



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**PRIOR'S FIELD SCHOOL**

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## Prior's Field School

Full Name of School	<b>Prior's Field School</b>
DfE Number	<b>936/6010</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>312038</b>
Address	<b>Prior's Field School Priorsfield Road Godalming Surrey GU7 2RH</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01483 810551</b>
Fax Number	<b>01483 810180</b>
Email Address	<b>office@priorsfieldschool.com</b>
Head	<b>Mrs Tracy Kirnig</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Richard Green</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>447</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>
Numbers by Age	11-16: <b>373</b> 16-18: <b>74</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>357</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>90</b> Full: <b>45</b> Weekly: <b>23</b> Flexi: <b>22</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>8 Mar 2016 to 11 Mar 2016</b>

## PREFACE

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

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

The previous ISI intermediate boarding welfare inspection was in September 2015 and the previous ISI standard inspection was in March 2011.

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

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

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

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

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

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

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of their work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, and with the chair and two other members of the governing body. They 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 Robin Gaff	Reporting Inspector
Miss Vivienne Davis	Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Dr David James	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Stuart Nicholson	Team Inspector (Principal, ISA school)
Mr Mark Twells	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mrs Jean Gray	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Prior's Field School provides day and boarding education for girls between the ages of eleven and eighteen. It occupies a site close to Godalming in Surrey. The school was founded in 1902 by Julia Huxley, the granddaughter of Thomas Arnold and mother of author Aldous Huxley. Its original buildings were designed by the architect Charles Voysey, a leading member of the Arts and Crafts movement. The school has two boarding houses, one of which is located in the main school premises and accommodates pupils in Years 7 to 11. The other, for sixth form pupils, occupies a separate building on the same site.
- 1.2 The school is a charitable trust whose work is overseen by a board of governors. Its principal aim is to provide an excellent all-round secondary education that brings out the best in each girl, according to her abilities and talents. The current head was appointed in September 2015. Since the previous inspection, the school has undertaken an extensive building and refurbishment programme which is still under way. One new building has recently been completed and the school's sports facilities have been developed. The school has also acquired a large adjacent woodland area which is used for outdoor learning and activities.
- 1.3 When the inspection took place the school had 447 pupils on roll, with 373 in Years 7 to 11, and 74 in the sixth form. Of the school's 90 boarders, 45 board full-time, 23 board weekly and 22 board on a flexi basis. Most day pupils travel to the school from the surrounding areas of Surrey, Hampshire and Greater London, reflecting the varied ethnic composition of these areas, and come from professional or business family backgrounds. Boarders represent a range of different countries and nationalities, as well as the United Kingdom. The ability profile of the pupils in the school is above the national average.
- 1.4 The school has identified 128 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 76 of whom receive additional support. These cover a range of disabilities and learning difficulties. Currently no pupils have statements of educational needs or education, health and care plans. English is spoken as an additional language (EAL) by 20 pupils, all of whom receive additional support.
- 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
First Form	Year 7
Second Form	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	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 The school is highly successful in enabling pupils to develop their abilities and talents in accordance with its aims. The achievement of pupils throughout the school is excellent. Pupils display a strong desire to learn, participate enthusiastically both in lessons and in other activities, and develop their individual skills and abilities to high levels. The school offers an excellent curriculum which is broad, diverse, well balanced and includes a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Pupils' programmes are carefully tailored to match their abilities and interests, including those with SEND or EAL and the more able. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teachers are highly knowledgeable about their subjects and successfully share their enthusiasm with pupils, whom they know and support extremely well. Their marking and feedback enable pupils to know precisely how well they are doing and what they should do to improve their work. Teachers do not always use information about pupils' attainment effectively to plan lessons that enable them to make rapid progress.
- 2.2 Pupils' excellent personal development is characterised by their self-confidence and self-awareness, and in their willingness to accept responsibility and to take on leadership roles throughout the school including in the sixth form. Pupils display a strong respect for the different faiths and traditions represented in the school and for modern British society. The quality of pastoral care is excellent. Staff provide pupils with highly effective support. They promote high standards of behaviour and ensure that pupils feel safe from any form of harassment. The school's promotion of pupils' welfare, health and safety is excellent. Staff implement the school's detailed and up-to-date policies and procedures for pupil safeguarding extremely effectively. The quality of boarding is excellent. Pupils make an excellent contribution to the boarding community and confirm that they very much enjoy their experience of boarding. Boarders strongly appreciate the high standard of care and the wide variety of out-of-school activities which the school provides.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is excellent. Governors know the school extremely well and have played a key role in its continuing development. They are strongly committed to promoting the school's aims and ethos, as well as its distinctive character. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The school's leaders provide staff with clear educational direction. They have successfully addressed the recommendations made by the school's previous full and intermediate boarding inspections, and have remedied the specific weakness highlighted by the latter. School leaders have accurately identified the strengths of the school and established appropriate priorities for its further development. The senior leadership team (SLT) recognise the need to establish complete clarity with regard to its members' roles and responsibilities. Parents have many opportunities to become involved in the life of the school. They strongly support the school's aims and ethos.

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

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

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

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

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that all teachers make effective use of information about pupils' attainment to plan activities which enable them to make rapid progress.
  2. Ensure that senior leaders have clearly designated roles to enable them to be fully effective in the development of their specific areas of responsibility.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils throughout the school acquire high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in a wide range of subjects and disciplines. This indicates that they are extremely well educated, in accordance with the school's aims. Pupils communicate clearly, accurately and confidently both orally and in writing. This is evident from their high-quality written work, as well as in their responses to teachers' questions and their contributions to classroom discussions and debates where they also demonstrate strong listening and well-developed reasoning skills. Pupils gain a very secure grasp of mathematical techniques and principles, and understand how to use information and communication technology successfully. They apply these skills to excellent effect in a variety of subjects, including economics and business studies as well as science. Pupils of all abilities enjoy taking part in a wide range of sports and other physical activities, demonstrating high levels of competence.
- 3.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The pupils' performance in recent years at both GCSE and A level has been above the national average for maintained schools overall, and generally in line with the national average for maintained selective schools. The proportions of pupils gaining the highest grades at both GCSE and A level are well above national averages and have risen in recent years.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment at GCSE, together with standardised measures of progress, indicates that pupils make progress which is at least good and often excellent in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Pupils' levels of attainment at A Level indicate that they achieve high levels of progress in relation to the average for pupils who have similar abilities.
- 3.5 Lesson observations and an examination of the pupils' work, together with information provided by the school about pupils' performance, demonstrate that current pupils are making excellent progress from their different starting points. The qualifications and skills which pupils acquire enable most to gain admission to higher education courses, many of which have challenging entrance requirements.
- 3.6 Pupils with SEND or EAL achieve at least as well as other pupils. These pupils make excellent progress in relation to their levels of attainment when they join the school. This is because staff understand their needs, and provide them with highly effective support. The more able pupils, as well as those who have been identified as having particular gifts and talents, also achieve high standards and make excellent progress.
- 3.7 Pupils become highly proficient in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities. Their performances in music, speech and drama examinations demonstrate their very well-developed creative skills in these areas. Pupils achieve considerable distinction in art, design and in poetry, winning national as well as local competitions. Pupils also achieve well in sport, where a considerable number have gained national or regional honours including in athletics, hockey and kayaking. Pupils are highly successful in other areas, for example in national mathematics and chemistry

competitions. This demonstrates the school's success in fostering pupils' individual gifts and talents, in line with its aims.

- 3.8 Pupils display excellent attitudes to learning throughout the school. Their pride in their work is evident from its organisation and presentation. Pupils are highly engaged and attentive during lessons, respond promptly to teachers' instructions and questions, and demonstrate their ability to work productively both on their own and with others. They display both enjoyment and tenacity in tackling the challenges with which they are presented.
- 3.9 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of pupils reported that they are making good progress in their work.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 The curriculum covers all the required areas of learning including personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE), and supports the aims of the school. It is very well adapted to meet the needs and match the interests of pupils of all ages and abilities.
- 3.12 At GCSE, the curriculum offers a suitable blend of creative and academic subjects. The school takes great care to ensure that pupils can follow programmes which correspond to their interests and abilities. Compulsory subjects including English, mathematics and science are combined with a large range of optional subjects. Pupils benefit from an extensive extra-curricular programme, which covers a wide range of sporting and creative activities. It also includes a number of academic subjects, such as Mandarin, which pupils can study in addition to their timetabled programme.
- 3.13 Sixth form pupils are able to choose from a wide selection of A level and BTEC programmes as well as general courses such as the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) according to their abilities, interests and career intentions. The school endeavours to meet any reasonable request to study different combinations of subjects, and is prepared to introduce new subjects if justified by demand.
- 3.14 The school closely monitors the effectiveness of the curriculum, developing the provision through careful co-ordination and thoughtfully planned development within and across subjects. Leaders ensure that individual pupils follow appropriate and well-balanced programmes. Pupils with EAL or SEND benefit from the specially adapted programmes and individual support which they require in order to succeed. The curriculum provides high levels of challenge and stimulation which enable the more able pupils and those with particular gifts and talents to flourish.
- 3.15 The school has enhanced sixth form pupils' opportunities for independent learning by introducing the EPQ. This has enabled pupils to investigate challenging topics, which have inspired them to deepen their understanding of areas which particularly interest them. Year 9 pupils are also encouraged to research projects which correspond to their particular interests, for example how footprint evidence may be used in criminal cases. Pupils successfully participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, at all levels. The recent whole-school art competition and subsequent exhibition inspired many promising pupil artists.

- 3.16 Staff provide an extensive programme of individual and group academic support for pupils of all abilities, who strongly appreciate the extra help provided to them. The school helps pupils make well-informed choices about potential careers and further study by, for example, using the well-resourced careers library and by organising visits to universities and colleges.
- 3.17 The curriculum is further enhanced by a range of trips, visits and exchanges, an extensive programme of talks provided by visiting speakers, and special events such as 'Brain Day' which took place during the inspection. These events are complemented by a wide range of clubs and societies which are often instigated and run by pupils. The recently acquired woodland area adjacent to the school is used imaginatively and to good effect, extending pupils' opportunities for outdoor learning in subjects such as science, as well as for adventurous pursuits such as den building.
- 3.18 Through the PSHEE programme, assemblies and form periods, the school actively and successfully promotes the essential British values of respect and tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. The school ensures that pupils receive a balanced presentation of alternative views in the consideration of any political issues in both curricular and extra-curricular activities through, for example, its choice of visiting speakers and its coverage of such topics in lessons.
- 3.19 The curriculum is enriched by the many strong and productive links which the school has developed with the local and wider community. These include organised visits to local care homes and church-linked groups, as well as arts festivals, careers fairs and conferences, from which many other pupils at local independent and maintained schools have benefited.
- 3.20 In their questionnaire responses, an overwhelming majority of both parents and pupils confirmed their satisfaction with the range of courses and extra-curricular activities provided by the school.

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

- 3.21 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.22 The quality of teaching is strongly underpinned by teachers' excellent knowledge and enthusiasm for their subjects which results in lessons that are well-paced, enable the pupils to make progress, and promote their enjoyment of learning.
- 3.23 Pupils in all year groups are highly appreciative of the support that teachers provide them in enabling them to fulfil their potential. Teaching contributes significantly to the fulfilment of the school's aim to inspire pupils to think for themselves and develop into successful independent learners. Pupils report that their teachers not only know them as individuals in the classroom but also that teachers are always available to support them through the many drop-in sessions and workshops provided by teaching departments. A very large majority of pupils felt that teachers help them to learn and provide them individual support when they need it. A small minority did not feel that teachers ensure that pupils are set an appropriate amount of work. Inspection evidence found that pupils are set work that suits their needs and interests, and that it does help them to learn.
- 3.24 Most lessons are clearly planned so that pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND or EAL and the more able, are actively engaged in their learning through collaboration, clearly focused tasks and appropriately used resources. For example

in a well-planned physical education lesson, pupils worked together in pairs on an imaginative task which engaged those of all abilities and reinforced and extended their knowledge and understanding of the subject.

- 3.25 In most lessons teaching fosters curiosity in all the pupils. The thoughtful use of a range of questioning strategies encourages pupils to reflect on what they are learning, and enables teachers to check the extent of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the topics that they are studying. Occasionally, teachers do not make sufficient use of the information provided by the school about pupils' performance to enable them to make rapid progress.
- 3.26 Throughout the school, teaching promotes tolerance and respect. Complex and controversial political issues are explored objectively and are free of any personal bias. Pupils are encouraged to voice their opinions and always to show respect for others who may hold opposing views. Close monitoring of their progress, with a clear focus on individual needs, ensures that pupils feel valued and understood. Use of assessment in subjects such as English and physics is personal, encouraging and supportive. The school's leaders regularly check the quality of pupils' work, focusing strongly on the quality of marking. This results in high standards maintained, and the sharing of good practice among departments. The school has hence successfully addressed the previous inspection report's recommendation for improvement.
- 3.27 Relations between teachers and pupils are excellent. Pupils are praised regularly; they know that they are valued and feel that staff are highly approachable. Teaching succeeds in promoting excellent behaviour as well as a responsible and mature attitude to learning.

## **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 Pupils embrace the core values which underpin British society, including individual liberty and respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and traditions. They participate enthusiastically in the wide range of consultation processes within the school, for example as tutor group representatives. Pupils have the opportunity to understand democracy through the appointment of prefects and, for example, in determining the winners of a whole-school art competition that was held during the inspection. Pupils acquire a suitable knowledge of the public institutions and services in England and of its civil and criminal law, which are covered explicitly through the PSHEE programme.
- 4.3 The spiritual development of pupils is excellent. Pupils' strong respect for different faiths and beliefs was illustrated by a group of older pupils who explained that they admired the personal faith of many of their friends, even though they did not share the same beliefs themselves. In a GCSE lesson, pupils demonstrated that they were able to appreciate the spiritual dimension of their own and other pupils' artwork.
- 4.4 The moral development of the pupils is excellent. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, based upon an intrinsic understanding rather than as a consequence of imposed regulation. Pupils confirm that they share in the shaping of the school's values, which they strongly support. Behaviour inside and outside the classroom is normally exemplary. Pupils are very much aware of the concerns of others in their own society and across the world. They displayed this in their response to lessons which covered the morality of the death penalty and issues relating to disability. Pupils raise considerable sums for a variety of local, national and international charities.
- 4.5 Pupils' social development is excellent; they relate extremely well to one another and to adults. They welcome visitors cheerfully and responsibly, and are courteous and friendly in both formal and informal settings. Around the school, pupils get on very well with one another. Those with posts of responsibility in all age groups take their positions very seriously, and are proud to play a role in representing their peers and in helping to improve their school.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural awareness is strong. They learn to understand and appreciate the festivals, representing many cultures and traditions, which are celebrated as part of the school's assembly programme. In one lesson, younger pupils considered the difference between western and Chinese musical traditions, creating their own melody using the Chinese pentatonic scale.
- 4.7 Pupils display respect for others in all ways, challenging stereotypes, valuing the right to equal treatment and rejecting discrimination. For example, in conversation senior pupils highlighted their respect for those whose sexual orientation differed from their own.
- 4.8 By the time they leave the school, the pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils extend their self-knowledge and their self-esteem. They are self-confident

and secure, speak modestly about their own success and show their pride in the achievements of others, which fully meets the school's aims.

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

- 4.9 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 The school is highly effective in ensuring that pupils can thrive in a safe, supportive and stimulating environment in accordance with the school's aims. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire confirmed that their daughters are well looked after at the school. Inspection evidence strongly supports this view.
- 4.11 Relationships between the pupils themselves and between staff and pupils are extremely positive. Pupils feel safe and express positive views about the friendly nature of the school community. Year 7 pupils recalled the welcoming atmosphere that they had encountered during their visits before they joined the school, and the successful induction processes.
- 4.12 A small minority of pupils' questionnaire responses indicated their belief that their opinions are not sought or acted upon, and that teachers are unfair in their use of rewards and sanctions. Inspection evidence found that the school has effective methods for listening to the views of pupils. The school's records confirm that rewards and sanctions are used appropriately; high expectations, encouragement and praise characterise the school's approach to pupils. This was supported in pupil interviews.
- 4.13 The school is extremely effective in promoting good behaviour. If any misbehaviour does take place, it is dealt with constructively and thoughtfully. In their questionnaire responses, a few parents did not agree that the school achieves high standards of behaviour. Inspection evidence, gained from scrutiny of the school's own records as well as from observations of and discussions with pupils, indicates that standards of behaviour are high.
- 4.14 A large majority of pupils' questionnaire responses expressed the view that the school deals effectively with bullying. This was also the judgement of most parents, and the conclusion drawn from inspection evidence. The school's 'Don't freeze her out' campaign reflects its priority to prevent unkindness and all types of bullying, including cyberbullying. In interview, many pupils made it clear that bullying is extremely rare and promptly addressed.
- 4.15 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for those with SEND. It supports these pupils extremely well, in line with the school's aim that all pupils should be enabled to realise their potential.
- 4.16 Pupils learn about healthy eating and nutrition through the PSHEE programme and in other lessons such as science, and wholeheartedly express their appreciation for the quality and range of food available to them. The wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities includes many opportunities for physical exercise, which are available to all pupils.

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

- 4.17 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.18 The school has a detailed safeguarding policy which reflects the most recent national guidance, as well as local requirements. This is robustly implemented, with all staff properly trained in child protection. All staff know and understand the procedures to follow should they have a concern, and to whom they should refer it. Staff are also very well trained in supporting the strategies that the government has introduced to combat extremism and minimise the risk of radicalisation. All required checks are completed before the appointment of new members of staff, and are meticulously recorded. The school has established strong relationships with local safeguarding authorities.
- 4.19 The school takes appropriate measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. School leaders are diligent in ensuring that checks on equipment and buildings are carried out regularly and thoroughly, and that fire drills occur at least termly and are properly recorded. The grounds and buildings are very well maintained and help to create a very positive environment for work and recreation.
- 4.20 The school's arrangements for ensuring pupils' health and safety are highly effective. Comprehensive risk assessments are drawn up by those responsible for different areas of the school. Potential hazards are rigorously assessed and effective safety procedures are devised, implemented and regularly reviewed. The school makes effective provision for sick and injured pupils, and for those with SEND. The medical centre is appropriately resourced and a suitable number of its staff have been trained to administer first aid.
- 4.21 Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained, and stored for the required period of time. The whereabouts of pupils are carefully monitored and any unexplained absence is quickly investigated and resolved. In their responses to the questionnaire, a very large majority of parents indicated that their children are kept safe at school.

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

- 4.22 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.23 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The school's boarding motto is 'Our school, our home' and the atmosphere of trust, tolerance and friendship in the boarding houses demonstrates that this is respected by staff and boarders alike.
- 4.24 Boarders are articulate, engaging, and courteous. They enjoy contributing positively to the community and take on duties and responsibilities within the houses. Prefects in the sixth form and 'deputies' in Year 11 develop their leadership skills by helping staff during the induction of new boarders and in organising house events. Junior boarders appreciate them as approachable mentors. Younger boarders can become 'buddies' for new boarders, and can represent their peers on various forums such as the food committee.
- 4.25 Pupils from all countries and cultures are welcomed, and diversity is celebrated. For example, during a Chinese New Year party, pupils suggested which dishes were to be served and also made Chinese decorations. Boarders who receive additional learning support, including those with EAL, find such support readily available during boarding hours.

- 4.26 Posters featuring the 'Listening Tree' provide details of staff and appropriate outside agencies, including an independent listener, to whom pupils can turn with any concerns. A minority pupils in their questionnaire responses thought that staff treat them unfairly; no inspection evidence was found to support this view. Many pupils reported that they gain real support from the constructive and harmonious relationships that they have with each other and the boarding staff. Pupils have a secure knowledge of the complaints policy.
- 4.27 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. The school promotes the physical and mental well-being of boarders extremely effectively. Induction for all boarders is a full and positive experience, which strongly promotes pupils' happiness and self-confidence. This demonstrates that the school has successfully addressed the recommendation from the previous intermediate boarding inspection report.
- 4.28 The boarding houses are bright and welcoming with colour schemes often chosen by the pupils themselves, who readily take the opportunity to personalise their own accommodation with items such as posters and photographs. From Year 10 onwards most pupils have their own rooms, and Year 13 pupils benefit from private washing facilities. Rooms are warm, well-lit and well ventilated. Common rooms are comfortably furnished and provide pupils with appropriate spaces in which to socialise and to relax. In their questionnaire responses, a small minority of boarders expressed a concern about the safety of their belongings. Following conversations with boarders and staff, no inspection evidence was found to indicate that these concerns were justified as each pupil has a lockable space. These are not always used.
- 4.29 Fully qualified nurses staff the medical centre during the school day, and in boarding hours the boarding staff take responsibility for the health of the boarders. A local doctor holds a surgery twice a week in the medical centre, and boarders have access to this as well as to other health professionals such as dentists and opticians during the week if necessary. Well-written policies, for example regarding the dispensing of medication, record keeping and storage of controlled drugs, are in place and robustly implemented.
- 4.30 In their questionnaire responses, most boarders said that they enjoy their food and praised its quality. Inspection evidence supports this view. The caterers provide ample nutritious and tasty food, with hot and cold choices for those with particular dietary requirements. Catering staff listen to suggestions from the boarders and enjoy providing a wide variety of themed meals. Extra treats are arranged for weekends, as for example when boarders helped to prepare their own evening sushi meal. A wide variety of drinks and snacks is always available in the houses, and boarders particularly appreciate the trays of cakes which are provided for them on their return at the end of the school day.
- 4.31 All laundry is done for the junior boarders, and senior boarders are responsible for using the washing machines and dryers themselves. This helps them to prepare for independent living. Pupils are able to buy everyday necessities in the school itself and in local shops.
- 4.32 A minority of boarders in their questionnaire responses stated that they are unhappy with the balance of free time and activities. Inspection evidence found that pupils are very keen to participate in the many activities available to them. A full sporting programme, together with a wide range of other activities, is available for boarders both during the week and at weekends. Younger boarders have safe areas to play

outside, and all have sufficient opportunities to work independently or simply to be alone with their thoughts. Pupils are able to contact family and friends easily through their telephones and the internet, and are able to keep themselves well informed about current affairs by reading newspapers and watching television.

- 4.33 The effectiveness of the arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that the school keeps their daughters safe.
- 4.34 The school fully complies with all national requirements for safeguarding. Staff are very well informed about the arrangements for child protection, which are effectively managed and properly implemented. Recruitment checks are suitably applied and recorded. Security systems in the houses and grounds, including the appropriate use of CCTV, ensure that access is tightly regulated and closely monitored.
- 4.35 High standards of behaviour are expected in the boarding houses, where the extremely dedicated staff enable the pupils to fulfil the school's expectations. The pupils have confidence in the staff to implement a robust anti-bullying policy should the need arise, although none of the many boarders who were interviewed could recall an occasion when this had occurred. Thorough systems for signing in and out of the houses allow the staff to know of pupils' whereabouts at all times. Staff know how to implement the missing pupil policy, should there be an absence without permission.
- 4.36 Risk assessments for the boarding houses are regularly updated and acted upon. Regular fire practices ensure that pupils know how to leave the building quickly in an emergency. Checks on fire systems and appliances occur at the necessary intervals and are centrally recorded.
- 4.37 The houses are well staffed with suitably qualified and experienced resident adults, and pupils know how to contact staff on duty both during the day and at night. Accommodation for resident staff is appropriately separate from that provided for pupils.
- 4.38 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. Boarding aims are clear and leaders are energetic, dedicated and highly effective, demonstrating a strong commitment to robust self-evaluation leading to improvement. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities to promote boarders' well-being.
- 4.39 The leadership team regularly monitor boarding records and standards. They discuss their findings with boarding staff at regular meetings, thus providing all staff the opportunity to contribute to developing the provision. Some tutors are resident in the boarding houses, and this enhances the formal and informal links between the staff responsible for academic progress and the boarding community. Boarding staff benefit from an annual appraisal system which informs their individual programme of professional training. A comprehensive induction system is in place for new members of staff so that they quickly feel competent to fulfil their roles, and staff commented on the high level of support that is forthcoming from their colleagues and the leadership team.
- 4.40 The school's most recent boarding welfare inspection found that the school did not provide access for all boarders to suitable shower facilities. The old showers have since been replaced by individual cubicles, in extremely well-decorated and appointed bathrooms, which afford both privacy and ample hot water.

- 4.41 A few parents reported in their questionnaire responses that their children do not enjoy boarding. However, none of the pupils interviewed were of this view. A very large majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that they can easily contact the staff who care for their children, that boarding accommodation is comfortable and that the experience of boarding helps their children's progress and development. Inspection evidence supports 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 Governors' wide range of skills and experience as well as their excellent knowledge of the school has enabled them to provide extremely effective oversight of the school's performance, ensuring the successful fulfilment of its aims. The governing body provides excellent support and challenge for the school's leaders.
- 5.3 Governors have ensured that the school has thoroughly addressed the recommendations from previous inspections, and remedied the weakness in provision identified in its previous intermediate boarding inspection. They are very much aware, as a result of the thorough checks that they carry out of the school's performance, of the school's continuing strengths and of its priorities for further development. Working closely with the school's leaders, the governors have created ambitious and well-founded plans for the future.
- 5.4 Governors are strongly committed to promoting the school's distinctive ethos and to ensuring that its traditions are respected. Their diligent stewardship of the school's finances ensures that the school can appoint high-quality staff and access the resources that it requires to achieve its aims. Governors have successfully overseen the significant redevelopment and refurbishment of its premises and facilities.
- 5.5 Governors are highly effective in discharging their responsibility to ensure that the school's arrangements for child protection, as well as for pupils' welfare, health and safety, are rigorous and robust. They regularly review the school's policies and procedures and their effectiveness, and the full governing body carries out a detailed annual review of the school's safeguarding procedures. Governors have ensured that the school complies fully with all regulatory requirements, including with regard to its arrangements for assuring pupils' health and safety, and for checking all newly appointed members of staff.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent.
- 5.7 At all levels of responsibility, the school's leaders and managers enable it to accomplish its aims. They have successfully addressed the recommendations from the school's previous inspections. Leaders discharge their responsibilities extremely effectively, including those for strategic planning, policy implementation and child protection.
- 5.8 The SLT provide very clear educational direction, as reflected in the high quality of provision and pupils' excellent achievements. Leaders and managers provide staff with effective support in order to ensure that individual pupils reach their potential in terms both of their achievements and their personal development, in accordance with the school's aims. The school has identified as an area for development the importance of ensuring that all SLT members have clearly designated roles, to

ensure that they are fully effective in leading the development of their respective areas of responsibility.

- 5.9 Leaders and managers at all levels are highly effective in assessing all aspects of the school's provision, setting appropriate targets and ensuring that they are achieved. Middle leaders throughout the school are both expert in, and highly enthusiastic about, the areas for which they are responsible. They are fully aware of the school's priorities for development, and incorporate them into their annual planning. Staff at all levels receive the support and any training that they need to be effective in their roles. Effective communication systems ensure that the SLT are fully aware of developments across the school, and able to evaluate the school's success in achieving its aims.
- 5.10 Management at all levels is successful in securing and retaining high-quality staff. The robust recruitment policy ensures that thorough arrangements are in place for checking the suitability of all staff, governors and volunteers before they take up their posts and that all checks are properly recorded. Comprehensive policies and procedures for all aspects of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are in place, and all staff receive appropriate training and induction to enable them to implement these effectively.
- 5.11 Senior leaders closely monitor the quality of teaching by regularly observing lessons and examining samples of pupils' work. They have successfully introduced new initiatives, which have been welcomed by staff, to improve the efficiency of this process. The school benefits from the excellent contribution made by support staff involved in catering, cleaning, premises and administration, who provide high-quality support to pupils and staff and help the school to run efficiently.
- 5.12 The leadership are highly successful in instilling values that encourage respect for and appreciation of others, and an understanding of democracy. These are very much evident in the ethos of the school.
- 5.13 Parents indicate that they are highly satisfied with the quality of education and support provided for their daughters. In their questionnaire responses and other documents scrutinised during inspection, many parents praise the way in which the school cares for each pupil as an individual in a friendly, flexible and relaxed environment. A very small minority of parents felt the school has not handled their concerns well. Inspection evidence found that the school's policies and procedures for handling concerns and complaints are robust and effective.
- 5.14 The school maintains regular contact with parents, in line with its aims, and develops strong partnerships with them for example through the Parent Staff Association (PSA). Parents have ample formal and informal opportunities to participate in school activities, including information evenings and a range of cultural events which are often open to the wider community. The PSA organises numerous activities for the whole school community, and parents have the opportunity to make their views heard through their class representatives.
- 5.15 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school. The school website, weekly e-bulletins and a comprehensive range of information including welcome booklets ensure that parents are fully informed about the way the school operates and the wide range of activities available to pupils. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that information about the school and its policies is readily available.

- 5.16 Parents are well informed about their children's work and progress, and receive clear and useful reports throughout the school year. The school has developed a well-structured programme of progress reviews, as well as personalised reports. These include detailed information about pupils' progress, appropriate targets and advice about how they can be achieved. All parents have the opportunity to meet teachers in person at parents' evenings at least once a year, and at more frequent intervals if necessary.

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