



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION ST GEORGE'S SCHOOL

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St George's School

Full Name of School	St George's School		
DfE Number	868/6001		
Registered Charity Number	309088		
Address	St George's School Wells Lane Ascot Berkshire SL5 7DZ England		
Telephone Number	01344 629900		
Fax Number	01344 629901		
Email Address	office@stgeorges-ascot.org.uk		
Headmistress	Mrs Rachel Owens		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Edward Luker		
Age Range	11 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	280		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	11-18	280	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	161	
Number of Boarders	Total:	119	
	Full:	69	Tailored 50
Inspection Dates	29th September to 2nd October 2015		

PREFACE

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. 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.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI boarding intermediate inspection was in November 2012 and the previous ISI integrated inspection was in October 2010.

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare.

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors and other 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 Colette Culligan	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Fiona Angel	Team Inspector (Head of Curriculum, HMC school)
Mr Roger Tapping	Team Inspector (Director of Academic Development, GSA school)
Dr Ruth Weeks	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Alison Horton	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Originally established as a boys' school in 1877, St George's became a girls' school in 1904, providing for girls aged 11 to 18. It has occupied its current site close to the centre of Ascot throughout its history. It is an educational trust, managed by a board of trustees who are governors of the school.
- 1.2 The school aims to create an environment of trust and respect within which each girl can achieve her full potential, academically and personally, while enjoying learning for its own sake. It has a Christian ethos and seeks to welcome pupils of all faiths or none, emphasising the need to develop a moral and spiritual framework and to treat others with courtesy and consideration. In its boarding, it aims for each pupil to become 'the best she can be', developing independence, tolerance and consideration for others. The school aims to enable all pupils to develop the confidence, personal resources and integrity needed to make positive choices in their future lives.
- 1.3 Currently there are 280 pupils enrolled at the school, of whom 87 are in the sixth form. Pupils take a range of standardised tests which show that they are generally of above average ability. Of the 54 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), 40 receive extra lessons in English to support their language development. The school identifies 75 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), mainly dyslexia, dyspraxia or dyscalculia; of these, 41 attend support lessons in school, provided by staff from an outside specialist centre. There are no pupils with statements of special educational need or education, health and care plans.
- 1.4 There are 119 boarders, 50 of whom attend on a tailored basis, boarding for between four and six nights each week. The three boarding houses, for pupils in Years 7 to 10, for those in Years 11 and 12, and a separate house for Year 13, are located in the school grounds. The school draws boarding pupils from across the UK. The 58 overseas boarders come from a range of countries, including China, Hong Kong, Nigeria and Russia. Day pupils come from the local area or from areas within two hours of the school.
- 1.5 Since the previous integrated inspection, a new headmistress has been appointed, the senior management team restructured and, recently, an extended leadership team established. A whole-school development plan has been created, teaching rooms reorganised to create cohesive departmental areas, boarding areas redecorated and a new library built, the latter building also providing classrooms for modern language teaching.

- 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 NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
First Year	Year 7
Second Year	Year 8
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	Year 11
L VIth	Year 12
U VIth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 St George's School is successful in providing a good education for its pupils and meets its aims to encourage all pupils to grow in confidence and to reach their potential, academically and personally, within a warm, supportive school community. Its excellent curriculum provides a wide range of choices suitable for the needs of its pupils, including those with SEND and EAL. Pupils demonstrate good literacy skills; they speak with fluency and confidence. They show good understanding of mathematical, scientific and technological skills. They take pride in their creative work, in which the results often reach high levels. They are diligent learners, listening carefully in class and making notes assiduously. Pupils take full advantage of the many opportunities for physical exercise in the curriculum and extra-curricular programme, reaching good standards in a range of sports. Teaching is good overall and in many cases excellent. In some lessons, however, little opportunity is provided for pupils to think for themselves and they become passive. Some lessons provide insufficient challenge for the most able pupils. While specialist support for those with SEND and EAL is very successful, classroom teaching does not always incorporate strategies to support their progress fully.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. Boarding makes a considerable contribution to their growing sense of personal responsibility and their developing self-confidence. The school is characterised by a warm sense of community. The pupils' behaviour is excellent. Boarding and day pupils alike are courteous, considerate, respectful and tolerant of differences. Pupils happily take on responsibility and are excellent ambassadors for the school. Staff know their pupils extremely well and pupils are highly appreciative of their teachers' support. Safeguarding is given high priority although there had been minor administrative errors in recording of all required checks on contractors. Health, safety and welfare measures were improved in the course of the inspection and are good overall.
- 2.3 Governance is good, facilitating the successful development of the school. Governors are committed fully to the school's aims but their understanding of the full range of their responsibilities for monitoring the implementation of regulatory requirements and policies is not fully secure; hence they have not ensured that the school has improved in all the areas identified in the previous inspection. Senior leaders provide excellent role models for their pupils and have developed a clear educational vision, supported by wide ranging improvement plans. Progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous integrated inspection has been limited. Monitoring by middle management of the work of administrative and academic departments has not always been sufficiently rigorous. Staff are very well trained in matters of safeguarding, health and safety. Guidance for pupils in respecting issues of diversity, tolerance and the rule of law in a democratic society is actively promoted in all aspects of the school's work. The majority of parents expressed high levels of satisfaction in the pre-inspection questionnaire and in discussion pupils were virtually unanimous in telling inspectors of their happiness, their pride in the school and satisfaction with what it provides.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Take steps to ensure that all teaching is consistently good and provides opportunities for independent learning and appropriate challenge for all pupils.
 2. Require all managers in academic and administrative areas to discharge fully their responsibility for rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their department's work to ensure standards are consistently maintained.
 3. Ensure all governors understand their legal responsibilities, including those for boarding and the monitoring of outcomes.

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 good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in line with the school's aim to create an environment within which each pupil can achieve her full potential academically and in which learning is enjoyed for its own sake. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop well. They can argue logically and coherently, manipulate numerical data and explain scientific concepts well. They use information and communication technology (ICT) competently to support their learning, accessing useful resources on the school intranet. Strong creativity is evident in their singing, in excellent artwork and their enthusiastic participation in theatrical productions.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve some success in a number of academic competitions, including mathematical challenges, science Olympiads, public speaking, music, and speech and drama examinations. The Young Enterprise teams have been regular award winners. Sports teams compete with notable success. During the inspection, the under-18 netball team were runners up in a county competition and swimming teams were winners or runners up in each event in a local gala. Individual pupils represent the county in a number of sports including lacrosse, cricket, rounders and athletics. In music, the chapel choir has recorded with the BBC and has performed several times for royalty. The senior drama company took part in a competition organised by the National Theatre, performing in a London theatre. Pupils have been highly successful in painting and sculpture at a recent local art festival.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. GCSE performance has been above the national average for maintained schools and in 2012 and 2013, was similar to the average for maintained selective schools. In 2014, 95 per cent of all GCSE results were at grade C or above, an improvement on previous years. 2015 GCSE results indicate an improvement. International GCSE results in English are above the world-wide average and, in mathematics, similar to the world-wide average. Results at A level have been above the national average for maintained schools and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. The 2015 A-level results indicate a significant improvement in the proportion of A* and A grades achieved compared to previous years and these pupils' progress has been high in relation to pupils of similar abilities. Virtually all pupils proceed to higher education and, in 2015, a very high proportion won places to their first or second choice of university. Evidence of examination results and internal measures indicate that all pupils, including the most able and those with SEND or EAL, achieve well in relation to their abilities. Inspection evidence indicates that, while all pupils generally make good progress in relation to their abilities, the specific needs of those with SEND or EAL and of those who are particularly able are not always recognised in routine classroom lessons; in such lessons their rate of progress is inconsistent.
- 3.5 Pupils' excellent attitudes to learning and their exemplary behaviour and attentiveness support their achievement strongly. They settle to work swiftly, make notes assiduously and work together very well. They respond thoughtfully when given an opportunity to think for themselves and to move beyond answering closed questions, although at times they are content to remain passive learners. They can demonstrate high-level research skills, as seen in complex topics chosen by sixth-

form pupils for an Extended Project Qualification. They appreciate the range of activities provided and participate enthusiastically. At the time of the inspection, more than 50 pupils were engaged in intense rehearsals for a forthcoming musical. Their genuine delight in each other's achievement in all spheres is evident.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 The school successfully meets its aims to foster a life-long love of learning by offering a wide-ranging and enriching academic curriculum and extra-curricular programme, providing suitably for the age, abilities and needs of all its pupils. Responses both from pupils and parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire showed high levels of satisfaction with the curricular and extra-curricular provision.
- 3.8 In Years 7 to 9, pupils benefit from a curriculum that covers more than the requisite areas of learning. The curriculum has been revised to include cookery for Years 7 and 8, classical civilisation as an option for GCSE and A level, and timetabled enrichment and physical education sessions for the sixth form. The timetable recognises the needs of pupils with EAL and SEND, for example in reducing timetabled commitment to allow for extra support lessons or study time. There is excellent learning support provision. The breadth of the curriculum provides inherent challenge for more able pupils, although they are not always sufficiently challenged in all lessons and there is limited formal provision beyond the taught curriculum for such pupils.
- 3.9 The well-planned personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and the extension programme for sixth-form pupils include current affairs, discussions covering fundamental British values, the way in which the UK's democratic system works, some careers guidance, and matters pertaining to personal relationships. This prepares pupils well for adult life. Care is taken to ensure that any outside speakers engaged will present their views with appropriate balance. Careers education and guidance for higher education is good, if notably stronger for older and more academic pupils.
- 3.10 At GCSE, all pupils follow a required core of subjects and choose from a wide variety of options. Currently there are 24 subjects offered at A level. These include traditional subjects as well as a range of contemporary creative options including photography. This curricular breadth is a strength, allowing realisation of each individual pupil's own abilities, interests and ambitions.
- 3.11 The number and range of trips organised by the school further enriches pupils' learning and personal development. Recent trips have included a visit to a zoo for new pupils, attendance at a conference on women in leadership and a visit to a Hindu temple. Each year, all year groups have the chance to take part in a residential trip, as well as several day trips. Year 9 girls eagerly apply to participate in an exchange programme with an Australian school and sixth-form pupils benefit from their visit to an Indian school for underprivileged children. Opportunities to work within the local community also enrich pupils' experiences: pupils visit a local care home, a shelter for the homeless and work on a reading programme with pupils in a local junior school.
- 3.12 The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Clubs, some of which are run by sixth-form pupils, offer something to appeal to everyone. They include clock making, Zumba, choir and a full range of sports. In the questionnaires,

and in discussion, a small minority of pupils complained that the compulsory nature of daily activities makes it difficult for them to complete their homework and that staff do not make sure the right amount of work is set. Inspectors recognise that pupils may find balancing this unaccustomed involvement with activities and the demands of academic life a challenge. However, as this system has been very recently introduced, it is not possible to make a firm judgement as to whether this view is justified at present.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.14 Teaching is effective in supporting the aims of the school to help pupils fulfil their academic potential. It enables pupils to achieve academic success as well as the skills they will need for their future lives.
- 3.15 The majority of lessons are well planned, with good pace and a range of activities to meet pupils' needs and take account of their prior learning. Teachers know their pupils well and many plan lessons to provide tasks appropriate to individuals' preferred learning styles. The teaching promotes tolerance and respect and presents a balanced view of any political issues. In interview and questionnaire responses, pupils said that teachers are generous in giving their time to provide individual guidance when needed. The quality of marking and assessment is inconsistent across subjects, as at the time of the previous inspection. Marking in some subjects is thorough, helpful and sets clear targets for improvement. The school marking policy is not uniformly followed, however, and suggestions for improvement are not always followed up. In some lessons pupils are given time to respond to comments in their homework but this is not uniform practice, so that pupils are sometimes unclear about errors.
- 3.16 Teachers have a high level of subject knowledge and in some instances a passion for their subject that inspires and enthuses pupils. Classrooms are well resourced and teaching makes good use of a learning platform on the school's intranet system. Pupils are very confident in utilising this. During the inspection some outstanding practice was observed, where vigorous teaching both challenged and inspired pupils. As a result they became totally absorbed in the subject matter and tasks and made rapid progress. This was more commonly observed in GCSE and A-level teaching where use of relevant material, rapid pace, variety of tasks and a focused, dynamic approach fostered swift progress. In less successful teaching, lessons are often excessively dominated by teacher exposition, with consequent low expectations of pupils and limited opportunity for pupils to contribute to their learning other than in making notes. The slow pace of these lessons means that little progress is made. The monitoring of teaching, as at the time of the previous inspection, is not yet sufficiently robust to ensure that the excellent practice evident in some subjects is commonplace across all. Teachers are skilled in maintaining a classroom atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance of differing viewpoints.
- 3.17 Careful grouping of pupils, targeted questioning and use of different resources to support those with SEND or EAL, enable them to make good progress in many lessons. These strategies are not used in all lessons; on occasion there is limited specific support provided for these pupils, and their progress is inhibited. Some lessons occasionally focused too much on provision for those with learning problems to the detriment of the rest of the pupils, especially the most able, whose learning and progress is consequently limited. Extension tasks for the latter pupils are

usually included in lesson plans but often lack any real challenge. Plans being launched in response to suggestions made by the newly established extended leadership team have not yet had time to affect the provision for the more able pupils.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school is highly successful in creating an atmosphere in which pupils develop tolerance, mutual respect and a warm appreciation not just of their opportunities but also of their responsibilities, both to their peers and to British and global society.
- 4.3 The spiritual awareness of pupils is excellent. It is evident in discussions with and between pupils, where they show empathy for others and maturity. They are confident and self-aware. They respond very well to the school's active encouragement of them to think about non-material aspects of their lives. In school assemblies, held in the chapel, pupils of all faiths and those of none are respectful, listen attentively and respond maturely when invited to reflect on what they have heard. The multi-cultural nature of the school encourages pupils to grow in tolerance and understanding of different interpretations of spirituality and to respond respectfully to these; a pupil-led assembly attended by inspectors included a prayer addressed to 'God of All'. Their awareness of the beauty of the world and man's creative contribution to it is evident in their music making and the sensitive art work displayed around the school.
- 4.4 Pupils have a highly developed moral awareness. Their behaviour is excellent and they treat adults and each other with courtesy and respect. Pupils are not afraid to speak out to peers or to alert staff about situations that they perceive to be morally unacceptable. They have an inherent sense of right and wrong and great compassion for those in need. An assembly written and presented by a group of pupils during the inspection showed their understanding of the moral dilemmas posed by the current crisis over immigration and the plight of Syrian refugees. Pupils discuss morally complex situations with sensitivity, for example, reflecting on the necessary response when religious law and civil law conflict. They recognise that civil and criminal law must be respected by all.
- 4.5 Pupils' social development is excellent. They make the most of opportunities to alert their peers to issues in their home countries, such as the political tensions between North and South Korea. They have a keen awareness of those who are less fortunate and are very generous in giving of their time to help others. Annually, they vote to support three charities, local, national and international, and respond enthusiastically to the challenge of fund-raising for these. Pupils show a genuine commitment to the well-being of each other, taking on leadership roles responsibly. New pupils, whether day or boarding, are warmly welcomed and supported by those older, who assist tutors and provide advice and guidance in the boarding houses.
- 4.6 The cultural development of the pupils is excellent. Their appreciation of other cultures is strong and they view the breadth of nationalities in the pupil body as enriching their school lives. They are interested in other cultures and faiths and show respect for others' beliefs and traditions. They are also respectful of the values and traditions of British society, both cultural and political. Holders of responsibility posts such as form captains and head girls are chosen by democratic vote.

- 4.7 Pupils leave the school as articulate, poised and confident young women who embrace responsibility readily and are well prepared to succeed in the next stage of their lives.

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

- 4.8 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The school fully meets its aims to provide a supportive and caring environment within which each pupil can grow in confidence. The small class sizes and supportive tutorial system ensure that all new arrivals quickly get to be known as individuals. Although a few responses from pupils in questionnaires said that teachers do not show concern for them, inspectors judged in interviews that staff know their pupils extremely well and show considerable care for their personal well being.
- 4.10 Relationships between staff and pupils, amongst pupils themselves, and between day pupils and boarders are excellent, with mutual respect and friendly warmth evident. Inspectors were frequently told that the school is "like a big family." Pupils are extremely appreciative of the support and guidance they receive from their housemistresses, teachers and staff at the medical centre.
- 4.11 The quality of food is excellent. Pupils eat well and sensibly. They participate eagerly in the opportunities for physical exercise available, and show a very good awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. The school has a suitable plan to improve access for those with disabilities.
- 4.12 Procedures to promote good behaviour are excellent; pupils' conduct is such that sanctions rarely have to be applied. A small minority of pupils said in the questionnaire that they feel that rewards and sanctions are given unfairly but inspection evidence did not support this view. The system of merits and commendations has been recently streamlined to ensure parity across subject areas, and checks of the sanctions records indicate that these are proportionate to the misbehaviour identified.
- 4.13 A small minority of responses in pupil and parent questionnaires said that the school does not deal effectively with bullying. Inspectors found that the school's clear policies on this matter, including cyber-bullying, are carefully followed and any concern carefully recorded and monitored. In interviews pupils said that bullying is very rare and dealt with swiftly. This view was supported by scrutiny of the school's bullying and sanctions logs.
- 4.14 Questionnaire responses from a small minority of pupils indicated that they did not feel listened to by the school. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to make their views heard, including school councils and food councils. Pupils told inspectors in interview that their ideas are taken seriously and lead to improvements, such as in weekend activities.

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

- 4.15 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.16 The school has a thorough safeguarding policy, correctly reflecting recently changed official guidance. Excellent procedures ensure that safeguarding measures are meticulously followed and supportive relationships have been established with local

children's services. Those responsible for safeguarding within the school and all other staff are fully trained as required, and staff have been alerted to recent policy changes, including the prevention of radicalisation and FGM. Staff are swift to pass on any concerns, however minor. These are carefully followed up and thorough records are stored securely. Confirmation has been received that checks of all individuals employed by other organisations but working within the school have been completed, but these had not all been recorded as required. The school corrected this during the course of the inspection so that legal requirements are now met.

- 4.17 The school has fully rectified errors in fire procedures identified in the previous boarding welfare report. Comprehensive logs are maintained of all checks and evacuation drills. Careful risk assessments ensure that all reasonable measures are taken to minimize hazards in school and on trips. Implementation of security measures was improved in the course of the inspection. The school has very recently received a report from an external consultancy identifying some general health and safety matters and is in the process of establishing an action plan in response. Overall health and safety procedures are good.
- 4.18 The medical provision ensures a high level of care for pupils and great care is taken to meet the needs of any who are incapacitated. Admission and attendance registers are maintained and stored as required.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.20 Outcomes for boarders are excellent, successfully meeting the boarding aim of encouraging every girl to become 'the best she can be'. Boarders are articulate, confident, tolerant and appreciative of cultural differences, and very positive about their boarding experience. They relish the opportunities to develop their independence and self-reliance as they move up through the houses to reach the semi-autonomy of the Year 13 house.
- 4.21 In the pupil questionnaire a very large majority of boarders said that they enjoy boarding and that boarders get on well together in the house. They relate respectfully and with easy confidence to fellow boarders and adults. Relationships between house staff and boarders are excellent. Staff have an excellent and natural rapport with their charges, who said the boarding staff would be the first port of call should worries arise.
- 4.22 Contrary to the views expressed by a small minority in the pupil questionnaire, in interview boarders showed that they are aware of the many avenues available for expressing their opinions, including house meetings, anonymous "quandary" boxes and a boarders' focus group. Boarders say that the school responds to reasonable requests appropriately. Prefects take concerns raised by the year representatives to the school leaders on behalf of the whole boarding community. Roles of responsibility, including heads of house, supervising homework, and taking turns to keep common areas tidy, are taken seriously. Boarders value the friendships they make and many deem this the most important aspect of boarding.
- 4.23 The quality of provision and care is excellent. Boarders are well cared for and a large majority said in the pupil questionnaire that they feel safe in their houses. The previous inspection judged that reasonable protection was not in place for boarders' personal possessions. As at that time, a small minority of boarders said their possessions are not safe. Inspectors found that all boarders have lockable

cupboards they may use. Accurate lists of which boarders are in the house are compiled daily; these are used to check boarders during fire drills held in boarding time. Clear notices explaining the complaints procedure are displayed in houses and, in interview, boarders were aware of several channels they could use, an improvement on the situation at the time of the previous boarding inspection. Boarding house risk assessments now contain sufficient detail to meet requirements.

- 4.24 Thorough induction procedures are in place for new boarders. Checklists maintained by housemistresses and monitored by senior staff show that these are completed. Boarders have clear access to help lines and have the contact details, phone number and email address of an independent listener.
- 4.25 Boarders benefit from excellent medical provision in the medical centre and their houses. They speak very positively about the approachability of the medical staff and the care they provide. The well-appointed medical centre provides appropriate facilities for treatment, longer-term care and counselling appointments. The quality of support for mental health matters is excellent. Close liaison between medical and house staff ensures that all are quickly aware of treatment given and other health concerns. Boarders are registered with a local GP practice and there are excellent links with local dentists and opticians. Matters of confidentiality are meticulously observed; personal files are recorded electronically and kept securely. Details of those with chronic conditions or allergies are posted in the staff room, kitchen and noted on girls' electronic files. All medications including homely remedies are appropriately stored.
- 4.26 A very large majority of boarders complimented the school's food. Inspectors sampled the provision at all meals and confirm the excellent nutritious quality and choice available. A food council meets termly and action taken as appropriate. Boarders may make their own snacks and drinks in suitable house kitchens. They may obtain personal items in the local shops or the school shop. The laundry service is extremely efficient.
- 4.27 In the questionnaire a small minority of boarders said they are not happy with the balance between free time and activities. Inspectors found that this referred primarily to the obligatory after-school activities for pupils up to Year 10 which some boarders say increases the pressure they feel to complete their work properly. This obligatory programme has been introduced very recently and the school is aware of the need to monitor its impact on all pupils. Otherwise, boarders enjoy the evening and weekend activity programme.
- 4.28 The houses are welcoming and attractively decorated, giving the accommodation a homely feel. Boarders appreciate the well-furnished and comfortable common rooms and access to computers within the house. Their rooms are cheerfully personalised, warm and pleasantly furnished, with very good study space and adequate storage. Bathroom provision is sufficient and hygienic. Boarders can contact family and friends easily.
- 4.29 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is good. All National Minimum Standards are met. The school has and implements effective safeguarding procedures, and all staff who work in the houses demonstrate a clear awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities. Required records were updated during the inspection to include contractors who have regular contact with boarders, together with evidence of their safeguarding training. Actions taken in the course of

the inspection have improved the implementation of security measures for boarding accommodation.

- 4.30 The previous inspection noted inconsistency in the implementation and understanding of the anti-bullying policy. Since the previous inspection, the school has ensured that all boarders understand the anti-bullying policy and procedures to express concerns. In interview boarders did not agree with the small minority who said in the questionnaire that bullying is not dealt with by the school. Boarders say that no bullying occurs in the houses and are confident that appropriate actions would be taken by staff to deal with any inappropriate behaviour. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities. Boarding staff have efficient systems to monitor the whereabouts of the boarders and to deal with the situation should a boarder be missing. The well-being of the boarders is supported by thorough record keeping. Boarding staff develop their skills through the sharing of good practice informally as well as in meetings and training courses. Sufficient staff are deployed in houses by day and overnight.
- 4.31 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. The school has taken successful steps to respond to the remaining recommendations of the previous inspection report. Boarding principles, developed with the boarders' focus group, are clear and well known, as are procedures for making complaints. Boarding principles are displayed in houses, in handbooks and are lived out in daily practice. Fortnightly boarding meetings have been introduced, led and rigorously minuted by senior staff and attended by all boarding staff. There is regular monitoring of all required records by senior leaders.
- 4.32 Governors have ensured that sufficient resources are in place for the provision of comfortable and homely boarding and receive regular reports on the pastoral care of boarders. Although those responsible on a daily basis for the leadership and management of boarding are highly effective, governors' understanding of their responsibilities under the National Minimum Standards is not fully secure.
- 4.33 House staff are highly committed, running their houses smoothly and sensitively. They know their individual boarders and their needs extremely well and are highly valued by them. Daily diaries ensure efficient handover procedures, and all record keeping is of a high standard. Housemistresses and academic staff liaise efficiently. Senior staff are always available for advice on or involvement in boarding and pastoral matters, and offer excellent leadership on the welfare of boarders.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The overall quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governors show a keen understanding of the school's ethos and are fully supportive of its aims to provide an environment in which pupils grow in confidence and can achieve their potential, academically and personally. The range of skills and expertise represented in the governing body provides a valuable resource to the school, some governors, for example, providing interview experiences for sixth-form pupils. Governors ensure that financial management is astute, monitoring this carefully. Their diligence in this area has ensured that the school has been able to make considerable investment in resources, such as the creation of the modern and attractive library. Despite some weaknesses in monitoring the effectiveness of day-to-day academic and welfare practice, governors have ensured good academic standards and a high level of personal development of pupils.
- 5.3 The school is meticulous in providing informative reports for the governing body. Matters raised are discussed in committee meetings and reported back to the full governing board. Governors are confident that any questions they have would be fully answered by the school. While minutes of meetings indicate some questioning of the formal reports from the school, active monitoring by governors of the implementation of agreed policies is limited. Staff make presentations on a range of matters at governors' meetings. Governors are regular visitors to the school, attending school functions at which they become known to parents as well as to staff. This close interaction successfully supports governors' knowledge of the daily life of the school community.
- 5.4 Not all governors fully understand their responsibility for monitoring the implementation of all required policies on regulatory matters, including safe recruitment records, accessibility and those relating to the National Minimum Standards for boarding. They tend to rely on others for detailed interpretation of requirements. Governors have all received safeguarding training and carry out their statutory responsibility for the annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures. Termly meetings between the staff responsible for this and a nominated governor ensure that there has been thorough oversight of this important matter.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.6 Senior leaders and managers are excellent role models for the pupils in their professionalism, hard work and clear values, consistently providing examples of the respect and courtesy they expect from all other members of the school community. They are enthusiastic and highly motivated, setting a clear educational direction for the school. The school's ethos and its values demonstrate its concern to develop respect for others and for democracy. The success of leadership and management is evident in the pupils' achievements but also in the warm, energetic and friendly atmosphere that pervades the school, as well as the happiness and excellent personal development of its pupils. Senior leadership gives high priority to

- safeguarding matters and has been meticulous in ensuring that all staff are fully trained and any concern actively followed up as required.
- 5.7 Development planning for the whole school is comprehensive and regularly reviewed by senior leaders to check on priorities and progress towards meeting them. The plan is formulated following consultation with all staff, and heads of department are expected to ensure that departmental plans reflect whole-school priorities. The quality of departmental development plans, however, is inconsistent. Some are unfocused, not related to the whole-school plan and lack detailed targets and clarity about timescales. Similarly, departmental handbooks vary in their usefulness and clarity. Some monitoring of the work of heads of department has taken place, but this has not been sufficient to ensure that all those with management responsibilities, whether academic or operational, have fully understood and successfully discharged their responsibilities.
- 5.8 There has been limited progress in meeting the academic recommendations made in the previous integrated inspection report. An extended leadership team has recently been created to establish more consistent monitoring but it is too early to judge its effectiveness in doing so. At present, heads of department are not working cohesively to promote the school's aim of improving pupils' attainment, and their monitoring of teaching in their departments is neither fully developed nor fully effective. Standardised assessment data is being used more effectively to monitor the progress of pupils, to evaluate examination results and plan strategies for improvement, although some staff are more confident in this than others.
- 5.9 Pastoral management is excellent. Senior leaders have been successful in recruiting and training well-qualified staff. Safe recruitment procedures are carefully followed. All required checks have been carried out, but in the recent past had not always been recorded as required, in respect of contractors. This was corrected in the course of the inspection. All new members of staff are trained in their responsibilities for safeguarding and matters of welfare, health and safety in a comprehensive induction programme. A useful appraisal system is in place for staff which includes some formal observation and target setting. A good range of training for individuals has resulted from this. The school is in the process of establishing a system of peer observation as a means of sharing good practice.
- 5.10 The school establishes and maintains excellent relationships with parents. The vast majority of those who responded to the questionnaire were extremely positive about their daughter's education and progress, the opportunities available to them, their happiness and safety and the availability of information. A few parents expressed unhappiness with the speed of responses to questions and the handling of concerns. Inspectors concluded that matters raised by parents are dealt with speedily and appropriately, both informally and in accordance with the school's suitable complaints policy.
- 5.11 A "Freshers' Day" for prospective pupils and parents ensures strong links with parents are established before new pupils enter the school. These are maintained by a wide variety of events. Parents' forum meetings are held regularly, sometimes as question and answer sessions, although questions can be raised at any time and senior leaders pride themselves on providing swift answers. The highly active parents' association works with the school to organise parental forums on matters such as teenage body image, as well as in arranging many social events. House dinners are particularly enjoyed, allowing parents to meet others across year groups while enjoying entertainment provided by their daughters.

- 5.12 All required information is available to parents on the website and parents receive plentiful additional information. Each week current school activities and letters are posted or updated on the website's parent portal, which also has a constantly updated school calendar.
- 5.13 Parents are well informed about the academic progress of their daughters with grade cards issued before every half term, full reports twice each year and parents' meetings to discuss individual pupils. These are held annually for pupils in Years 7 to 11 but held termly for those in the sixth form. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a few parents indicated dissatisfaction with information about their child's progress. Inspection found that reports are helpful and informative, offering plenty of encouragement, constructive advice and targets for improvement. Parents appreciate the efforts taken by staff to ensure they know the pupils really well. Parents are very much part of a lively and welcoming school community.

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