



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

MILL HILL SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The pre-preparatory and preparatory schools were inspected at the same time and separate reports published.

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| Full Name of School | Mill Hill School |
| DfE Number | 302/6000 |
| Registered Charity Number | 1064758 |
| Address | Mill Hill School The Ridgeway Mill Hill London NW7 1QS |
| Telephone Number | 020 8959 1176 |
| Fax Number | 020 8201 0663 |
| Email Address | headmaster@millhill.org.uk |
| Headmaster | Dr Dominic Lockett |
| Chair of Governors | Professor Michael Proctor |
| Age Range | 13 to 18 |
| Total Number of Pupils | 640 |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (436 boys; 204 girls) |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: 519 |
| Number of Boarders | Total: 121 |
| | Full: 121 Weekly: 0 |
| Inspection dates | 13 Mar 2012 to 16 Mar 2012 |

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 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: www.legislation.gov.uk. Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and disability).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning corporal punishment.

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

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. 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. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in June 2010 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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.

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

same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions 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 Terry Dillon | Reporting Inspector |
| Mrs Mary Booth | Team Inspector (Head of Admissions, HMC school) |
| Mrs Annie Farrell | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, SHMIS school) |
| Mr Christopher Hall | Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school) |
| Mr Chris Ramsey | Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school) |
| Mr Ian Selmes | Team Inspector (Staff Tutor, HMC school) |
| Mr John White | Team Inspector (Director of Sixth Form, HMC school) |
| Mrs Rosalind Hayes | Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding |

CONTENTS

| | Page |
|--|-----------|
| 1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL | 1 |
| 2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL | 3 |
| (a) Main findings | 3 |
| (b) Action points | 4 |
| (i) Compliance with regulatory requirements | 4 |
| (ii) Recommendations for further improvement | 4 |
| 3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS | 5 |
| (a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning | 5 |
| (b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils) | 6 |
| (c) The contribution of teaching | 7 |
| 4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT | 9 |
| (a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils | 9 |
| (b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care | 10 |
| (c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety | 10 |
| (d) The quality of boarding | 11 |
| 5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT | 14 |
| (a) The quality of governance | 14 |
| (b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians | 14 |

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Founded in 1807 by a committee of non-conformist merchants and ministers, Mill Hill School is a mixed boarding and day school for pupils aged 13 to 18, situated in north west London. The Mill Hill School Foundation comprises Mill Hill School, Belmont (the preparatory school) and Grimsdell (the pre-preparatory school). The three schools operate separately in their day-to-day educational arrangements, and have a central governing body (the Court of Governors) and central administration. The headmaster of the senior school acts as chief executive for all three schools. Mill Hill School has three co-educational boarding houses, one of which has a separate annexe for girls. Since the previous inspection, new games facilities and changing rooms have been built.
- 1.2 Pupils are admitted to the school at any stage but mostly at the ages of 13 and 16. Approximately half come from Belmont and the other half from a variety of preparatory and maintained schools. Those who do not enter from Belmont are required to take examinations in English, mathematics, science, French and optional Latin, as well as attend for interview. Sixth-form entrants are required to have a minimum of two GCSEs at grade A and three at grade B. They are also required to have achieved grade C or above in English and mathematics. For subjects intended for study in the sixth form, A* or A grades are usually expected.
- 1.3 The total number of pupils is 640, of whom 436 are boys and 204 girls. The boarders total 121, of whom 63 are boys and 58 girls. Many of the pupils come from professional and business families. Standardised tests taken in Year 9 show that the average ability of the pupils is above the national average, but with a wide range of ability evident. A substantial number of pupils are from overseas and from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Some 49 pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and 45 receive support for their English. A total of 112 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 61 receive extra support.
- 1.4 The aims of the foundation are to provide excellence in education, to support pupils in the passage from childhood towards adulthood, and to develop in them all self-discipline, responsibility and spiritual and moral values, leading to the highest possible standards of behaviour, consideration for others and a pride in themselves and their own achievements. The foundation seeks to achieve its aims through a broad, flexible and forward-looking curriculum, upholding the Christian faith while respecting the faiths of others. It aims to provide opportunities for the development of leadership, independence and responsibility. It sets out to work in partnership with parents, and seeks to promote in its pupils a desire to serve the local and wider community.

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

| School | NC name |
|-------------|---------|
| Fourth Form | Year 9 |
| Remove | Year 10 |
| Fifth Form | Year 11 |
| Lower Sixth | Year 12 |
| Upper Sixth | Year 13 |

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils receive a good, broad education that has many excellent features and is in line with the aims of the school. Achievement and academic progress throughout the school are good and occasionally excellent. Many pupils also achieve excellent standards in activities outside the classroom. The quality of teaching is good and much is excellent. This is reflected in the good subject knowledge, class management and excellent classroom relationships which encourage pupils to learn and make progress. Teaching is sometimes less successful when it does not provide different work for pupils with different abilities, and the good assessment and target setting in some subjects have not been adopted by all departments. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) within and beyond the curriculum is not fully developed. Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning, which contributes to their good and often excellent progress.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils show high levels of self-esteem, whilst recognising and celebrating the achievements of others. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and readily support those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities and carry them out conscientiously. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school shows a high degree of maturity. The range of ethnic backgrounds of the pupils and their introduction to different faiths contribute to their excellent cultural understanding and valuing of cultural diversity. The pastoral system is excellent, as are the school's arrangements for welfare, health and safety. The care pupils receive, which includes the promotion of healthy living and expert medical provision, contributes strongly to their welfare. The provision for boarding is excellent. Responses to the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire indicated some discontent with the match between sanctions and misdemeanours, and inspectors concur. Responses to the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive, indicating their confidence in the school's provision.
- 2.3 The governing body provides good oversight of the school. Leadership and management are excellent and provide a high standard of educational direction for the school. The strong relationships which exist between senior management and staff contribute effectively to the school's success. The management of day-to-day matters is carried out responsibly and well supported by the good systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's overall success. Middle management provides good professional leadership, although the monitoring of assessment procedures is not yet fully effective. At the time of the previous inspection, the school was recommended to increase the range of teaching approaches and to improve the quality of development planning, both of which have been implemented, and to spread the best practice in marking, which has still to be achieved. The school was also recommended to increase the opportunities available to pupils for community service and report more meaningfully to parents, both of which it has accomplished. All the recommendations of the previous boarding inspection have been met.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the good practice of marking and target setting observed in some subjects is extended to all subjects.
 2. Ensure that sanctions are appropriately matched to misdemeanours.
 3. Ensure that staff match the level of academic work to the different needs of the pupils.
 4. Further extend the use and management of ICT and the virtual learning environment within and beyond the curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils' achievement throughout the school is good.
- 3.2 The pupils' good, and on occasions, excellent achievement moves the school closer to its aim of providing excellence in education, an improvement since the time of the previous inspection.
- 3.3 Pupils are very good listeners who can articulate their views very clearly. They display their knowledge, understanding and skills confidently. In English they use an extensive vocabulary when involved in discussion, in history they read and interpret sources effectively and in art they draw together contrary ideas to create a whole. In science and mathematics they develop good investigative skills, and in design technology and music show high levels of both practical and creative skills. Pupils make good use of ICT in the creative arts and areas of humanities, using computers to help in composition in music and to enable them to test out different shapes and colours in art, but ICT is not used fully in all subjects, especially when it is limited to simple word processing. Pupils are attentive listeners in music, perform well in drama and commit themselves well to physical development in games and physical education. The presentation of their written work is of variable quality, but in the main they demonstrate a good and sometimes excellent ability to express ideas and concepts through the written word. Pupils with EAL have individual or group lessons and achieve particularly well in developing a range of vocabulary to fit their needs. Pupils who have SEND also achieve well, especially when receiving individual tuition or the support of a teaching assistant in class. The gifted and talented respond to the effective teaching they receive by showing excellent perception and the ability to organise ideas.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve excellent results in extra-curricular activities, which contributes effectively to their personal development. Individuals and teams perform well at county and national level in different sports, with several pupils gaining national representation. Pupils have also enjoyed excellent success in a wide range of activities such as in speech and drama examinations, as well as gaining access to junior musical conservatoires. Some achieve outstanding levels for their age, such as in conducting a junior conservatoire orchestra at the school concert. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) has had the honour of parading at the Cenotaph and participating in the British Military Tournament at Earls Court.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Performance at GCSE and at A level is good in relation to the national average for all maintained schools and in line with that for maintained selective schools. In 2011 almost 60 per cent of pupils gained A* to A grades at GCSE and almost 20 per cent gained A* at A level, an improvement on the previous year. The pupils' attainment at both levels shows good progress from Year 9 through to Year 13; boys and girls, as evidenced in their books and in lesson observations, perform at about the same level. On leaving the school, almost all the pupils proceed to university or follow other higher education courses.
- 3.6 In lessons and written work pupils apply themselves well, are keen to learn and respond willingly to the good and sometimes excellent teaching. They generally show a high level of learning, show enthusiasm for what they are doing and, working

in groups and individually, display commitment and persistence. They tackle projects and individual work effectively, showing strong willingness to take individual responsibility. Throughout the school, behaviour in lessons is of a high standard, and pupils enjoy extremely good relationships amongst themselves, with their teachers and with the non-academic staff with whom they come into contact.

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

- 3.7 Curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.8 The school provides a broad and challenging education for the pupils, in line with its aims; the curriculum and extra-curricular activities include some excellent features. The wide range of provision outside the normal timetable, for instance the option of Latin in Year 9, complements the pupils' experiences in the curriculum. The school has recently updated its curriculum to bring it more in line with the needs of pupils. It is currently discussing the implications for the structure of the curriculum concerning its decision to move to a five-day week in the next academic year. This includes a review of sixth-form provision.
- 3.9 During Year 9, pupils follow a broad academic curriculum that provides a thorough preparation for GCSE. All the National Curriculum subjects are included as well as choices from three modern foreign languages and Latin. Physical education, drama and personal, social, health and religious education (PSHRE) are also covered. In Years 10 and 11 the curriculum remains broad, with an appropriate core of subjects and a good range of options. Teaching in several subjects is organised in ability groups, providing effectively for the different needs of the pupils in those subjects. The pupils with SEND or EAL are well catered for by the two well-organised departments. The curricular arrangements also cater well for the gifted and talented pupils within the class structure of setting by ability, providing opportunities that challenge them to excel, though this is less evident in some subjects where setting does not take place.
- 3.10 In Year 12, most pupils choose four subjects at AS level from a wide choice of options and continue with three or in some cases four through to A level in Year 13. Suitably qualified pupils in Years 12 and 13 also take the Extended Project Qualification. Pupils also study a non-examined complementary studies course, physical education and PSHRE, as well as benefitting from visiting lecturers. The strength of the sixth-form curriculum is the flexible response to individual need and the provision of academic enrichment activities.
- 3.11 The school has developed its virtual learning environment provision since the previous inspection and has engendered a more imaginative use of ICT within and outside lessons. This is well used in several subjects but has yet to be adopted in others.
- 3.12 Careers guidance is excellent. Pupils are well supported when choosing both GCSE and A-level subjects. The employment of a higher education advisor to interview pupils and parents further enhances the guidance given. Careers is included in PSHRE in Year 9 and begins the positive approach that is mirrored by the good support sixth formers receive with their university applications.
- 3.13 The academic curriculum is balanced by the comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities on offer. The school asserts that academic rigour is just one aspect in its educational provision, and sport, arts, drama and music, as well as community action, are taken equally seriously. Many pupils take part in several initiatives

whether they are within the performing arts, sport, community action or the varied council forums. There has been a positive response to the recommendations of the previous inspection to increase opportunities for pupils to be involved in community service. The new additions, such as the gardening club and local environmental projects, are making a positive contribution to the local community.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.15 The good and often excellent teaching contributes strongly to the school's aim for excellence in its provision for pupils. Teachers are knowledgeable. It is planned well and helps the pupils to understand the purpose of the lesson. Ideas and procedures are generally explained clearly so that pupils understand what is expected of them. This leads to effective learning. Pupils are skilfully encouraged to be involved in their learning through the different techniques used. For example, in a GCSE mathematics lesson, pupils used slides to make presentations to the class and were then questioned and assessed expertly by their peers. In an English lesson, pupils progressed in their understanding of literary terminology by participating in a paired quiz, and in a Year 13 politics lesson a game lightened the learning whilst challenging the pupils' understanding of proportional representation.
- 3.16 Teaching uses a good range of resources effectively. The best lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and include effective questioning techniques that encourage pupils to think for themselves and develop their knowledge, understanding and skills well. On the occasions when the pace drops or teachers do not explain a task clearly enough, the pupils lose concentration. Praise and encouragement help the pupils to enjoy the subjects studied. The wide range of opportunities for individual and group work contributes strongly to the pupils' personal development, fostering their social and independent skills. Lessons are well managed, and expectations of the pupils are high, which leads to a strong work ethic.
- 3.17 The teaching of pupils with SEND or EAL is well organised, is of a high standard and ensures that they make good progress. In mainstream classes teachers are aware of pupils with particular difficulties or strengths and there are some good examples of work being tailored to their needs, but often teachers do not provide for pupils of different abilities, with the result that progress for the less able and the gifted and talented is slowed.
- 3.18 Assessment is good. The school has developed a highly effective system for monitoring and assessing individual pupils' progress, often using standardised tests. Where the system is well embedded, those pupils who may be at risk of under-performing are quickly identified and the causes are addressed through the provision of well-targeted specialist support. This system has not yet been adopted in full across all subject areas.
- 3.19 A good feature of the assessment system is that pupils set their own targets for each term, record them in their planners and indicate how well they think they are progressing in the target review at the end of each term. Pupils also keep a record of the half-termly effort and attainment grades they receive, a further means of monitoring their own progress.

- 3.20 Teachers keep good records of marks indicating progress or otherwise in unit tests and examinations in all departments, and these are used to set targets and monitor progress in a subject over time.
- 3.21 Marking is generally thorough, accurate and frequent. However, the variation in the quality of marking overall identified at the time of the previous inspection remains. The best includes positive comments and sets out how pupils can improve their work. Useful oral feedback is also provided in some subjects. However, such excellent practice is not consistent across all subjects, and on occasions comments provided are not sufficiently detailed to ensure that pupils know exactly what steps they need to take in order to improve the quality of their work.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The excellent level of personal development achieved by pupils by the time they leave the school contributes strongly to the school's fulfilment of its aim to develop in all self-discipline, responsibility, and spiritual and moral values that lead to the highest possible standards of behaviour, consideration for others and a pride in themselves and their achievements.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They consider that all have special gifts that make them unique, so that when they are involved in different pursuits such as music, sport or drama they enter into the activities determined to make the best use of their talents. This was well demonstrated in the Five and Ten Mile Cup race and in experimental work observed in drama. The pupils' self-esteem is apparent in their confident, lucid expressions of beliefs and opinions. They willingly consider that their peers have talents that are worthy of praise, and as demonstrated in some artwork, they appreciate differences in people's attitudes and responses as a reflection of that beyond the purely material.
- 4.4 Pupils have well-developed moral sensibilities and have an excellent understanding of right and wrong, guided, not least, through the many statements in the literature of the school that urge them to act well. The PILLAR acronym, defined by members of the school councils, emphasises integrity, pride and respect, personified in the pupils' calm management of themselves and their social interactions with others. Pupils are nonetheless intellectually engaged by humanity's problems, and debate about these is actively encouraged and enjoyed as both cerebral stimulation and a spur to action. Pupils are as much eager to listen as to contribute to ethical deliberation, as seen in PSHRE classroom discussions about euthanasia, or in more formal pupil presentations about, for example, economic policy at 'soap box' and 'hot topics' meetings.
- 4.5 Pupils accept and enjoy responsibility, managing aspects of the school community as prefects and councillors. The various school councils examine debated issues such as homework, which has been examined by the Year 9 council. Pupils willingly and successfully take on leadership roles in Young Enterprise schemes or act as prefects, who, as role models and 'grand mentors', oversee younger pupils successfully. Notably, pupils also learn values of comradeship and being as willing to follow as to lead, for instance as members of the CCF. Boarders and day pupils are involved in activities that they consider give them the opportunity to learn to trust fellow pupils. Pupils are also aware of a responsibility to those who are in need. National and international charities benefit from their enthusiastic support and willingness to organise fund-raising events. Pupils give their time to outreach projects such as ICT with senior citizens and attaining recognised status for ecological initiatives.
- 4.6 The cultural development of pupils is excellent and supported by an extensive, imaginative and diverse programme of curricular and extra-curricular activities involving European exchange visits and world-wide partnerships. Mutual respect is perceptible in the pupils' calm behaviour across the age range, encouraged by the vertical house system. Their interactions reflect the Christian principles fundamental to the aims of the school, and are coupled with a respectful and active desire to

understand the beliefs of others, evidenced by the regular inter-faith assemblies. The number of pupils from different countries enables pupils to learn to respect different faiths and cultures, and their various friendships prepare them well for life in a multi-cultural society.

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

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 A clear structure which includes housemasters, housemistresses and form tutors is overseen by senior managers. The system supports the extended family that the school sets out to encourage. Teachers and tutors know their pupils very well. Daily tutor groups, regular assemblies and house meetings provide an inclusive and highly supportive structure. Relationships between staff and pupils are congenial, as they are between pupils and their peers. All members of the community clearly value each other's contributions to school life. The responses to the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that pupils feel cared for and safe around the school and that they like being at the school. Some pupils feel that sanctions to deal with unacceptable behaviour do not always fit the misdemeanour for which they are applied, with some being excessive or containing an element of unfairness. Inspection evidence supports this view.
- 4.9 Pupils benefit from a choice of eating venues and menus, and the caterers and pastoral team work closely to ensure various healthy eating options. All pupils are appropriately encouraged to participate in physical exercise in choosing their games and activity programme. Pupils with SEND or EAL are fully included in the life of the school and there is a suitable accessibility plan.
- 4.10 The school has developed a highly positive anti-bullying policy that identifies bullying and advises on how to combat it. As a result, there is little evidence of bullying and in discussion with inspectors pupils confirmed that if it is reported it is dealt with quickly. Measures to promote good behaviour are effective and pupils move around the school in an orderly manner, being polite and courteous. The system for supervision by staff at break times is well organised and ensures that pupils have someone to turn to if they have any concerns.
- 4.11 Pupils are frequently consulted on their views on all aspects of school life through the numerous councils that meet regularly, and have their minutes and successes clearly displayed in prominent places around the school. Surveys in tutor periods also ensure that the views of pupils are revealed on specific issues, such as careers support.

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

- 4.12 The arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.13 The school's provision in this area contributes significantly to meeting its aim of providing a supportive, friendly and inclusive environment in which pupils can realise their full potential, both academically and in terms of personal development.
- 4.14 The school recognises the need to maintain high safeguarding standards. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and is implemented successfully. Regular and effective child protection training, including in internet safety, is provided for all pupils and members of staff, and is updated regularly. All visitors to the school receive a copy of its child protection disclosure procedure. Health and safety

procedures are excellent; regular fire drills are carefully monitored and recommendations for improvement duly recorded. Fire extinguishers are well placed and regularly checked, and fire exit doors are well signposted. Comprehensive risk assessments cover buildings and grounds, subject areas and the wide range of external visits. All electrical equipment is checked routinely by a qualified external agency.

- 4.15 The on-site medical staff have excellent arrangements for dealing with sick pupils or those involved in an accident and the medical centre provides clean and attractive accommodation. Medical boxes are in convenient places around the school and these locations are listed in the comprehensive first-aid policy. Staff have appropriate and up-to-date first-aid training.
- 4.16 The admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained and stored; follow-up checks on absent pupils are carried out promptly and effectively.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.17 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.18 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The school is highly successful in providing a lively, supportive and caring environment that allows boarders to grow in confidence, independence and sensitivity to the needs of others, in line with its aims. Relationships amongst boarders are excellent, and friendships extend across year groups. Boarders from overseas are welcomed into the community and different cultures are celebrated in house events, such as Chinese New Year and a Russian evening. The innovative appointment of a figure to liaise with pupils from north east Asia provides further support for such boarders, and their parents and guardians.
- 4.19 Pupils are at ease with staff and enjoy boarding life. The boarding committee and boarders' food committee provide opportunities for opinions to be expressed and boarders are confident that their views do, on occasions, influence decisions. All boarders help with the running of the houses, and more senior boarders accept responsibility for organising house challenges such as the music, drama, and Five and Ten Mile Cup competitions. Boarders show considerable loyalty to their houses and to the boarding community as a whole.
- 4.20 House staff know the boarders well and boarders value highly the care they receive. A comprehensive induction programme encourages new pupils to settle in quickly. The peer mentoring system works well. The effective communication between pastoral and academic staff ensures that the pupils' individual needs are catered for and they can feel confident in what the school is providing for them.
- 4.21 The medical centre provides excellent daytime care, whilst the presence of medically qualified staff ensures that overnight medical care is effective. Individual care plans are well formulated and are closely followed. The secure database allows detailed medical information to be shared efficiently with senior pastoral staff. Surgeries are held three times a week and boarders can choose to see either a male or female doctor. Matrons make appointments for, and accompany boarders to, the dentist, optometrist and other specialist services when necessary.
- 4.22 There is an extensive range of activities available to boarders during the week which includes sport, music, drama and community action. At weekends, house staff, in consultation with the boarders, arrange ice-skating and bowling trips, and visits to places of interest. The swimming pool is open on Sundays and other sporting

activities such as basketball are available. Pre-inspection questionnaire responses indicated that some boarders do not think there is enough to do at weekends. However, when interviewed, boarders reported that Sunday is seen by many as an opportunity for free time in which they can follow their own interests.

- 4.23 Boarding accommodation is attractive, well decorated and suitably furnished. It is restricted to boarders unless special permission for visitors is granted. Common rooms and bedrooms are comfortable and there are well-equipped games rooms. Each of the three houses has an efficient laundry service and facilities are available for boarders to launder their own clothes if they so wish. An ongoing refurbishment programme is in place.
- 4.24 Overall, food is of good quality and quantity and is well presented, and there is always a choice. Individual dietary needs are catered for, including allergies, sports diets and the provision of halal meat. Some boarders expressed negative views about food provided in the evenings but this was not supported by evidence during the inspection. Fruit and water are always available. Kitchen facilities exist for making drinks and snacks in the evening and boarders have an input into the choice of additional food provided in the boarding houses.
- 4.25 Good links with pupils' parents and guardians exist. Boarders are able to communicate easily with their friends and parents, and house staff have regular communication with parents and guardians. Parents and guardians of new boarders are invited to induction days to meet with boarding staff in order to facilitate relationships, and opportunities exist throughout the year for social gatherings, for example at Christmas.
- 4.26 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent. Policies for the health and safety of boarders and risk assessments are detailed, understood and monitored regularly. Fire drills take place each term, occasionally at night, and are clearly recorded. All staff receive child protection training when they start at the school and training is updated regularly. Senior pupils with responsibilities also receive safeguarding training. Safe recruitment procedures are in place. Effective systems exist for boarders to sign in and out of the boarding house. Pupils have very clear information regarding areas they may visit and understand the need for their whereabouts to be monitored at all times. Procedures for finding a missing boarder are clearly understood by staff. Appropriate consideration has been given to the safety of pupils in boarding and CCTV is unobtrusive.
- 4.27 School policies for countering bullying are clear and are supported by the pupils' anti-bullying and mentoring council. Boarders report that there are a number of people they can talk to if they are worried and there is also a counsellor whom boarders can contact directly. High standards of behaviour are achieved, based on the mutual trust between staff and pupils and in response to the staff's high expectations.
- 4.28 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent, the result evident in very happy and fulfilled boarders. The appointment of a senior staff member to oversee boarding has ensured well-organised provision. Policies and procedures are clearly stated in the boarding handbook, which is available to staff, parents and boarders. They are implemented rigorously and are regularly monitored. Boarding staff are thoroughly trained, have the opportunity for continuous professional development and are committed to the school's caring ethos. All staff follow a comprehensive induction programme on arrival at the school and are appraised on a two-yearly

cycle. Regular meetings take place amongst boarding staff in order to share good practice. Supervision levels are high. Resident staff and visiting tutors from the academic team provide support in addition to housemasters, housemistresses and the matrons.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing body is contributing effectively to the school's growing success in meeting the full range of its aims. It meets regularly and also makes good use of an effective committee structure, which enables it to keep abreast of the quality of the school's provision and its outcomes. Governors have a wide range of relevant skills and expertise in areas such as education, medicine, law, business, finance, construction and the police service, which enable them to support the school and provide advice and oversight in key areas related to child protection, welfare, and health and safety throughout the school. They review the school's policies regularly in these areas, including an annual review of that concerned with child protection.
- 5.3 Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities, carefully considering reports from the school's senior management as well as other staff through their various committees. Their minutes indicate that they are willing to question and challenge. They ensure the financial stability of the school and also take a keen interest in the school's performance in relation to the pupils' achievements and personal development. Some governors visit the school and make informal visits to classes but the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work are mostly left to the school's senior management. Designated governors liaise with boarding houses, with the preparatory and pre-preparatory schools, and with academic and pastoral staff with varying degrees of success. Overall, governors show good support for the school's work.

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

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the school are excellent.
- 5.5 Leadership and management successfully fulfil the school's aims. The headmaster and senior management team have a clear vision and have implemented systems and procedures which provide for the continued development of the school. Changes in the management structure, which have included increased collaboration between pastoral and academic middle management and clearer accountability, all implemented since the previous inspection, have been achieved and have benefited from the wide range of consultation. The result is that the school is effectively building on its traditions with a new emphasis on pride and ambition, strengthened by a shared and collegiate approach.
- 5.6 Leadership and management are effective across different levels. Regular departmental reviews and the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning have resulted in heads of department and housemasters and housemistresses becoming increasingly accountable, though the implementation of policies across and within all departments, for instance in target setting and meeting the needs of pupils of different abilities, is not yet consistent. A key outcome of the commitment to change is the strong sense of shared purpose amongst the staff. Management has ensured appropriate deployment of resources, though ICT is not fully exploited. New staff, governors and volunteers are checked appropriately; these checks are suitably recorded.

- 5.7 The process of development planning has improved significantly since the previous inspection, meeting the recommendation of that report. The school consults all members of the school community and uses professional consultants in creating its very robust plans. Significant changes, such as the abolition of schooling on Saturday, have been carefully thought through, and working parties are addressing the ways in which the various needs of the school are to be met within the reduced working week. The plan reflects priorities identified in departmental and boarding plans. Pupils are consulted through the various year group, boarding and school councils although some expressed disappointment that their views are not always taken into account. Inspectors found evidence to support this view although they recognised that the school is not always in a position to implement what pupils have requested. Nevertheless, other pupils identified significant initiatives, such as the sustainability campaign, in which the school's management clearly responded to their recommendations. The development plan has robust procedures for the measurement of success, clear timelines and indicators as to the devolvement of responsibilities.
- 5.8 Systems for appraising and developing the work of staff are effective. Self-assessment, lesson observations and monitoring by senior and middle management ensure effective departmental reviews. Regular meetings between department leaders and senior management are carefully minuted, with a keen eye on the quality of teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. Opportunities to benefit from further discussion of good practice are offered by the informal teaching and learning group, run by staff. Links with the pre-preparatory and preparatory schools, including joint curriculum meetings, are strong, which benefits pupils when they transfer. In-service training and induction for staff are well organised but are currently not sufficient regarding the provision in teaching of appropriate challenge for pupils of differing abilities. Staff are regularly trained in issues such as safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The school's administrative systems are efficient and the administrative staff personable.
- 5.9 The school has excellent links with parents, in accordance with its aims. The school does not have an organised parent group but is currently in the process of forming one. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated high levels of satisfaction with their children's progress, the range of experiences provided, their children's happiness and well-being, and the school's communications with them, views supported by inspection evidence.
- 5.10 The regular flow of newsletters by email ensures that parents are kept informed, and the officially required information for parents of current and prospective pupils is easily and effectively available through the school website. The various magazines, highlighting results, pupils' work and achievements, and future plans are also much appreciated and underpin the sense of community.
- 5.11 Parents receive information on their children's progress through the class grade cards they receive regularly and the helpful reports, ensuring that they are able to support their children's learning. The regular grading system also keeps pastoral staff abreast of any concerns about pupils. This system meets the recommendation of the previous inspection report
- 5.12 Parental concerns are dealt with in accordance with well-constructed guidelines. Most are swiftly and informally addressed. The school has a fair and sensitive complaints procedure that is operated effectively.

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