

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Senior School ISI Report Highlights

The following text contains edited highlight from the Senior School ISI Integrated Inspection Report for Burgess Hill School for Girls.

A full, unexpurgated copy of the report can be found from the link on the Inspection Reports page on the school's website.

The quality of governance

The quality of governance is good.

Under the strong leadership of the chair of governors, the governing body provides effective oversight of most sections of the school so that it is largely successful in meeting its aim to provide quality education within a caring environment.

Governors are strongly committed to the school and to maintaining its ethos. They attend most events, meet staff regularly, visit classes and scrutinise policies and their implementation. In this way, they ensure that educational standards within school remain high.

A detailed strategic plan is in place, based upon a realistic assessment of the school's needs, which has enabled sound financial planning and appropriate investment in staff, accommodation and resources.

Governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise to their roles which benefits the school. Three committees to oversee education, buildings and estates, and finance meet regularly and are effective in providing support, whilst challenging the rationale for existing practice and so stimulating self-review, growth and improvement. Other committees to consider matters such as staff appointments or recruitment of governors are formed when required, meeting well a specific need. In most respects, governors have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities and review regulatory policies in order to assess compliance. Some minor policy updates were made during the inspection. Governors responded swiftly and ratified relevant policies. Omissions were such that the welfare of pupils was not in question. Governors have received recent training in safeguarding so that they understand the importance of their role in ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.

Some of the senior management team are new to their role within the last two academic years. They share a clear vision for the future and are committed to furthering the school's aims. They provide strong focus and clear educational direction. Their high expectations are understood by staff, who in response strive to provide a nurturing environment for pupils with a wide range of abilities. As a consequence, pupils make excellent progress.

Senior leaders share a close and productive relationship with governors. Working co-operatively, they have produced a detailed self-evaluation and strategic plan for the future, which sets out clear priorities for development. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis with staff members fully committed to the work of the school; most have several posts of responsibility which they carry out with energy and enthusiasm to the benefit of the pupils. For example, having received excellent careers advice and individual mentoring from a number of staff, able pupils in the sixth form have successfully obtained interviews at universities with highly selective procedures.

Teaching and support staff are committed to the school's success and are well deployed. All staff have appropriate job descriptions and receive a regular appraisal of their work. Systems for the induction of new staff are excellent. Further training opportunities are readily available so that staff feel supported in their desire to develop professionally. Managers understand their responsibility to monitor the quality of the teaching and learning. Observation of lessons and careful scrutiny of written work is an embedded practice. Careful review by managers of each pupil's examination results engenders discussion with relevant staff. A subsequent action plan for those who are believed to be under-achieving offers a support programme, regularly reviewed, which results in improved progress. Each department submits an annual self-review of achievements and future priorities. This careful focus on continuing improvement means that standards of education and most pastoral aspects remain high and staff are well prepared to support the welfare, health and safety of the pupils.

The comprehensive range of appropriate policies, including for safeguarding, is effectively implemented and regularly reviewed. Systems to recruit staff are efficient and appropriate checks, which are recorded accurately, are in place to ensure the suitability of all those working with children. Training in the safeguarding of pupils is compulsory for all staff and is comprehensive.

The quality of links between the school and parents, carers and guardians is excellent. Parents are very satisfied with the education and support that the school provides, as shown in the highly positive responses to the questionnaire. They expressed broad approval for the range of subjects and activities offered and were pleased with the support received for their children from the staff. Almost all parents felt that the school handled any concerns well. Examination of a sample of correspondence showed that the school followed closely its published complaints policy.

In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of parents stated that they are well informed about school activities. Comprehensive information about the school and its policies is easily accessible on the website and fortnightly emails contain details of individual and team achievements in music, drama, sport and other interests.

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Parents have excellent opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. Information seminars are organised throughout the year which focus on the personal development of the pupils so that parents are supported in their understanding of the challenges facing their daughters as they mature. For example, a recent seminar dealt with issues concerning the safe use of the internet. Parents are welcomed at matches, concerts and plays and those with a special interest or expertise are invited to share

this with groups of pupils. Parents can belong to a parents' organisation which is active in its support of the school through a variety of social and fund-raising events.

Parents receive clear and informative reports at the end of every academic year which detail their children's achievements. These include comments on learning attitudes as well as targets for improvement. In addition, they receive half-termly grades and a tutor report which provides a regular summary and assessment of progress. Two parent conferences take place each year. The school arranges individual consultations with staff at other times if a concern is raised either by subject teachers or by parents. Almost without exception, parents feel that the school is well led and managed.