



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**BERKHAMSTED SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The preparatory school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	<b>Berkhamsted School</b>
DfE Number	<b>919/6005</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>310630</b>
Address	<b>Berkhamsted School 131-133 High School Berkhamsted Hertfordshire HP4 2DJ</b>
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Email Address	<b>principal@berkhamstedschool.org</b>
Principal	<b>Mr Mark Steed</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Gavin Laws</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 19</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>1092</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (607 boys; 485 girls)</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>1049</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>43</b>
	Full: <b>34</b> Weekly: <b>9</b>
Inspection dates	<b>25 Sep 2012 to 28 Sep 2012</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 November 2009.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

### Inspectors

Mr John Sugden	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Caroline Ansell	Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, ISA school)
Mr Marcus Cliff Hodges	Team Inspector (Deputy Warden and Head of Boys' School, HMC school)
Mr Stephen Cole	Team inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr George Fussey	Team inspector (Former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Tom Keenan	Team inspector (Head of Sixth Form, HMC school)
Mrs Sue Marks	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Stephen Pugh	Team inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Stephen Smith	Team inspector (Former Head, HMC school)
Dr Ruth Weeks	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Patricia Woodhouse	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Gregg Davies	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Berkhamsted School caters for boys and girls aged 3 to 19, with a boarding option for those aged 11 to 19. The school is divided into four sections: the preparatory school, for pupils aged 3 to 11; separate boys' and girls' senior schools for pupils aged 11 to 16; and a co-educational sixth form. This report is concerned with the senior schools and sixth form, each of which has a head of school under the overall direction of the principal. The school is a charitable company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The directors are the governors of the school.
- 1.2 Berkhamsted School was established in 1541 and the girls' school was added to the foundation in 1888. The schools were amalgamated in 1996, together with the respective preparatory and junior sections, initially as Berkhamsted Collegiate School and, from 2009, as Berkhamsted School. In 2011 Berkhamsted School became Berkhamsted Schools Group, having merged with Heatherton House (a girls' preparatory school).
- 1.3 The school has a total of 1092 pupils, of whom 43 are boarders and 1049 day pupils. There are 607 boys and 485 girls, and 334 pupils are in the sixth form, of whom 177 are boys and 157 girls.
- 1.4 The school aims to provide both single-sex and co-education across a broad and balanced curriculum, with pupils at the heart of a strong, supportive school community. It seeks to nurture pupils' enjoyment of learning, engendering a spirit of enquiry and intellectual independence. Although boys and girls are taught separately between the ages of 11 and 16, they join together for a variety of extra-curricular activities.
- 1.5 Pupils are drawn mainly from the surrounding area, with almost all from white European backgrounds. Boarders come largely from overseas, mainly from the Far East. Nationally standardised measures of attainment indicate that the pupils' average ability on entry is above the national average. There is 1 pupil with a statement of special educational needs and the school has identified 274 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 78 receive specialist learning support. A total of 23 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 7 receive support.
- 1.6 Improvements since the previous inspection include a new chapel, a new dining hall, new laboratories and high tech classrooms, and a new staff common room on the girls' site. The boys' site laboratories and the sixth-form common room have also been refurbished and boarding accommodation has been transformed. A large-scale curricular review has taken place and lunchtimes have been extended to enable provision of an extensive compulsory co-curricular programme. Extensive information and communication technology (ICT) resources have been provided.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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

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

- 2.1 Pupils are very well educated, in line with the school's aims. The quality of their achievements is good overall. They make good progress throughout the school and gain excellent results at A level in relation to their abilities because of their positive attitudes to study, dedicated and, on occasions, inspiring teaching, and curricular provision adapted to meet each pupil's needs. Pupils with SEND and those with EAL make excellent progress. The excellent curriculum is supported by a range of lunchtime co-curricular clubs and societies, and further enriched by an outstanding extra-curricular programme. The best teaching engages pupils' willingness to take responsibility for their learning. Innovative teaching and learning were observed, but such approaches have not yet been widely embraced. The lack of supportive, challenging monitoring and evaluation in some academic departments leads to an inequality of academic provision.
- 2.2 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of the pupils is excellent. It is supported by equally strong pastoral care from the heads of houses and their staff, providing a highly supportive environment in which pupils feel safe and valued. The caring example set by staff is mirrored in the pupils' own interaction. High standards of behaviour are the norm, promoted by the school's clear expectations. Secure, comprehensive policies and procedures, implemented effectively, safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety. Lack of clarity in the management of boarding leads to some inconsistency in the quality of provision and care for a small number of boarders.
- 2.3 Senior staff and governors provide strong leadership, ushering in a period of change in pursuit of a challenging vision for the school's future. Extensive capital investment is providing excellent facilities for learning and accommodation. The quality of ICT resources is exceptional. Inconsistencies of practice in the leadership and management of boarding lead to some non-compliance with regulations. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show overwhelming support for the academic and pastoral sides of school life, praising most teaching but pointing to some inequality of provision. The school promotes good links with parents. The parent portal is widely used. All recommendations from the previous report have been implemented.

## **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 does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, and therefore it must:
- ensure that there is an appropriate process of induction and guidance for new boarders [National Minimum Standard 2.1, under Boarders' induction and support];
  - ensure that there is an appropriate range and choice of activities for boarders outside teaching time [National Minimum Standard 10.1, under Activities and free time];
  - ensure that there is clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school [National Minimum Standard 13.1, under Management and development of boarding].

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

- 2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Disseminate the outstanding teaching methods demonstrated in some lessons and extend regular, consistent monitoring of teaching and learning.
  2. Train all teachers in the use of the school's outstanding ICT resources to enhance further the quality of teaching and learning.
  3. Improve the leadership and management of boarding.



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

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements overall is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are very well educated in accordance with the school's aims. Pupils of all ages demonstrate good levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum. They apply mathematical and scientific concepts well, express their ideas fluently both orally and in writing, and use technical vocabulary with precision and confidence. Many pupils show good levels of general knowledge, which they employ effectively to place their learning into context. Creative work shows flair and imagination. Pupils make good use of ICT in several subjects, including English and modern foreign languages, where it is outstanding. In many lessons, pupils show a spirit of enquiry, an enjoyment of learning, and a growing ability to study and think independently and reason clearly, although these skills are not developed in lessons where teaching is not sufficiently demanding.
- 3.3 Pupils of all ages achieve highly in the many extra-curricular activities and competitions in which they participate. They achieve outstanding collective success and individual representative honours at regional and national level in a number of sports. Many pupils achieve highly in music examinations and several perform at county and national level. Pupils' artwork is skilled and expressive, reflecting their creative and original thinking. A significant number of older pupils achieve bronze, silver or gold levels in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE). Almost all Year 13 leavers gain places at higher education institutions, and in recent years three out of every four pupils have moved on to the course, and to the university, of their first choice.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Pupils' results in GCSE examinations have been high in relation to the national average for maintained schools, similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Over half the grades awarded were A\* or A. In 2011, the girls' performance was excellent, above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Results in the International GCSE in 2011 were higher than the worldwide and UK averages. Results at A level have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained schools, and above the national average for maintained selective schools; 85 per cent of grades awarded were A\*, A or B. In 2010, the girls' results were well above the selective school average. Results have shown improvement from 2009 to 2011. The level of attainment at GCSE and the nationally standardised progress data available indicate that pupils make good and sometimes excellent progress up to Year 11 in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability. The level of attainment in the sixth form and nationally standardised measures of progress indicate that pupils make progress that is excellent in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability. Pupils with SEND and those with EAL make exceptional progress, because of the provision of excellent learning support. Pupils who are gifted or talented excel in lessons where they are fully engaged and challenged, but their progress is more limited when teaching does not stretch them.
- 3.5 Pupils' attitudes to learning and to the activities they are involved in are excellent. They show real enthusiasm and are keen to succeed. They respond particularly well to those lessons where teaching challenges and inspires them. They work well independently or in groups, and the presentation of their work and organisation are

excellent. Pupils show initiative and interest in lessons, with a minority taking a passive approach to their learning. Relationships with teachers are generally excellent and the pupils appreciate the support they get in and out of the classroom.

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

- 3.6 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 A curricular review has addressed the recommendations of the previous inspection and introduced an extensive co-curricular programme, for which lunchtimes have been extended. Parents and pupils appreciate the quality of the curriculum and its impact on pupils' progress.
- 3.8 The breadth of the curriculum and an extensive range of co-curricular activities provide an excellent all-round education in line with the school's aims. All subjects are now available for both girls and boys. Language courses have been streamlined, introducing the necessary flexibility to enable an increased emphasis on study skills for some pupils. Religious studies remain a core subject up to Year 11. In the sixth form, the wide range of 26 A-level courses is supplemented by the Extended Project Qualification at level 3. The curriculum is delivered in a revised daily timetable, with the teaching day divided into 20-minute tranches. This timetable allows for more flexibility, but all the consequences of the change have not yet been evaluated thoroughly.
- 3.9 The curriculum helps to identify and develop the potential of pupils in a large variety of ways inside and outside the classroom. The emphasis on English, mathematics, science and languages in the lower years lays strong foundations for future learning. Pupils identified as having SEND or EAL are given excellent support by a specialist department. Excellent opportunities are provided for pupils' acquisition of strong literacy, numeracy, listening and speaking skills. A rich and varied programme for the most able and gifted in Year 8 gives pupils a voice in the provision. The curriculum is supported by extensive ICT resources. A full, well-resourced personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship programme helps to prepare pupils for life after school, ranging from how to open a bank account to dealing with complex emotional issues. Strong provision of careers advice helps to guide choices for GCSE, A level and university entry, and includes careers fairs as well as work experience for all pupils in Year 12.
- 3.10 The curriculum is enriched by an extensive range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities throughout all year groups. Participation rates are very high. This programme encompasses sporting activities, the arts, academic societies and competitions, visiting speakers and general interest groups, as well as activities such as the DofE and the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), which are both very well attended. An increasingly varied range of sports supplements a strong programme of major sports, which caters for large numbers, whilst extensive drama provision culminates for some in a production at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Musical provision is increasing rapidly, with an orchestra, big band and various ensembles. A large number of trips take place locally, nationally and internationally.
- 3.11 Links with the community are well established, with much time dedicated to service around the region by pupils in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. They have supported local schools, care homes and charities, and host an annual senior citizens' Christmas party for a large number of guests. The school also works

closely with the Wren Academy, sharing expertise and resources to create an innovative partnership that brings benefits to pupils and staff from both schools.

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

- 3.12 The overall quality of teaching is good.
- 3.13 Since the previous inspection, much has been done to improve the overall quality of teaching, helping the school to fulfil its aim to nurture pupils' enjoyment of learning. Most teaching encourages excellent learning attitudes, stimulating interest and perseverance to the task in hand. Teachers are well qualified and have a high level of knowledge and expertise in their subjects. Most lessons are well planned and demonstrate teachers' excellent understanding of the ability and potential of the pupils, who are encouraged to take responsibility for their learning. Lessons are pitched at an appropriate level, a good pace is maintained and a variety of approaches is employed to engage and challenge the pupils. However, some lessons lack variety of approach and are over directed by the teacher, with the result that the pupils become passive learners.
- 3.14 Pupils with SEND are supported extremely well by the learning support department, which supplies helpful guidance for teachers on how to ensure effective progress for these pupils in subject lessons. The teaching makes full provision for any pupil who has a statement of special educational needs. Pupils with EAL are helped to achieve the necessary linguistic competence to be able to access the curriculum and higher education. However, not all teaching provides sufficient challenge for the most able pupils, both within lessons and beyond.
- 3.15 The resources available to teachers are of excellent quality, but they are not always used effectively. However, in English and modern foreign languages, classes were making excellent use of ICT and electronic learning. For example, a discussion of globalisation in Year 13 geography was enhanced by an interesting slideshow presentation and media clip. Such effective practice in teaching methodology and in the use of ICT in the classroom has not yet been universally adopted.
- 3.16 The quality of the marking of pupils' work is good overall. For example, in art and history, the use of GCSE and A-level criteria was fully understood by the pupils, who used the comments to aid future progress. Excellent use of peer assessment was seen in a Year 8 classics lesson, which encouraged mutual support and confidence in the pupils. However, as at the time of the previous inspection, consistency is lacking within and across departments, with examples of superficial marking and perfunctory comments. Pupils appreciate the availability and accessibility of their teachers to support them when required. The school is using nationally standardised measures of progress to make judgements on the relative performance of pupils in different classes and subjects and to set individual targets. A minority of pupils' questionnaire responses raised concerns about the amount of work they are given. Inspectors found that house tutors use the targets effectively to monitor their pupils' workload and improve the quality of their learning.

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

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

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 Since the previous inspection, the pupils' personal qualities, mature and responsible attitude to learning and exceptionally good standards of behaviour have been maintained and further developed, in line with the school's aims, largely due to advances in the already outstanding pastoral care provided and the strong community spirit.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent. They grow rapidly in self-awareness and self-esteem, becoming emotionally very mature for their age. They take responsibility for their actions and embrace the challenges they face with determination and good humour. They are engaging, considerate and articulate, expressing their views with confidence but also respecting the views of others. They listen thoughtfully and exhibit growing maturity of reflection. Their appreciation of non-material aspects of life is evident in their studies in music, art and literature, and enhanced by the school's Christian ethos, which is embodied in chapel and house assemblies and confirmation classes.
- 4.4 The moral awareness of the pupils is outstanding. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, fostered by discussions of a wide range of moral issues in houses, in assemblies, in lessons, especially religious studies, and during PSHE. Thought-provoking feedback on the nature of fairness was observed in a house meeting. Pupils demonstrate genuine concern for those less fortunate than themselves through their strong commitment to the school's extensive programme of charity work, alongside outstanding levels of service in the community, for example in local schools and care homes. They display a strong sense of justice and social action, manifesting itself in Amnesty International and fair trade groups, as well as in celebrations, such as those for World Peace Day.
- 4.5 Social development is excellent. Teachers and pupils work well together, creating a warm community atmosphere. Pupils' relationships with one another are excellent, confirmed by constructive small group work observed in many lessons. The comprehensive PSHE programme, which incorporates a substantial element of citizenship and personal skills, prepares pupils well for life beyond school. Pupils develop good social skills through opportunities to take on leadership roles, as in the CCF or as heads of school and house captains or deputies. Their sense of social responsibility is developed through the links between year groups encouraged by the house system and through service to others, such as the programme of Year 10 peer support. Discussions at the sixth-form school council clearly demonstrated pupils' social awareness. Pupils participate with confidence in community life and play their part in sports teams, plays and ensembles with evident commitment and enthusiasm.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. Their awareness is successfully developed through an extensive range of trips, educational visits, many abroad, and language exchanges. Their visit to Auschwitz informed class discussions on prejudice, whilst Sinai and Jordan offered them experience of several days in the desert without luxuries. Displays of photographs and articles show pupils' deep understanding and appreciation of other environments and cultures, exemplified by the school's link with a secondary school in South Africa. Pupils also develop very strong awareness of

the music, art and literature of their own culture, as seen in their lively involvement in these activities. They leave school extremely well prepared for life ahead.

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

- 4.7 The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.8 A high standard of pastoral care is provided by heads of house, who are very ably supported by deputies. Since the previous inspection, the role of tutors has become more structured and effective, including regular review of academic progress and the teaching of PSHE. The arrangements are in line with the school's stated aim to place pupils at the heart of a strong and supportive community. Ready, exemplary communication with house staff is highly valued by parents.
- 4.9 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves is excellent. Staff provide pupils with the support, advice and guidance they need. Counselling provision is excellent. The house structure, with each comprising a mix of pupils from Years 7 to 11, contributes to a strong sense of community. Several Year 10 pupils in each house are trained to offer peer support. This supportive ethos successfully promotes good behaviour and helps guard against bullying and harassment. Pupils say they feel safe. If unacceptable behaviour does occur, it is dealt with constructively, following clear procedures. Pupils' views are surveyed in a biennial questionnaire on bullying. A small minority of parents and pupils were unhappy with the way the school deals with bullying. Inspectors found that the school follows its published policies and procedures.
- 4.10 A minority of the small number of boarders expressed concern about the school's food. Following discussions with pupils, inspectors found that pupils are given an extremely well-balanced and varied choice of nutritious meals. Healthy eating is promoted in PSHE groups and food technology lessons. Opportunities for regular exercise range from elite teams and competitive games to activities such as carpet bowls, ballroom dancing and aerobics. A very large percentage of pupils take part in extra-curricular sport.
- 4.11 Since the previous inspection, the school has carried out numerous projects to improve accessibility for pupils with SEND. An appropriate access plan is in place.
- 4.12 School councils and charity and catering committees provide opportunities for pupils to express their opinions. The school council was instrumental in the drafting of the current code of conduct for pupils. However, a significant minority of pupils feel that issues submitted are not given due consideration. Steps are being taken to widen the councils' appeal.

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

- 4.13 The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.14 The safeguarding policy and procedures have due regard to official guidance and are effectively implemented with great care. Appropriate training is provided for all staff, and policy, procedures and their effective implementation are reviewed by the governing body on an annual basis. Health and safety procedures are implemented effectively, with risk assessments covering all aspects of school life. Accidents are recorded appropriately.
- 4.15 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Risk assessments are in place and staff have undertaken appropriate fire training. Fire practice drills are carried out regularly and records kept. The school has an experienced and well-qualified team of health professionals who provide excellent medical and pastoral support for pupils. The medical facilities are welcoming and well organised. Many staff are qualified first aiders and St John Ambulance staff attend fixtures and tournaments. A satisfactory written first-aid policy is effectively implemented.
- 4.16 Registration is conducted efficiently electronically. Absence is quickly followed up. Attendance and admission registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored for a minimum of three years. The recommendations in the previous report have been fully implemented.

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

- 4.17 The quality of boarding education is sound.
- 4.18 Outcomes for boarders are sound. Boarders enjoy the measure of independence boarding affords them and are personable, confident, tolerant young people as a result of their experiences. They have access to information about events in the world outside the school through daily newspapers, television and the internet. Local shops are easily accessible, from where boarders may obtain personal and stationery items. They also use a local leisure complex. Some responses from the small number of questionnaires returned suggest that boarding staff do not treat all boarders fairly. Staff and girls who board reported in interviews that inconsistencies in practice between the two houses remain. Relationships amongst boarders are generally good.
- 4.19 Boarding houses hold regular house meetings, where boarders are able to raise concerns. Questionnaire responses suggested that boarders have little influence on the operation of the boarding provision. Inspection evidence supports this view; for example, requests for weekend activities have not been satisfied and the boarders are not regularly represented on the school's catering committee.
- 4.20 Heads of houses and deputies are appointed, although formal prefect training is limited to peer training in Year 10. Boarders have few opportunities for taking responsibility within the boarding houses. This is recognised by the boarding staff and additional duties have recently been introduced.
- 4.21 There is a choice of staff, including heads of day houses, to whom boarders may turn for personal guidance or help. However, many boarders prefer to share their concerns and difficulties with each other, looking to their peers for mutual support. Boarders eat with boarding staff present but not necessarily on their tables.

Boarders with EAL associate mainly with those of similar linguistic background. Overall, however, pupils have good relationships within their close friendship groups. A clear behaviour policy promotes tolerance. Boarders generally accept house rules and are accepting of others from different backgrounds.

- 4.22 The quality of boarding provision and care is sound. There is no formal induction programme for new boarders, but they receive a handbook and matrons help with orientation around the houses and with the daily house routines.
- 4.23 Boarders are made aware of someone other than a parent or friend outside the boarding or teaching staff of the school whom they may contact directly for help and advice with concerns. Contact details for helplines are displayed by the public telephone and are also available in the handbook.
- 4.24 Accommodation for boarders who are unwell is suitable and appropriate policies are in place for the dispensing of controlled and prescribed medicines. Boarders may also make a doctor's appointment either in the school surgery or in the community. Confidentiality and the rights of boarders are respected.
- 4.25 Appropriate measures are in place to ensure the welfare and safety of the boarders, including regular fire drills, signing in and out books, house diaries and monitoring of visitors. Food is nutritious and of a good standard, with a wide variety that enables all to enjoy the eating experience.
- 4.26 Boarders organise their own recreation time in the evenings and at weekends with the exception of occasional house events such as Chinese New Year and a Christmas party. Some evening activities are available for boarders using the nearby local sports facilities. Otherwise, there are very limited organised activities for boarders at weekend and in the evenings, and few opportunities for joint house events.
- 4.27 A recent programme of refurbishment has created facilities of a very high standard in the girls' house. These include pleasant common rooms, a well-equipped kitchen, laundry and en-suite bathrooms. Main areas are well lit, with suitable tables, chairs and internet access in addition to desks in individual bedrooms. Boarders are able to keep in contact with family and friends by email and electronic social media. A similar refurbishment programme is underway in the boys' house. Reasonable protection is provided for boarders' personal possessions. Notice boards are available in every room; some boarders have personalised their rooms, though many regard them merely as convenient places for work and sleep. There are good external recreational spaces for boarders to enjoy in safety.
- 4.28 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is good. There is a secure system in place for the recruitment of staff and appropriate safeguarding training is delivered promptly. Visitors to the boarding houses are signed in and, where necessary, accompanied. New boarding staff are given an informal induction but there is no structured system for this. Fire drills are held regularly and the appropriate logs are maintained and monitored.
- 4.29 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of boarding provision is sound. Lines of responsibility are laid down, but they are not always implemented consistently, particularly with regard to sharing an agreed boarding vision and monitoring practice. The boarding principles are clearly set out in the handbooks and many can be seen in operation. Job descriptions are in place but some do not accurately reflect current roles. The boarding teams do not meet formally, which

was a recommendation in the most recent Ofsted boarding report, and this continues to lead to some inconsistencies of practice, as noted by pupils in their questionnaire responses. Ancillary staff feel valued and supported, and enjoy the interaction they have with the boarders. Training for boarding staff is encouraged and includes access for non-teaching members of the teams. Performance management procedures are in place but there are examples of varied practice in implementation.



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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governors provide extremely effective oversight of the school. Their strong strategic thinking is ushering in a period of change in pursuit of a forward-looking vision for the school's future. Since the previous inspection, continued extensive investment has provided outstanding resources and accommodation, demonstrating clearly their commitment to enhancing the quality of pupils' learning and personal development.
- 5.3 The governors have a good insight into the working of the school. A highly effective committee structure allows careful consideration of school business and governors benefit from extensive, termly reporting by the principal and senior management team, from subject presentations and from an audit of the school's arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils' welfare, health and safety. Governors bring a broad range of experience and expertise to the board and avail themselves of a range of opportunities for training, including safeguarding pupils' welfare and safer recruitment courses, to support them in their responsibilities. An excellent induction programme is offered to all new governors. Minutes of committee meetings indicate that governors have a good awareness of educational standards and provide excellent support, challenge and stimulus for the school's growth and improvement. However, not all parents understand fully the changes made in recent years, particularly with regard to the pivotal roles of the principal, vice-principals and heads of school.
- 5.4 The governors take their statutory responsibilities very seriously. All the changes required to meet regulatory requirements, as indicated in the previous report, have been made. The governing body as a whole now reviews safeguarding and health and safety policies and procedures annually. At times in the past, governors have lacked a detailed awareness of whether policies were being fully implemented. A member of the board now checks how effectively regulatory policies and procedures are being supported and monitored.

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

- 5.5 The quality of the school's leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 Since the previous inspection, strong strategic leadership has moved the school forward and enabled pupils to achieve higher standards in external examinations, as well as building further on the school's pastoral excellence, in line with its aims.
- 5.7 The leadership heads a large senior management team, in which responsibility for each school, including links with parents, is delegated to the respective head of school. The team's fluidity and complexity lead to confusions over accountability, not only in parents' misunderstanding of the structure, as reflected in their questionnaire responses, but also in the monitoring of teaching and learning, the management of boarding and the use of ICT in learning. The new structures and forward-looking vision for the future are not yet fully embedded in the culture of the

school, and sometimes the efficiency of communication has not matched the speed of change. However, the high quality of pupils' academic performance and personal development is testimony to leadership and management's clear direction. A detailed and exhaustive school strategic development plan, which has been presented to parents, shows clear vision and excellent levels of self-evaluation and prioritisation, in line with the school's aims.

- 5.8 The quality of middle management is inconsistent. The management of pastoral care is excellent, and the work of the heads, heads of house and tutors is praised by both pupils and parents. Tutors oversee pupils' progress, but some pupils are unclear about who is overseeing their academic progress. Heads of department are excellent in managing resources and the curriculum. However, although there are ample opportunities for in-service training, a consequence of both the split sites and a modular timetable is a reduced opportunity for essential cross-faculty interaction and the informal sharing of good ideas and practice. However, a working party has successfully stimulated more innovative thinking, which is beginning to spread. Heads of academic departments are responsible to designated senior managers. At its best, this relationship supports the school's strategic development plan in identifying the improvement of classroom practice as the main route to lifting pupils' academic performance. However, the frequency and style of appraisals often vary across departments and the monitoring of teaching and learning is not sufficiently robust, both within departments and across the curriculum.
- 5.9 Management is effective in securing and retaining high quality staff. An excellent induction programme for new teachers includes appropriate training in safeguarding the welfare and health and safety of the pupils. All staff are fully trained in this area and senior managers and governors have attended courses in safer recruitment. All policies and procedures are effectively implemented, with relevant risk assessments, and are reviewed regularly. Resources for learning and accommodation are excellent and are very well maintained. The excellent ICT resources are beginning to impact on the quality of teaching in lessons where they are effectively employed. The team of support staff and its leadership and management make a significant contribution to the school's success.
- 5.10 Since the previous inspection, the school has maintained and enhanced effective links with parents. In their questionnaire returns, almost all parents praised the progress that their children are making and the range of curricular provision. They gave high praise for the pastoral work of the heads of house, who serve as the primary point of contact for parents and for the range of extra-curricular activities. A small minority expressed a lack of satisfaction in the leadership and management of the school. Comments in the questionnaires suggested that this arose from a misconception of the management structure. However, inspectors found that there is some inconsistency of practice. Responses also indicate strong approval of the availability of information, the timely responses to questions and the encouragement given to involve themselves in aspects of the school's work.
- 5.11 The school has many and varied lines of communication, from the printed magazine, calendar and prospectus to text and email. Since the previous inspection, the school website has been further enhanced; nearly three-quarters of all parents have visited the parent portal. Parents have also been surveyed recently on communication issues.
- 5.12 A small number of parents expressed dissatisfaction over the school's handling of complaints and of alleged bullying. Inspectors found that the school follows its

published procedures in both areas. Pupils to whom they spoke expressed overwhelming confidence in the heads of house, who are accessible, know their pupils very well and are entrusted to progress concerns or issues.

- 5.13 Parents have many opportunities, formal and informal, to be involved in the life of the school and the work of their children. Regular parents evenings are held to discuss pupils' progress. These are supplemented by access to heads of house outside normal school hours and information evenings, and parents are invited to breakfast in school. An 'Open Forum' with the principal and chair of governors has taken place and, most recently, parents were invited to a presentation on the school development plan. Parents contribute to the careers programme. Useful guidance on how parents can support language learning is sent out from the modern foreign languages department. Parents of prospective pupils receive required information and a great deal more, which offers valuable insight into the vision and values of the school. Reports on pupils' progress are clear and constructive, with a blend of grades and supporting comment.

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