial awareness very well. In the senior school high quality extended writing is evident. Pupils can think logically and coherently, manipulate numerical data and explain scientific concepts effectively. At all ages from the EYFS onwards, pupils' strong creativity can be seen in the artwork displayed around the school. Music education observed during the inspection was notable for its quality and the number of participants. In the EYFS, all children demonstrate good physical control of their bodies; they manipulate a computer mouse competently and show dexterity when using pencils and small tools.
- 3.3 In the prep school and the senior school, the standard of sport and physical activity is high in a wide range of disciplines. The school uses its location to good effect in outdoor pursuits. In the prep school, pupils have the opportunity to play in teams, and former senior school pupils currently hold national cricketing honours and have been given county contracts. In netball the under-19 and under-16 teams have won district championships while the school's climbers have participated in the final of a nationally sponsored competition. In basketball and badminton, participation is strong. In The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) pupils achieve well at all levels, including at gold standard. Pupils succeed in a number of academic competitions, particularly in the British Biology Olympiad. They compete successfully in the UK Maths Challenge at senior, intermediate and junior levels.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment in the junior school cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. The pupils follow a demanding curriculum and almost all pupils transfer successfully to the senior school. The following senior school analysis is based on the years 2009 to 2011, the most recent three years for which comparative data is available. Performance at GCSE has been above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. A-level results have been above the national average for maintained schools and in 2011 were above the national average for maintained selective schools. These levels of attainment throughout the school indicate that pupils make at least good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability, as shown by standardised measures of progress.
- 3.5 In the EYFS all children make rapid progress in relation to their abilities and needs, and continuing progress is evident also in Years 1 to 6 of the prep school from the pupils' written work and interviews with inspectors. In the senior school specialist monitoring within the learning support department is supportive of pupils with SEND

or EAL, enabling them to make at least good progress. The most able pupils are identified in subject departments and in many lessons they make rapid progress. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed an effective management information system to monitor the pupils' progress and achievements.

- 3.6 In the EYFS children make trusting relationships with adults, start to play happily together and enjoy sharing stories. They show deep interest in the world around them. In Years 1 to 6 of the prep school, pupils' exceptionally good behaviour and the good relationships they enjoy with staff are key factors in enabling them to achieve high standards. They are well motivated, concentrate seriously, take pride in their work and show great enthusiasm for their studies. In the senior school, pupils also show positive attitudes to learning and their exemplary behaviour supports their achievements strongly, both inside and outside the classroom. They learn well independently and co-operate successfully. The sixth-form pupils make good use of the resources available to them and aspire to achieve to the best of their abilities.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum reflects the school's stated aim of providing a broad and balanced programme for all its pupils. It promotes high standards and is sharply focused on providing the best possible outcomes. The school has compliant curriculum policies for both the prep and the senior sections and is effective in its coverage of the requisite areas of learning.
- 3.9 In the EYFS the provision is excellent in meeting the needs of all children, in both the Nursery and Reception classes. The quality of the provision for the most able children and the use of the outside areas have improved since the previous inspection. The well-devised programmes give all children rich opportunities to speak clearly and confidently, and to listen with concentration. Staff implement fully the new curriculum both indoors and outdoors. The curriculum is well planned throughout the prep school to ensure continuity and progress in pupils' learning across the years. It is expansive and balanced, and nurtures the physical and emotional development of pupils, in accordance with the school's aims. Pupils have high expectations of themselves and of their teachers, who provide exciting creative opportunities in lessons.
- 3.10 In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum is modelled on the framework of the National Curriculum but is extended beyond this, especially with regard to science and modern foreign languages, in order to offer further opportunities to pupils. Options thus remain open for the transition to A-level study. Discussions about subject choices are started at the beginning of Year 11 in a process that is a significant strength and one that does much to ensure that provision is centred as far as possible on individual preferences.
- 3.11 Personal, social and health education is taught throughout the school and includes outside speakers. The comprehensive spiritual, moral, social and cultural development audits carried out in both the senior and prep schools provide strong evidence for the effectiveness of PSHE provision. The enrichment programme for the sixth form adds breadth to the good number of subjects from which pupils choose A levels.

- 3.12 Throughout the school the curriculum is extended by a wide range of educational visits. In the prep school, swimming and 'nature detectives' are strengths. Sport and team games offer opportunities for all pupils to improve their inter-personal leadership and team-working skills. A wide range of trips is organised for pupils in the senior school. They undertake fieldwork on the north Devon coast, whilst visits abroad to Sri Lanka, Kenya, Iceland and Spain are all examples of this strong feature of the school's provision. A busy, well-organised library also supports the curriculum.
- 3.13 There is excellent, well-structured support for pupils with SEND or EAL. Sessions are offered as part of general provision and many pupils benefit from these. Pupils with SEND interviewed were highly appreciative of the quality and level of support that they are offered as a result of their individual curriculum requirements. A policy on access to the curriculum is implemented to enable pupils to gain the greatest benefit from what is offered. There is no separate formal provision for the most able pupils. Departments are expected to set these pupils appropriate challenge.
- 3.14 The school's provision of extra-curricular activities is outstanding and enriches the pupils' experience significantly. From school-wide events, such as the Exmoor Run in March, to house music and drama competitions, and successful societies such as the Socrates Club, pupils benefit in many ways from the diverse range of activities on offer. These are organised for them in a coherent programme, with over 40 regular activities scheduled each week in lunch breaks and after school, and many informal activities encouraged and supported by staff. A wide range of traditional sports is also offered with expert, enthusiastic coaching. Excellent recent initiatives to provide coaching and matches in non-mainstream sports such as basketball and badminton have encouraged wider participation, especially amongst international pupils; a significantly wider range of pupils now represents the school in matches as a result.

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

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.16 Teaching is effective in promoting pupils' progress and in supporting the aims of the school. In the best lessons, a range of teaching methods and activities challenged the pupils to solve problems and apply themselves in both independent and group tasks. Detailed planning and the effective use of excellent resources facilitated stimulating lessons that engaged the pupils and enabled them to make good progress in line with their ability. Knowledgeable staff provide individual support and guidance. They understand the pupils' abilities well and create opportunities for pupils to share their ideas with others. Teaching methods employed give the pupils clear direction so that they behave respectfully and enthusiastically.
- 3.17 Sixth-form pupils are well supported; a range of challenging but engaging tasks was observed. The needs of pupils with SEND are met through sympathetic and supportive teaching and classroom support. Staff know their pupils well, and teaching makes appropriate provision for the needs of pupils with a statement of special educational needs. In a small minority of lessons observed, the teaching did not fully engage the pupils' interest because there was an emphasis on teacher-led activities and a lack of provision for more able pupils or those with SEND.

- 3.18 Teaching provides opportunities for pupils to take interest and pride in their work, and pupils can describe with enthusiasm tasks that they research and produce independently.
- 3.19 The quality of marking varies across departments. At best, marking is thorough, with detailed, constructive and supportive comments and targets for improvement, enabling pupils to understand how they can progress further, but some marking is cursory, and, on occasion in written work, there is little evidence of teachers' comments being acted upon by the pupils. Much verbal feedback is provided in lessons and pupils appreciate this.
- 3.20 Within lessons pupils' progress is assessed through frequent questioning. An increasing amount of data from internal and nationally standardised tests is being used to monitor pupils' performance, and to identify under-performing pupils. Effective strategies for improving pupils' performance are shared informally between departments but the most successful methods are not always used across all departments.
- 3.21 In the EYFS, staff are experienced and have high expectations. Constant assessment ensures that they know their children thoroughly. They devise stimulating activities which challenge and enthuse the children, and they use a skilful blend of information and questions that encourage children to think and to reason independently. Staff provide activities that enable children to develop excellent physical skills, make close relationships, and learn both independently and with adult support.
- 3.22 Lessons in the prep school are carefully planned, with clear overall objectives which are shared with the pupils. They contain a variety of stimulating activities and tasks. Most lessons develop at a brisk pace and end with a plenary session in which teachers and pupils discuss whether the learning objectives have been met. Teachers have excellent relationships with pupils, who are confident to seek help when they need it. Standardised assessments in English and mathematics are used effectively to assess pupils' progress annually. Teaching prepares pupils successfully for their move to the senior school.

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

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

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils are very much aware of the school as a Christian foundation and the Christian ethos is well established. Regular services are held in the chapel and the Memorial Hall. Pupils take an active role, leading prayers and assemblies. Spiritual life is enlivened through a number of initiatives, such as the introduction of the Socrates Club, where wide-ranging discussion gives pupils the chance to explore in an unbiased way wider perspectives regarding ethical and social issues. Opportunities for those of different cultural backgrounds have also been developed.
- 4.3 The moral development of the pupils is excellent. They have a well-founded sense of right and wrong, supported by the PSHE programme that covers such issues as substance abuse, theft and copyright, reinforced by visits from members of the local police. Pupils take advantage of the GCSE religious studies course, which examines controversial issues such as discrimination in all its forms and the argument for armed conflict.
- 4.4 Pupils are committed to supporting their local community and gain much from the active charities and entertainments committee that focuses on fund-raising initiatives, through activities ranging from non-uniform days to sponsored sky-diving. Pupils express enthusiasm for the Likewise Group, which produced shoe boxes of toys as a part of the Operation Christmas Child campaign. The DofE is well supported in its community service programme, and in the prep school, cake and 'table top' sales are popular.
- 4.5 The pupils' social development is excellent. Children in the EYFS are confident, happy and eager to learn. They enjoy each other's company and are kind to each other. Behaviour is excellent. The children have numerous opportunities to meet and play with older pupils; they feel safe and learn to lead healthy lifestyles. They know all the EYFS staff and the teacher in Year 1, so that transition is smooth from one class to another.
- 4.6 Older pupils are proud of their school and are emotionally mature, confident, engaging and polite. They show regard for each other and for those in authority. Pupils aspire to positions of responsibility, whether as captains of sport or as prefects; in the prep school, Year 6 pupils may apply for monitorships. A significant proportion of pupils in responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire noted that they would like more opportunities for responsibility. Pupils interviewed did not suggest that this was a widespread concern.
- 4.7 Pupils have a high standard of personal development by the time they leave the school. Year 13 pupils are well adjusted and aware of future challenges in higher education and the world of work, meeting the school's aim in this regard. They are clearly stimulated by the enrichment programme, which provides them with the opportunity to examine issues such as performance enhancing drugs in sport and the use of mobile telephones while driving. From the programme and from informal discussion, they also gain an awareness of English public services and institutions.
- 4.8 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. Pupils from Year 1 enjoy the many and varied musical events, participate in choirs, ensembles and orchestras and, as

individuals, perform to a very high level. In art and technology they exhibit impressive creativity and, through the well-established drama programme, participate in theatre performances in the prep and senior schools that are both challenging and good fun. Many pupils participate in the visits on offer, ranging from theatre outings to London to language-based trips to France and Spain and across the globe.

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

- 4.9 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 Pastoral arrangements are well organised and effective, in accordance with the school's aims. In the EYFS, provision for the children's well-being is excellent. The key people are skilled and experienced, providing excellent role models for the children. The happy atmosphere which they create ensures that children feel safe and confident to form warm, trusting relationships with adults and other children. Those who need extra support are identified quickly and given valuable help, and staff ensure that all children have the chance to explore and to work both co-operatively and independently.
- 4.11 Throughout the school, members of staff with pastoral responsibilities are very successful in safeguarding and caring for pupils. They regard pupils' welfare as their paramount concern, with tutor time providing many opportunities to monitor pupils' progress, give praise and provide advice to aid improvement. Equally, pupils enjoy their time at school and have a clear sense of who they can approach if they need guidance, including the opportunity to talk to a trained counsellor.
- 4.12 The school has high expectations of its pupils. Policies on the management of their behaviour are well articulated, detailed and thoughtful. Any incidents of misbehaviour are generally minor. Where bullying behaviour occurs, pupils acknowledge that it is dealt with swiftly, firmly and sensitively.
- 4.13 Positive behaviour is promoted and rewarded. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, and pastoral staff are quick to respond to any issues where they arise. The monitoring of pupils' welfare is managed diligently and conscientiously, and staff use many opportunities, both formally and informally, to share information about any pupil who may be causing concern.
- 4.14 There are many opportunities for exercise. Advice to aid healthy eating is provided through the PSHE programme. The school's catering provision is good and improving, with a variety of choices at lunch including vegetarian options. The evening meal is less well regarded by boarders.
- 4.15 The school has made considerable efforts to cater for pupils with SEND. There is a well-developed access plan with practical and realistic targets for improvement. The school takes steps to consult its pupils, and survey results inform the thinking of senior staff. Where possible, the school makes efforts to meet pupils' aspirations. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, nearly a third of pupils did not feel that the school makes sufficient efforts to ask for or listen to their views. Through their discussions with pupils, inspectors found that the great majority of pupils fully appreciate their education, feel that they are well listened to, and take great pride in being members of a very happy school.



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

- 4.16 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.17 Safeguarding arrangements have regard to official guidance, and procedures are meticulously carried out. The school's policy on safeguarding contains all necessary information and there is further helpful guidance for staff in the staff handbook. Each section of the school has its own designated person for child protection, who follows the same practices, ensuring that the policy is implemented effectively. All staff, whatever their role, are trained in safeguarding. The dates of induction training, as well as of refresher training, are recorded in the single central staff register of appointments. Contractors working on site are given a handbook setting out their responsibilities and code of conduct.
- 4.18 The school takes careful measures to reduce risk from fire. The fire risk assessment was reviewed by the local fire and rescue service during an audit in 2011. Equipment is regularly checked and tested both by external consultants and by the school's own trained maintenance staff. Fire drills are carried out at regular intervals and all staff receive training in fire safety by a professional each year.
- 4.19 A health and safety committee ensures that the site is well maintained. Attention is paid to any potential hazards, which are remedied promptly. The safety and well-being of all on the site are given high priority. Those responsible for maintaining high standards have access to external training courses and follow the set protocols. A newly built and equipped medical centre, staffed by a qualified nurse, provides excellent accommodation for the care of sick or injured pupils.
- 4.20 A central admission register is kept in the senior school, while the prep school has a separate register of attendance from the senior school. All registers are suitably maintained and stored.
- 4.21 High levels of attention to children's safeguarding and welfare are central to all activity in the EYFS. Children understand about keeping safe, the importance of physical exercise, good hygiene and eating healthily. Criminal records checks have been carried for all staff and they have received full training in child protection, first aid, and health and safety procedures.

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

- 4.22 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.23 Boarders have a good standard of personal development and are confident and self-reliant. They enjoy life in their houses and feel at home amongst friends and with staff who support them in their everyday school lives. They are well behaved, polite and friendly; relationships are good and constructive. Any who experience emotional or social difficulties are well understood and supported by house and staff members and other members of the school community. Most international boarders integrate well into boarding life and those with EAL have good opportunities to mix with English speaking boarders and to develop their linguistic skills.
- 4.24 There is a good balance of free time and organised optional activities for boarders in the evenings and at weekends to meet their differing needs. The majority of boarders take good advantage of the opportunities available to them, including the weekly shopping trips to Barnstaple, Sunday outings and time-out in the house after a busy day at school. Boarders participate in the monthly church services and

contribute to charity events under the well-organised direction and support of the chaplain. In discussion with inspectors and in responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, a minority of international boarders expressed some concern that their views are not listened to, particularly with respect to video communication via the internet. Inspectors found that pupils have sufficient opportunities to contact their family, and the school's policy is to not allow unrestricted access to all online communication tools in pupils' rooms. When both in and out of school, boarders know how to remain safe and to help look after each other. They understand the importance of keeping fit and healthy, and are well prepared for the next stage of their academic and personal life.

- 4.25 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. House staff know the boarders well and help them to settle into life in boarding. Care is taken to understand each boarder's needs through both informal and formal channels, as house staff and academic staff strive to ensure that boarders make progress in their work and in their personal development. Through a good range of sports and weekly extra-curricular activities, boarders find opportunities to participate. Positions of responsibility are available through a peer mentoring scheme and the school and house prefect system for older pupils. The arrangements for sick or injured boarders are of the highest quality, with very experienced and caring staff in the new medical centre. Since the previous inspection procedures for self-medication have been reviewed and are now robust. There is close liaison between house staff and the medical centre to ensure the well-being of all boarders.
- 4.26 Boarding accommodation is comfortable and clean, with more than adequate washroom provision. Each house has comfortable common room space where boarders can enjoy time together and invite friends from other houses. Recreational facilities for games and films to provide opportunities for socialising enhance boarders' time together. Well-equipped kitchens ensure that boarders can enjoy drinks and snacks. With regard to meals, most boarders are happy with breakfast and lunch but a minority expressed some dissatisfaction with the quality of food served in the evenings, and in particular on Sunday evenings.
- 4.27 Arrangements for the welfare and safeguarding of boarders, including for the recruitment of staff, are good and meet requirements. All staff are suitably trained in safeguarding procedures, which are updated to the appropriate level for particular roles held when required. On arrival boarders have an induction tour of the house and school, and are made aware of the necessary procedures for their safety. In discussion with inspectors, boarders reported without hesitation that they feel safe in their houses and know that there are members of staff and others, including an independent listener, to whom they can turn should the need arise.
- 4.28 Sanction procedures are in place and in the majority of cases boarders believe them to be fair. In discussion with inspectors and in responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, some boarders reported that they found that on occasion sanctions are too severe and inconsistently applied between staff and houses, and inspectors agree with this concern. Boarders reported that there is little bullying in the boarding houses and should any incident occur it is dealt with effectively. Risk assessments are in place for any potential health hazards, and boarders are clear when they should report any concern and are confident that house staff will react.
- 4.29 Leadership and management of the boarding provision are good. They are clearly exercised and evident in the friendly and positive atmosphere in the houses. Boarding houses are well run, in accordance with the school's aim to provide a

'home from home' experience for boarders. Boarding staff, many of them relatively recent appointments, have brought new and fresh ideas to the boarding community, which have enhanced the experience for many of the boarders. The number of boarders who enjoy the flexible boarding option has increased, which has helped boarders and day pupils to integrate.

- 4.30 Boarders benefit from a good standard of care, with their individual needs monitored by house staff. For the most part, house staff monitor boarders closely to ensure their well-being through a well-balanced programme of work and recreational life. Monitoring and development of house procedures and policies are in place through regular house meetings, where a variety of topics and issues is discussed and recorded in minutes. However, not all relevant information from informal discussion regarding a boarder is incorporated into the system for tracking a concern. Record keeping is in place but it is not centrally or systematically monitored.
- 4.31 All house staff understand their role and staff new to boarding have an induction process supported by a comprehensive staff induction handbook, but the boarding practices of house staff are not overseen through monitoring. The majority of boarders are happy with their lives in boarding and houses run smoothly and pleasantly, with noticeable harmony and purpose. Good contact with parents is maintained and is indicative of a purposeful relationship. The majority of parents of boarders who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires were happy with the boarding provision. Recommendations from the previous inspection have now all been met.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good. Governors are increasingly involved in the EYFS, visit on an annual basis and have been generous in funding much needed new equipment in the Nursery. They have responded to a recommendation from the previous inspection that they should establish mechanisms for overseeing the work of the school and the implementation of regulatory requirements. Senior staff report to committees who are rigorous in their examination of policies and procedures, particularly those concerning safeguarding and welfare, health and safety. The full governing body discusses and endorses the policies and their implementation. The single central register is checked annually by a member of the governing body and the governors ensure that safer recruitment practices are followed.
- 5.2 The governors are very committed to the aims of the school and have a high attendance rate at meetings. They ensure that the required skills, knowledge and experience are represented by their members through a nominations committee and new governors are given suitable training in their role. They regard good financial management of the school in challenging economic times as being a high priority and, through careful oversight of the school's finances, have continued their building projects in addition to providing high quality resources and staffing for the school. When they consider it advisable they call in external expertise, such as in training for themselves, in appraising the head and in conducting market research.
- 5.3 The head and senior staff have regular contact with the governors, both formally and informally, and are well supported as well as challenged by them. There is a committee for the prep school which ensures that due consideration is given to younger pupils. The governors measure the success of the school and its educational standards in a number of ways and are diligent in their assessment of the key performance indicators that they have set. They have not yet fully developed systems of evaluating their own success and effectiveness, although the chair is currently giving consideration to suitable strategies.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.5 The leadership and management of the school are effective in ensuring that the school supports all its pupils in academic achievement and personal development throughout. The senior leadership team members know the pupils well and all staff contribute to the creation of a community where the pupils feel well cared for. The SLT ensures that it fulfils conscientiously its responsibilities for implementation of policies, particularly with regard to safeguarding. The team is meticulous in maintaining good procedures. It recruits well-qualified staff and follows safer recruitment procedures.
- 5.6 In the EYFS, the recently appointed management team is implementing well-considered improvements to the setting. The development plan shows well-defined priorities but at present only for the current year. Policies have all been updated and systems for monitoring the curriculum and for self-evaluation are being put in place

in order to clarify priorities and areas for further improvement. Staff meet regularly to plan and evaluate the progress of individual children, ensuring equality of opportunity for all. Safety and well-being requirements are followed rigorously, ensuring that children are safeguarded and secure in a warm, welcoming environment. The help of external agencies is sought and appreciated so that children receive high quality support when needed. The setting has made good progress since the previous inspection through the improved curriculum, and through the more focused challenge to every child, which has resulted in more solid achievement by all, including the most able.

- 5.7 Staff in the EYFS work closely with parents. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated that they particularly appreciate the family atmosphere, the excellent support their children receive and the way the school involves them in their children's learning, which helps children to feel secure and confident.
- 5.8 The EYFS, prep school and senior school work as one body and leadership of each section is successful in working as a single team. The head of the prep school is a member of the SLT, which helps in setting the whole-school ethos and in ensuring that policies are equally applicable to all sections of the school. The needs of all pupils are considered carefully at each stage, along with how they can best be met within the single framework of the school. The different sections of the school make good links with one another by sharing facilities, but also through such practices as older pupils working towards their DofE by helping prep school pupils in swimming lessons.
- 5.9 Leadership and management promote the school's aim of helping all pupils to achieve their potential by ensuring clearly understood structures of care for each. In the senior school, a tutor and housemaster or housemistress monitors both the academic progress and personal development of each pupil. Since the previous inspection, the role of head of boarding has been created, which enables greater focus on boarding issues. New practices and guidance in the EYFS and boarding provision are being introduced but are not yet fully implemented. The outstanding personal development of the pupils is assisted by the broad range of experiences that the school provides and by the individual attention that the pupils receive.
- 5.10 At all levels, leadership is mindful of the aims of the school and is concerned to achieve the best outcomes for each pupil. It has established suitable structures for achieving academic and pastoral care. Since the previous inspection, the school has made progress in its use of the management information system.
- 5.11 There is a well-established and wide-ranging programme for staff to facilitate their continuing professional development. Many opportunities are available for staff to attend individual courses, 'twilight' sessions and whole-school in-service training. Opportunities are provided to enhance specific skills and career development. For example, the recent introduction of the assistant housemaster and housemistress positions has allowed staff interested in pastoral care to build on their skills and provide for succession management within the school. Training for safeguarding, fire and safety is provided regularly.
- 5.12 The SLT frequently considers and discusses the needs and direction of the school. Each department currently produces its own development plan that is reviewed by the SLT. These plans, however, are not fed into a whole-school development plan

with targets and review dates in order to assist management at all levels to develop a coherent overall approach to make further progress regarding the school's aims.

- 5.13 The school's relationship with parents is very positive. Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with relevant information about the school. They are welcomed at the school and can regularly speak with staff.
- 5.14 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents were pleased with the progress that their children are making and would recommend the school to another parent. There was also a high degree of satisfaction with the range of subjects and extra-curricular activities available. The majority of parents were happy with the information they receive about their children's education. There are constructive and informative written reports twice a year and grade only reports each half-term to ensure that parents are aware of their children's progress. Further individual feedback is provided by annual parents' evenings in the senior school and termly meetings in the prep school. These provide good opportunity for individual personal feedback. Parents feel that their concerns are dealt with in an effective and caring manner.
- 5.15 The school website, the newsletter '*In Form*' and the magazine '*The 3Rs*' keep parents informed of news, developments and the wide variety of activities and achievements of the school. In the prep school, the well-constructed weekly newsletter regularly updates parents of events. Detailed information booklets outline the academic programme and give specific guidance on subject choices at GCSE and A level, further helping parents to be involved in the education of their children.
- 5.16 Parents have other good opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children. They are encouraged to support the many activities of the school. There are regular formal and informal music concerts, drama productions and sporting fixtures. An active parents' association raises funds for the school through social activities and quiz nights. These events unite parents from all sections of the school and include teaching representatives and the leadership.

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