



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**HEATH MOUNT SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

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## Heath Mount School

Full Name of School	<b>Heath Mount School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>919/6046</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>311069</b>		
Address	<b>Heath Mount School Woodhall Park Watton at Stone Hertford Hertfordshire SG14 3NG</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01920 830230</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01920 830357</b>		
Email Address	<b>office@heathmount.org</b>		
Head	<b>Mr Robert Middleton</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Linda Haysey</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>451</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (253 boys; 198 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>97</b>	5-13: <b>354</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>357</b>	
Number of Boarders	Flexi:	<b>94</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Sandy Dakakni</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>19 Mar 2013 to 22 Mar 2013</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in April 2006 and there was an interim inspection in March 2010.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**‘exceptional’ that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology (‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘satisfactory’ and ‘inadequate’) as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

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

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sally Hobbs	Team Inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Mr Adrian Lowe-Wheeler	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mr Huw May	Team Inspector (Headmaster, GSA school)
Mr Ian Sterling	Team Inspector (Head of Prep, IAPS school)
Mrs Bridget Forrest	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years
Mrs Vivienne Wells	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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

- 1.1 Heath Mount School is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils aged from three to thirteen years. It was founded in 1796 in Hampstead and moved to a Grade 1 listed Georgian mansion, on the Woodhall Park Estate, in Hertfordshire, in 1934. Additional buildings have been constructed to provide further accommodation and sports facilities. The school is a charitable foundation overseen by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school's central principles are that its pupils should demonstrate tolerance, respect, integrity, industry and achievement. It considers that pupils are entitled to be happy, healthy, safe and fulfilled within a community that values them, and it aims to provide an holistic education.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, 451 pupils (253 boys and 198 girls) were on the school roll, of whom 97 (61 boys and 36 girls) were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for pupils aged from three to five years. The forty-two Nursery children, aged three, attend part time. The school provides only flexi-boarding, for any combination of Monday to Thursday nights. Currently, there are 94 flexi-boarders, an approximately equal number of boys and girls, aged from 8 to 13. The boys are accommodated in the main school building, and the girls' accommodation is in a separate house on the edge of the school campus.
- 1.4 From Year 1 to Year 7, assessments are used to determine applicants' suitability to join the year group. Many of the pupils come from professional families, and a few are from minority ethnic groups although very few speak English as an additional language (EAL). The ability profile of the school, on entry to the EYFS, is in line with the national average. New entrants at a later stage are also usually of average ability.
- 1.5 The school has identified 59 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One of these pupils has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.6 Classes from Nursery to Year 2 inclusive are known as the pre-prep. Years 3 to 8 are known as the prep. National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report, and by the school, to refer to year groups in the school.

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

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

- 2.1 The pupils' achievements are excellent, throughout the school. Particularly high standards are reached in creative pursuits such as art, dance and music. The pupils excel in a number of sports, including cricket, fencing and riding. They make high rates of progress, from the EYFS onwards through the school. Consequently, they are very well versed in communication skills, including information and communication technology (ICT), and in literacy and numeracy. The pupils' excellent achievements are supported by their enthusiasm for learning, by a particularly vibrant curriculum and by largely excellent teaching, where very few inconsistencies remain. Strong support for pupils with SEND, more able pupils and those with EAL ensure that all achieve to the best of their ability. As a result, pupils experience the fulfilling and holistic education described in the school aims and are extremely well prepared for their future lives.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. They respond very well to the 'family-feel', excellent boarding experience, and to the school-wide 'Restorative Practice' programme, developing their awareness and understanding of feelings. Pastoral care and arrangements for the pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are excellent and fully reflect school aims, ensuring that pupils are happy, healthy and safe. Pupils care for one another; they are socially adept, friendly and polite to visitors. They have clear insight into their own culture and others because they respond fully to relevant aspects of the curriculum and are involved in extensive charitable activity, including significant contributions towards building a school in India.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are excellent throughout the school, underpinning pupils' excellent achievements and finely-honed personal development. Swift response to the recommendations of the previous inspection has ensured compliance with all regulations and has improved assessment and the curriculum. Governors have a very clear oversight of the school, including the boarding arrangements and the EYFS. They and the school's senior leadership provide a clear vision for the school, with a very strong emphasis on developing pupils' emotional well-being, supported by all staff. Heads of department manage their subjects well but some are given few opportunities to see their colleagues teaching, so as to identify and redress the minor inconsistencies. Links with parents are excellent; parents are extremely positive about most aspects of the school's educational and pastoral provision.

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

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

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

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

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Monitor teaching and learning more robustly throughout the school to eliminate inconsistencies and increase the involvement of middle leaders.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills is excellent.
- 3.2 Achievement has improved since the previous inspection, including in the EYFS. Nursery children can sequence numbers. They give thoughtful, confident and articulate answers to questions about a story. Reception children use skills in linking sounds with letters to write words such as 'chick'. Independently, they can compose and write sentences. They understand how to 'double' numbers, such as the spots on a ladybird. They are eager to participate and creative in their thinking, using resources ingeniously to aid their imaginative play. In ICT they are competent in selecting, scrolling down, using the 'back' button and starting video clips.
- 3.3 By the time they leave in Year 8, pupils have responded fully to the school's aim to enable pupils to benefit from a well-rounded education. Consequently, they are extremely articulate, well versed in creative and aesthetic skills and sports and in a range of academic and technical skills. They use ICT well to support learning, for example, using computers and video cameras in art lessons, and using laptops regularly to support learning in other subjects.
- 3.4 Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND or EAL, apply their communication, literacy and numeracy skills well, for instance to solve problems in a number of different subjects requiring calculation and use of data. In assemblies, they answer ad hoc questions from adults and pupils competently and show mature logical thought, for instance, in expressing views about fairness and the plight of children less fortunate than themselves.
- 3.5 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national norm but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. They follow a very demanding curriculum and extra-curricular programme. This year, the proportion of scholarships won by Year 8 pupils, often to leading selective senior schools, has increased to three-quarters of the group. These scholarships not only cover academic subjects but further reaffirm the success of the school's holistic approach, and include art, music and sport. Inspection evidence confirms the excellent attainment. The work in the senior pupils' books is of a particularly high standard in relation to national targets. Pupils are able to talk knowledgeably about their learning.
- 3.6 Many examples of excellent creative and sporting achievement were seen during the inspection, through curricular and extra-curricular activities. A very high standard of sculpture and artwork is on display; ballet performances observed were at a standard well above pupils' ages. Twenty pupils have won places in the National Youth Choir; the school won BBC Choir of the Year in 2012; the Jazz Band won 'Gold' at a regional festival. Instrumental playing is exceptional, from violinists, in a spell-binding performance of the Bach double violin concerto, to a UK 'under 17' piano competition finalist. High-calibre swimming, rugby and hockey were observed, in games lessons and in matches. One pupil won the 2012 World Karting Championship. There are national, regional and county players in several other sports, such as cricket, judo and fencing.

- 3.7 This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that progress is excellent relative to the average for pupils of similar starting ability. This includes all abilities and those pupils who start at the school later than the usual starting points. The pupils respond very well to the vibrant and varied curriculum and the excellent teaching because they have extremely positive attitudes to their work. They co-operate well, in groups, in pairs, and with their teachers. They are well organised, they persevere in order to achieve the highest standard they can; they present their work well and are notably eager and resourceful.

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

- 3.8 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. The use of ICT has improved significantly, in response to a recommendation at that time. The curriculum is highly stimulating and strongly supports the development of the pupils' individual talents, in line with the school's aims. It fully covers the requisite areas of learning, and facilitates the pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. It offers a broad range of subjects, including humanities, and linguistic and technological experiences, with a strong focus on the creative and performing arts as well as literacy and numeracy.
- 3.10 The stimulating, colourful and welcoming indoor and outdoor environment in the EYFS reinforces and promotes children's learning. In response to a recommendation of the previous inspection, the variety of activities for children to choose, to promote their creativity and problem solving skills, has increased. The exciting experiences, whether directed by the adults or those the children choose for themselves, enable children's individual needs to be met very effectively.
- 3.11 Pupils have the opportunity to develop strong communication and literacy skills and confidence in speaking and performing, not only in English lessons but also through a wide range of creative and performing arts covering dance, art, sculpture, pottery, drama and musical provision. French, taught throughout the school, and Latin, taught from Year 5, also enhance pupils' linguistic skills. Science, taught as separate sciences from Year 6, enables a broad scientific experience.
- 3.12 The setting of pupils into ability groups for English and mathematics from Year 1 helps ensure that all receive the support and challenge they need, with regular reviews allowing pupils to move between sets. Curricular support for pupils with SEND or EAL is thorough. For pupils with SEND, including those with a statement, clear targets are set in individual learning plans which fulfil requirements and allow pupils' needs to be met with appropriate support in mainstream lessons as well as individual support out of class.
- 3.13 The excellent programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) covers all areas very well. The school-wide focus on pupils' interpretation of feelings and their importance to emotional well-being helps pupils appreciate the benefits of such understanding to their educational and academic success.
- 3.14 Curricular documentation is thorough and regularly checked to ensure that it meets the needs of all pupils and covers all requirements. Cross-curricular work is extensive through regular 'discovery days', linking several subjects together over two days. The Scholars and Common Entrance programmes in Year 8 successfully focus on developing pupils' presentation and research skills.

- 3.15 The very broad range of well-attended extra-curricular clubs and activities stimulates the pupils' interest and fully supports their personal and social development. These include art, ballet, crafts, film, judo, knitting, 'mathletics', multi-sports and philosophy. Educational visits abound. Recent expeditions include residential sports visits to Jersey, choir tours to Berlin and Austria and regular outdoor educational visits for pupils of all age groups.
- 3.16 Curricular links with the local and wider community are very strong and include supporting a local retirement home with art work and musical performances, helping a local school by funding transport to facilitate its use of the school's swimming pool, and choir performances in a local hospital and a carol service for the community at a neighbouring village.

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

- 3.17 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.18 Teaching has maintained its quality since the previous inspection and leads directly to pupils' excellent achievements across a broad range of subjects, fulfilling the aims of the school.
- 3.19 Teaching is very strong in the EYFS, led by knowledgeable adults who motivate and engage pupils, plan exciting activities and quickly adjust plans to children's needs, helping them to learn effectively. Nursery explorers learned quickly about the natural world on a 'bear hunt' in the woodland area, collecting 'squishy mud', grass and sticks. Reception children improved their counting skills rapidly by chalking 'number snakes' on the ground.
- 3.20 Throughout the school, teachers have built very positive and trusting relationships with their pupils, emphasising the importance of pupils' emotional well-being. Teachers' subject knowledge is often excellent. The range of different methods and styles encourages pupils to work independently and co-operatively.
- 3.21 Lesson planning is often excellent, reflects previous attainment and sets the timed outline for each lesson. Just occasionally learning objectives are described to pupils as tasks to be carried out, rather than what is to be learned from the activities, so that pupils are not always sure how to measure their success. Teaching meets pupils' differing needs very well. There is often excellent challenge for the most able. The needs of pupils with EAL or SEND, including the requirements of statements of special educational needs, are carefully and sensitively met, in lessons and in one-to-one work. Consequently, teaching helps all groups of pupils to achieve as well as they can.
- 3.22 Inspectors could find no evidence to support the view of a few parents, in responses to the questionnaire, that homework is not appropriate. Homework places appropriate emphasis on reading and research and continues the learning that takes place in lessons. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 use laptops for most homework activities and are often directed to the school's virtual learning environment (VLE) for supplementary resources.
- 3.23 The use of resources is excellent. In the EYFS, Stumble Trip Wood is the site of many exciting outdoor activities. Older pupils organised an exciting assembly based on their recent trip to India, incorporating film stills of the pupils' recent trip, along with the dressing of pupils and staff in Indian traditional dress, and audience participation, making *chapattis* on stage.

- 3.24 The school has responded to a recommendation of the previous inspection to improve teachers' marking, which has led to mostly good marking that praises achievement and encourages further effort, with often, good guidance to pupils as to how they can improve. However, some inconsistency in practice remains.
- 3.25 In the best lessons, teachers often enable pupils to check their own learning in lessons, helping them learn. For example, pre-prep pupils carefully checked each other's placing of shapes such as pentagons and rectangles in a Sudoku square, by adding up the number of sides in each column and line. In a science lesson senior pupils scrutinised each other's recordings of energy transfer related to the efficiency of machinery. This quality of lessons includes many opportunities for pupils to carry out independent research, resulting in self-motivated, independent, thinking learners.

## **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 The high standards of pupils' personal development, including in the EYFS, successfully reflect the school's aims. They are enhanced further by pupils' strong enjoyment of boarding.
- 4.3 Throughout the school, pupils' spiritual and cultural development is linked very closely. Both are excellent. Pupils appreciate the exquisite singing and instrumental playing that pervade the school and their high-quality sculptures and artwork that decorate the corridors. Pupils, especially boarding pupils who experience evenings at school, enjoy the calm derived from the beautiful grounds and buildings. Pupils are fully at ease with themselves. In lessons, they listen responsively to each other, developing high levels of self-esteem and a sense of values. Pupils throughout the school, including children in the EYFS, show considerable self-confidence and courage in their willingness to perform on stage or speak in public. Older pupils demonstrate a highly thoughtful response to assembly themes. In the Easter Service, pupils took the lead in reading lessons and prayers and performing two beautifully sung hymns by the choir. They heard a true story of an event between Hindu and Christian, expressing the school's central principles of tolerance and integrity, which are mirrored in pupils' understanding of the major world religions and of the range of cultures in Britain today.
- 4.4 Pupils have an extremely well-developed moral sense and clearly distinguish right from wrong. In the EYFS, table manners and behaviour are exemplary because children respond to what is expected of them. Older pupils know how their actions can affect others, and have responded well to the school's 'Restorative Practice' behaviour and discipline programme. Consequently, they show deep respect for each other's needs, interests and views. They discuss moral issues and dilemmas thoughtfully, and show enjoyment and pride in raising money for local and world charities, such as the building of a school in India, and, in conjunction with the school's parents' association fund-raising group, raising money for a local charity which helps people with SEND.
- 4.5 Pupils' social development is excellent. Day and boarding pupils share highly positive attitudes, ensuring a happy and harmonious atmosphere. Children throughout the EYFS setting are kind, caring, helpful friends to one another. They make a strongly positive contribution to life in the setting, clearing away trays and helping ensure good hygiene. They willingly take turns, cooperate with each other, make choices and decisions and tolerate each other's differences. Older pupils grow in maturity and are unfailingly polite, opening doors for adults and welcoming them. Pupils take responsibilities willingly and well, for instance, for younger pupils, and for those who are new to the school. They listen and respect each other's views. Pupils from Year 3 upwards make conscientious delegates on the food committee, and pupils in Years 7 and 8 make responsible 'community prefects'. In the EYFS, children are very well prepared for a smooth transition as they move up through the setting and into Year 1. Through the PSHCE programme, pupils begin to learn how to become responsible members of modern democratic society. They leave with an excellent understanding of public services and institutions and what makes a good citizen, with a firm grasp of fundamental British values of democracy, respect and tolerance.

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

- 4.6 The school's arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.7 The school provides a friendly and highly nurturing environment, fully promoting pupils' well-being, in keeping with its aims. Pupils are encouraged to develop 'emotional intelligence', reading and managing their own and others' emotional state. 'Feelings' charts in classrooms are used to track how pupils are feeling each day with concerns about individuals monitored and responded to sensitively. Pupils are able to put concerns into a 'worry box' and a school counsellor supports individuals facing personal difficulties.
- 4.8 In the EYFS, each child has a key person. All adults act as role models. Children are happy learners who share their concerns freely with the adults who care for them. Their needs are at the heart of the setting. They feel very safe in the loving and caring environment, which helps them develop effectively as young people.
- 4.9 Throughout the school, excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils and between pupils. All staff foster a 'climate of praise' where positive behaviour is rewarded and each child is valued.
- 4.10 Healthy choices of hot and cold food are available at all meals and menus are rotated and reviewed on a regular basis. Food is nutritious and plentiful. Pupils participate in an excellent range of exercise and sports each week.
- 4.11 The school's 'Restorative Practice' system has made a significant impact on ensuring that pupils understand the impact of poor behaviour on others. Sanctions are used constructively, taking account of the needs of pupils with SEND. Patterns of behaviour are monitored. 'Community prefects' are trained in peer mediation and help prevent bullying by intervening early. Despite a few parental comments to the contrary in their questionnaires, pupils confirm that bullying rarely occurs within the school and is dealt with promptly when it does.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.13 The views of pupils are sought and acted upon, through the food committee, the 'community prefect' system and regular questionnaires.

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

- 4.14 The quality of provision for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 Children's welfare is promoted very thoroughly in the EYFS. Clear procedures for safeguarding pupils and eliminating discrimination are implemented highly effectively throughout the school and with due regard to official guidance. All staff receive appropriate and timely training in child protection. The school works closely with the local safeguarding children board and the school's safeguarding officer acts as a local trainer in safeguarding for other schools.
- 4.16 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Fire practices are held regularly, including in the evening, and fire protection measures are in order, with regular monitoring of electrical equipment through portable appliance testing. Thorough risk assessments are undertaken, where appropriate, for activities in and out of school, including in the EYFS. In the PSHCE programme

and ICT lessons, pupils are alerted to 'e-safety' issues. All use of the school computer network is monitored.

- 4.17 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are highly effective and cover all aspects of the life of the school. The health and safety committee meets termly, chaired by the bursar. The medical room is well equipped and an abundant number of staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid, to ensure that the school provides well for sick or injured pupils, and those with disabilities or other medical needs.
- 4.18 Admission and attendance registers are accurately completed and appropriately archived.

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

- 4.19 The quality of boarding education is excellent.
- 4.20 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders' personal development is enhanced by the highly positive atmosphere among the boarding community. Most boarders go on to board at their senior schools and their experience of boarding provides them with an excellent preparation and enables them to develop independence and self-reliance. They feel that they are able to take responsibility for themselves within a relaxed, nurturing environment. Boarders thoroughly enjoy their boarding experience. Happiness and a sense of fun are clearly in evidence. Boarders are confident in themselves and able to articulate their views with great maturity. They demonstrate very easy, positive and tolerant relationships both with each other and with the boarding staff, making a highly positive contribution to their community. Termly questionnaires canvas opinions on the running of the house. Boarders are also able to use the 'suggestion box' or 'worry box' to express their views. Boarding prefects are aware of their responsibilities and conduct their duties with care.
- 4.21 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Staff meet well the challenge of developing a friendly home-from-home 'family-feel' environment for boarders, who are all flexi-boarders, usually staying for one or two nights a week. New boarders are provided with clear, child-friendly information about boarding in advance and are offered a 'trial' night before they start. They are supported through a 'buddy' system. Staff look after boarders very well; keeping them safe, fit and healthy; staffing levels are generous and this ensures that the boarders' needs are known extremely well. Boarders report that staff would readily notice if they had a problem. Staff liaise closely with the medical centre and arrangements for the care of sick boarders are good. Medicines are stored safely and effective systems are in place for the administration of both prescribed and non-prescribed medication. Boarders facing personal difficulties have access to a school counsellor who is experienced and works closely with them and their families, helping and enabling them to make personal progress through such times. Boarders are able to call home and friends freely and the school maintains very regular contact with parents.
- 4.22 Boarders are provided with a choice of healthy and nutritious hot and cold meals and eat their meals in the school dining room, which is attractively decorated with pupils' artwork. Special diets are sensitively catered for by knowledgeable staff fully aware of individual needs. Theme nights occur regularly and boarders celebrate cultural festivals as well as create their own. In house, boarders are able to make toast (once they have achieved their toast-making proficiency certificate) and cereals in the evenings. Fruit is readily available and boarders commented enthusiastically that, 'Matron makes 'the best hot chocolate in the world!'.

- 4.23 Boarders are accommodated in attractive, homely and family-run boarding houses. The boys live on the middle floor of the main school house whilst the girls live in a large, detached house a short distance away from the school on the edge of the school grounds. Every attempt has been made to provide the boarders with a bright and well-decorated environment, personalised with photos, including house activities and relevant information. A new breakfast-bar area had just been created within the boys' house in order to foster and develop a sense of community at snack-time. Although there are more flexi-boarders than beds, excellent systems are in place to ensure that boarders generally sleep in the same bed each time they board and are able to store their belongings safely.
- 4.24 Boarders have access to a very wide range of activities during the school day. During boarding time they are able to make use of the extensive school grounds and woods where they are encouraged to enjoy a 'Swallows and Amazons' type of experience, building camps, during the summer months. Boarders can use the sports facilities to play sport in the evenings or swim, and cookery and art activities are very popular. Alternatively, they may return to their boarding houses to relax, play board games, or, for the girls, enjoy the occasional 'pampering' evening.
- 4.25 The effectiveness of the arrangements for safeguarding and welfare in boarding is excellent. It has improved since the last inspection, when there were shortcomings. Robust policies and procedures are now in place and adhered to when recruiting staff. All boarding and other staff are trained in child protection and have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The 'Restorative Practice' programme is highly effective in addressing any difficulties and problems that pupils have with each other, and boarders confirm that bullying is not an issue among them, and they know how to recognise bullying and what to do in case there is a problem.
- 4.26 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of boarding is excellent. Senior staff have a clear, strategic plan for boarding to remain a central part of the school's life. Boarding is very well led and managed by experienced senior staff. Both sets of houseparents have received excellent support and training. Communication between management and boarding staff is effective and operates both informally and formally during a variety of regular staff meetings. There are clear plans for the ongoing review and development of the boarding accommodation and provision.
- 4.27 In their questionnaire responses, boarders and their parents expressed great satisfaction with most aspects, a view supported by inspectors' findings. A few boarders, and a few parents, expressed dissatisfaction with the safety of boarders' belongings, the quality of the food, the provision of snacks, contact with families, and care of those who are unwell. These concerns were discussed with many of the boarders, and procedures and policies were checked, but inspectors found no evidence to substantiate these views.

## **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 highly effective, well-structured governing body has improved its quality since the previous inspection, enabling the school to meet its aims more thoroughly and continually improve. Governors are strongly committed to the school, its pupils and staff. They are fully aware of their responsibilities, ensuring effective oversight. Astute financial planning, managed efficiently through the bursar's office, ensures that human and material resources are sufficient to support and maintain the pupils' excellent achievements and their first class personal development, and to enable the school's spacious and attractive site and historic accommodation to be sensitively maintained and developed.
- 5.3 The inclusion of governors who are parents of current pupils provides strong ties to the school community and ensures a more thorough understanding of the work of the school. Responsibilities are fully shared and the corporate responsibility is understood. Governors provide very strong support, challenge and stimulus for growth and development because educational standards are monitored effectively and include visits and discussion of school assessment data and the pupils' achievements. Governors are allocated aspects and subjects in order to make sure that monitoring is thorough. In this way, boarding and the EYFS are fully considered and governors provide excellent guidance and direction for development for all areas of the school.
- 5.4 Governors review all school policies regularly, and effectively discharge their responsibilities for health and safety, for risk management and for child protection. The governors have undertaken an appropriate annual safeguarding review.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 The senior leadership team has been augmented and restructured and has become significantly stronger. Members have well-defined responsibilities and a common philosophy. Under the clear direction of senior leaders, all work together to promote the special ethos of the school, to assure pupils' emotional well-being. Through their success in achieving this central aim, the school has driven up the standard of pupils' achievement and their personal development, as well as the quality of teaching and the curriculum. Senior leaders regularly commission professional audits to authenticate their own monitoring of standards through the school.
- 5.7 The EYFS leadership is part of the 'wide' management team. Leadership and management of the EYFS are excellent. All the safeguarding requirements in the EYFS have been met and parents and children readily trust the well-trained staff within the happy and safe environment. Self-evaluation in the EYFS is accurate and drives improvement well. EYFS development priorities include ambitious plans, well advanced, to develop new and larger accommodation. The current EYFS provision is very effectively monitored and evaluated, including the use of resources. Staff are

supervised regularly so that needs are accurately identified. They value their appraisals and are able to access the training they require but there is currently only limited opportunity for staff to observe and learn from each other's teaching. Excellent partnerships with parents and agencies, such as the local authority, ensure that appropriate interventions are secured for children who need them. Parents are delighted with the education their children are receiving. The response to pre-inspection questionnaires was very positive. Parents have many opportunities to be involved in their children's learning; for example by contributing weekend 'wow moments' and by attending parent and curriculum evenings, and they are well informed of their children's progress. All aspects of the setting have improved since the previous inspection. In response to a recommendation at that time, a range of indoor and outdoor experiences have been implemented for Reception children to develop creativity and problem solving skills in child-initiated learning.

- 5.8 Throughout the rest of the school, recommendations of the previous inspection have all been dealt with. As in the EYFS, the robust focus on improvement is underpinned by careful and accurate self-evaluation. Areas for improvement are set out in strategic planning, communicated well to the school community, and followed up thoroughly. Middle managers (prep heads of department, and pre-prep subject coordinators) monitor their subjects across their section of the school, to check the effectiveness of subject policies and long-term plans. Lesson observations and monitoring of pupils' work are undertaken mostly by the senior leadership as part of a rigorous appraisal system that identifies staff strengths and areas for professional development. Recent opportunities for teachers and middle managers to share expertise through observing each other teach have been beneficial but are not yet embedded in the school's practice. Middle managers are at an early stage of checking individual teachers' lesson planning and the quality of written marking in order to ensure a completely consistent high standard.
- 5.9 Staff are well qualified and are deployed effectively to give the support required to meet the needs of pupils. They receive regular training in the necessary areas of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, as well as to improve their teaching skills. Effective policies and procedures cover all aspects of school life, including the promotion of equality; they are conscientiously implemented by staff. Pupils' educational experiences are facilitated by all other staff who work effectively and cohesively in support, including administrative staff, those involved in the maintenance of the grounds and buildings and in the catering arrangements.
- 5.10 The senior leadership team is highly effective in the discharge of its duties with regard to implementing policies and safeguarding children, resulting in high standards of pastoral care and health and safety. The required checks on staff and governors are carried out and suitably recorded. Shortcomings noted in the previous inspection were quickly rectified.
- 5.11 The school's excellent relationship with its parents is based on a depth of knowledge and genuine care of the pupils and their families. The vast majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and those spoken to during the inspection are extremely happy with the education and support provided for their children. A small minority of parents, in responses to the questionnaire, expressed concern: about bullying, communication systems and information provided by the school, about their children's progress and appropriate homework for their age. Inspectors investigated these concerns thoroughly and found no evidence that would support their views.

- 5.12 Communication is prompt. Parents have access to senior managers each morning and the headmaster is readily available. Staff respond to emails within 24 hours. Records showed that any complaints are dealt with thoroughly and in accordance with the complaints procedure.
- 5.13 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school and they are regularly invited to attend a variety of events, such as special assemblies, concerts and plays. Year 6 and 7 parents are invited to a 'black tie' film premiere to see their children's films. Parents participate in school outings, make costumes for nativity plays and are regularly found supporting their children on the sports pitches. The highly supportive parents' association organises fund raising and social events such as quiz evening, the summer ball and a fun day for everybody. A Nursery social is arranged for new parents so they can get to know each other and arrange play dates for their children.
- 5.14 Both current and prospective parents are provided with all the required information about the school. Parents are invited to curriculum evenings at the start of each academic year where they can learn about the programme their child will study, and meet their children's new teacher. Excellent support is given at key transitional points; the headmaster helps parents choose the right senior school for their child. Parents are kept well informed of their children's progress at regular parents' consultation evenings as well as through very informative and regular written reports.

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