



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
BURGESS HILL SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Burgess Hill School for Girls

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

Full Name of School	Burgess Hill School for Girls		
DfE Number	938/6201		
Registered Charity Number	307001		
Address	Burgess Hill School for Girls Keymer Road Burgess Hill West Sussex RH15 0EG		
Telephone Number	01444 241050		
Fax Number	01444 870314		
Email Address	headmistress@burgesshill-school.com		
Head	Mrs Kathryn Bell		
Chair of Governors	Mr Charles Cooper		
Age Range	11 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	308		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	11:16	216	16:18 92
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	257	
Number of Boarders	Total:	51	
	Full:	51	Weekly: 0
Inspection Dates	2 to 5 December 2014		

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 March 2009.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and another governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and an assembly. 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 Elaine Brook	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Alison Bawden	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Perdita Davidson	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Dr Christopher Enos	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, GSA school)
Mrs Deborah Leonard	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Established in 1906, Burgess Hill School for Girls moved to its present site in 1931. It is an independent day and boarding school, educating girls aged 2 ½ to 18 years. The senior school admits pupils from the age of 11. The school is a charitable trust, with a board of 11 governors, who are also trustees and oversee both schools. Both the junior and senior school have their own management team and administration under the overall leadership of the head of the senior school, who took up her appointment in September 2014.
- 1.2 The school is located in purpose-built accommodation within 13 acres of grounds close to the town of Burgess Hill in West Sussex. Offering boarding accommodation for up to 56 pupils, one boarding house is in the school grounds whilst the second is a former family home situated in a road adjacent to the main site.
- 1.3 The school aims to “provide quality education within a happy, challenging, supportive and caring atmosphere, which encourages pupils to use their initiative, be inquisitive and creative, and develop responsibility and independence”. It plans to do this by working in partnership with parents to ensure that each pupil is happy and enabled to build a successful foundation for the future.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, 308 pupils were on roll, of whom 51 were full boarders. There are 216 pupils in Years 7-11 and 92 pupils are in the sixth form. Pupils can board from the age of 11. Currently, there are two boarders in Years 7 and 8, 22 boarders in Years 9, 10 and 11 and 27 boarders in the sixth form. The majority of day pupils come from professional and business families and are of white British origin, most of whom live within a 25-mile radius of the school. The majority of boarders originate from overseas, principally from China and Nigeria.
- 1.5 The overall ability profile is above the national average. Few pupils have ability that is below average. The school has identified 59 pupils as having special educational needs/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 34 receive additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational need or Education, Health and Care plan. There are 51 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 24 receive support.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout the report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Year 7	Year 7
Year 8	Year 8
Year 9	Year 9
Year 10	Year 10
Year 11	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school meets its aims successfully. The achievements of all pupils, including those with SEND or EAL, are excellent. Those pupils who are highly able or have an exceptional talent are well supported to achieve their full potential. Pupils of all ages are conscientious and diligent learners, with a strong commitment to their work, so that progress is high in relation to their abilities. The curricular and extra-curricular programme makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' success because they are tailored to meet and develop the strengths of the individual. Pupils, particularly in the sixth form, are well prepared for future career choices. The quality of teaching is excellent. The school has fully met the recommendation from the previous inspection to support pupils with learning difficulties in all lessons. Pupils appreciate the individual attention they receive which is a significant factor in their success.
- 2.2 The personal development of the pupils is excellent. Pupils are confident and articulate, having high levels of self-esteem. Arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding and pastoral care are excellent. Premises and facilities are well maintained. The quality of boarding is sound. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small number of boarders raised concerns about aspects of their boarding experience although most pupils stated that they enjoy boarding. Inspection found the provision and care to be appropriate. Boarders have a pleasant and constructive relationship with boarding staff but a proper sense of community within the houses is lacking. The range and variety of food is good and the school is responsive to dietary suggestions from the pupils.
- 2.3 The successful fulfilment of the school's aims reflects the good quality of governance. All members of the governing body show good awareness of most of their responsibilities, including safeguarding. Oversight of the quality of boarding provision has been insufficient to ensure the high standards evident in all other areas of school life. Leadership and management of the school is good. Following the example set by senior leaders, staff work hard to ensure high standards are achieved by all pupils, giving freely of their time. Senior managers have identified the need to simplify internal committee structures in order that communication between all staff is clear. The leadership and management of boarding is ineffective and links between academic and boarding staff are underdeveloped. The school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Relations with parents are excellent, as reflected in their highly positive responses to the questionnaire, in which they expressed satisfaction with the support received for their children by the staff. Almost without exception, parents feel that the school is well led and managed.

2.(b) Action points**(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, as amended.
- 2.5 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013, and therefore it must:
- ensure that there is clear management and leadership of the practice and development of boarding in the school, including effective links between academic and residential staff. [National Minimum Standard 13.1, under Management and Development of Boarding]

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Improve the monitoring of the quality of the pupils' experience in boarding so that it matches the high standards of care and provision for day pupils.
 2. Ensure that the school's management arrangements support clear and effective internal communication.

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 are well educated, achieving the school's aim that they should be happy and successful. Pupils of all ages, including those in the sixth form, display excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skill across all subjects and activities.
- 3.3 Standards of literacy are high. Pupils speak, read and write confidently in English, French, German and Spanish. They research at an advanced level, as demonstrated by sixth form pupils working independently and thoughtfully on a personal project. Numeracy skills are strong. Pupils have an advanced understanding of mathematical concepts appropriate to their age and use these to interpret data so that they solve problems logically. They are generally proficient in information and communication technology (ICT) and show high levels of creativity, as seen in the excellent standard of art work displayed around the school and in the productions, plays and concerts. Their physical fitness levels are well developed so that excellence is achieved in a range of sports, including dance. Awards received in speech and drama demonstrate a high level of achievement.
- 3.4 In their extra-curricular activities, pupils have many successes, individually and in teams. Recent noteworthy achievements include the award of an engineering scholarship, a Gold Medal in the World Linguistics Olympiad and success at the highest level in a national mathematics challenge. Pupils with exceptional skills compete at county and national level in a diverse range of events which include athletics, netball, dressage and show-jumping. Results in team sports are excellent. Pupils leave the sixth form well prepared for the next stage of their education. Almost all pupils achieve places at their first choice of university, many with highly competitive entry requirements.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to that for girls in maintained selective schools. Results in IGCSE sciences have been higher than worldwide norms. Results at A level have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and above that for girls in maintained selective schools. The results of the most recent examinations in 2014 show that 81 per cent of grades achieved at A level were A* to B, whilst at GCSE, 50 out of 71 pupils gained at least five A* or A grades.
- 3.6 This level of attainment indicates that pupils make progress that is high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Pupils of all backgrounds, including those with EAL, make rapid progress. Pupils with SEND reach excellent levels in academic subjects, whilst those who are able, gifted or talented extend their knowledge and skills well because they are offered sufficient challenge and stimulus. Pupils of all ages have highly positive attitudes to learning. Their excellent achievements stem from a strong desire to succeed so that they become skilled learners, applying themselves diligently in lessons and participating enthusiastically in the wide range of extra-curricular activities during lunch-times and immediately after school.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The academic curriculum is broad and covers thoroughly all the requisite areas of learning, contributing significantly to the pupils' high levels of achievement. Scientific, creative and expressive subjects are equally represented, meeting well the individual strengths of the pupils. Characterised by flexibility, a wide range of choices are available at GCSE and A level, so that a personalised programme can be tailored to suit widely differing career aspirations. This fully supports the school's aim to provide a quality education that enables pupils to confidently build a foundation for the future.
- 3.9 From Year 7 to Year 9, pupils follow a wide range of subjects well suited to their ages and abilities. The teaching of languages is a strength, with French taught in Year 7 being further supplemented by Spanish and German from Year 8. The broad programme gives pupils linguistic, mathematical, science, technological, creative and physical experience, and provides an effective basis for the choice of subjects in Years 10 and 11, leading to GCSEs. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme successfully contributes to pupils' personal development. Citizenship is an integral part of the programme; provision enables pupils to acquire a deepening understanding of public institutions and services in Britain, whilst learning about traditions and cultures very different to their own.
- 3.10 The sixth form offers a comprehensive choice of subjects and pupils can also choose to study an ancient foreign language as well as Chinese. In addition to examination subjects, the sixth form programme includes an option to complete an extended project, a qualification in ICT, and a life skills course, the latter ranging from cookery to car maintenance. Provision includes comprehensive guidance through the university application process. In this way, pupils are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 3.11 The academic curriculum is well supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. Covering such areas as art, theatre, debating, sport, science and mathematics, a wide choice is available during the lunch-time and after school. Opportunities for boarders to pursue additional interests and pursuits in the evening and at the weekend are more limited mainly offering private study. Almost all parents and pupils expressed satisfaction with the range of extra-curricular activities.
- 3.12 Well developed community links benefit the pupils. A wide range of speakers from charities, local businesses and major world religions are regularly invited into the school. Pupils host tea parties annually for local senior citizens and perform musically in a range of local venues.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.14 Teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' progress, fully supporting the school's aims. The high quality of the teaching is an important factor in enabling pupils of all abilities to reach their potential and obtain excellent examination results. This represents an improved position since the previous inspection.
- 3.15 Lessons are carefully planned, purposeful and productive. In almost all lessons, teaching engages the pupils' attention and ICT is well used to extend learning.

Learning objectives are clearly stated and outcomes carefully assessed so that effective guidance is given and progress is swift. Marking is carried out to a good standard. In the best examples, constructive comments inform pupils how to improve. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm and encouraging. Praise is frequent and a sense of shared purpose is evident in conversations with both staff and pupils. With very few exceptions, pupils agreed that teachers help them to learn and that they are encouraged to think for themselves and to work independently where appropriate. This was clearly evident in lessons across the school, which were characterised by opportunities for reflection and independent study.

- 3.16 Teachers know their subject well. Their enthusiasm is shared by the pupils who enjoy opportunities for research and discussion. Excellent use is made of question and answer to encourage reflection and debate but pupils are not afraid to challenge an assumption or to make a mistake. Time is well managed so that understanding can be assessed at the end of a lesson. A wide range of resources, including articles, newspaper reports, the library and the internet are well used to stimulate interest.
- 3.17 All pupils are carefully assessed when they join the school and progress is monitored carefully thereafter. Teachers are made aware of each pupil's needs and use effective strategies to support their learning in line with suggestions given by the learning support department. In this way, teaching for pupils with SEND or EAL is carefully adapted to meet their varying needs. The school has fully met the recommendation from the previous inspection to support pupils with learning difficulties in all lessons. Pupils are very appreciative of the willingness of teachers to offer additional help outside lessons. Similarly, pupils who are highly able are identified and receive extension or enrichment work, which stimulates their learning and offers greater challenge.
- 3.18 The recently established personal mentor system, which provides each pupil with an allocated a personal mentor who tracks their progress regularly and agrees new targets, is a growing strength of the teaching. In their responses to the questionnaire, almost all parents were pleased with the progress being made by their child and agreed that very able pupils received stimulus which motivates and sets high expectations.

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 of all ages have an excellent standard of personal development, in line with the school's aims, being independent, inquisitive and creative individuals yet responsible members of their community. This is demonstrated in their willingness to express differing opinions during class discussions in a confident yet courteous manner.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They have a strong sense of self-esteem and self-confidence which enables them to form relationships confidently. Pupils develop an aesthetic awareness of the non-material aspects of life, shown in their participation in creative and performing arts and through the excellent art work proudly displayed all around the school. They feel valued and supported because they are encouraged to celebrate their own and others' success; their self-awareness is high. Their emotional maturity is evident in the sensitive ways in which they enter into moral debate in classroom activities, such as the exploration of differing expectations of women in the Edwardian period and the 21st Century. They enjoy debate and self-reflection.
- 4.4 Pupils have a developed sense of right and wrong, understanding the need for rules in a well-regulated community. This includes an understanding of, and a respect for, the over-arching character of the civil and criminal law of England. They are appreciative of the school's emphasis on support and encouragement. Although they recognise the value of sanctions, pupils felt that these were hardly ever required because the ethos was one of mutual respect. In lessons, pupils showed a mature ability to offer support to one another in paired or group work. At an early age, pupils take responsibility for the organisation of charitable fund-raising, appreciating that there are many people who, through no fault of their own, lead less fortunate lives. For example, pupils took the lead in an assembly which debated the ethics of a war-torn country, prompting intensive fund-raising to provide non-partisan medical support.
- 4.5 Pupils' sense of social responsibility within and beyond the school is excellent. The excellent PSHE programme ensures that pupils are given a broad general knowledge of the public institutions and services of England. They are able to consider the needs of others, reaching outwards to encourage participation from external organisations. They also show respect for those whose lives are lived differently from their own. For example, pupils from Years 9 host a pamper day for local citizens who act as carers for a family member, which involves liaison between local social services and other business organisations. Community service is an important element of school life. Sixth form pupils act as mentors to younger pupils, organise clubs and lead activities. They value the opportunity to take part in democratic processes through being elected to take on posts of responsibility. For example, they can become members of the charity committee which actively promotes fund-raising for both local and international charities. Part of their remit is to raise sufficient funds to sponsor an educational project in Uganda. Their understanding is deepened because the school organises an annual journey to the project open to all pupils from Years 10-13 when they actively work on the land with the local people. In this way, they have a deepening understanding of how individuals can pool their resources to benefit communities.

- 4.6 Pupils show excellent understanding of and respect for their own and others' cultural heritage. They benefit from the opportunity to learn from overseas pupils about traditions very different from their own, for example in school assemblies, and they enjoy the celebration of major world festivals such as the Chinese New Year. They understand the importance of accepting fundamental differences with tolerance so that there is no inappropriate discrimination evident. Whilst learning about other societies, the school actively promotes the fundamental British values of democracy, individual liberty and mutual respect. This was shown by the way sixth form pupils shadowed the Scottish devolution referendum with their own hotly-contested vote. The school is already preparing to run a mock election in May, with curriculum time used to ensure understanding of party politics and the democratic process. In this way, pupils develop a balanced view on a range of issues, which is well informed by an international perspective.
- 4.7 By the time they leave the sixth form, pupils have matured into articulate, confident young women, who understand democratic processes and have an understanding of global issues, therefore being well prepared for the next stage of their career.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 Staff provide effective support and guidance for the pupils in accordance with the school's aims. Academic progress is particularly well monitored through a well organised system of mentoring. Pupils have regular meetings with staff, who keep detailed records of performance in assessments so that any unexpected variations in outcomes are noted and appropriate support provided. In their responses to the questionnaire and in conversations, pupils reported their appreciation of the readily available help and guidance which made them feel valued and supported.
- 4.10 Relationships are positive between staff and pupils. Staff know the pupils well. A very small minority of pupils reported that some staff did not show concern for them as a person. The inspection team found that relationships were warm and nurturing. The majority of pupils agreed that they have a number of people they can turn to if they have personal difficulties. This includes the school nurse, an independent listener and a counsellor. Relationships between the pupils themselves are predominantly excellent, underpinned by mutual respect and courtesy.
- 4.11 Pupils are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The wide range of sporting activities offers excellent opportunities to take regular exercise whilst the provision of dietary guidance and a suitable range of healthy and nourishing meals enables sensible choices.
- 4.12 The school is extremely successful in setting out high expectations of good behaviour. Relevant policies are well known and comply with current guidance, taking due account of individual pupils' related needs or disabilities. Pupils agree that instances of bullying are very rare and are dealt with swiftly. A formal register of detentions is kept and monitored, and the few minor incidents that occur are resolved effectively. In their responses to the questionnaire, a few pupils considered that rewards and sanctions were not always applied consistently. Evidence from discussions with pupils and a scrutiny of records did not support this view. Achievements are widely celebrated in assemblies, newsletters and published articles on the website. Prior to the inspection, the plan to improve accessibility to the school and its curriculum for those pupils with SEND had not been updated. The

school responded swiftly when notified so that a suitable policy and plan, complying with current requirements, is now in place.

- 4.13 A few pupils reported that the school does not ask for their opinions or seek their views. Evidence from conversations with pupils and scrutiny of minutes from meetings confirms that pupils can express their views through the school council and that the school responds to their suggestions, for example, to menu choices, although within boarding views are less effectively sought.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 Arrangements to safeguard the pupils' welfare are thorough and well implemented. Designated staff receive regular training, in line with current guidance, which is updated at the appropriate level. Effective systems are in place so that temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of safeguarding procedures. Recruitment checks adhere to safer recruitment guidance and appropriate induction is provided for all those new to the school.
- 4.16 The health and safety policy is clear and detailed, as is all related documentation. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Regular fire drills and fire alarm tests take place and are recorded. Risk assessments are carried out and recorded for school activities, both on and off site, including residential trips. Health and safety measures are regularly monitored and evaluated by a buildings and estates committee, who ensure that any necessary improvements are made. Guidance, and in some cases confirmation of compliance with health and safety regulations, is sought from external agencies.
- 4.17 The school's arrangements for the care of any pupil who is taken ill or sustains an injury are suitably thorough. The majority of staff are trained first-aiders so that arrangements for sick or injured pupils are thorough and appropriate. Medical care during the school day is excellent, provided by qualified staff in a well-resourced medical centre. Care of boarders who are unwell during the night and weekends meets their needs well. Staff can request additional support from the nursing staff when outside of surgery hours. Appropriate action is taken to record and report incidents. First-aid kits are suitably placed in different areas of the school. Medicines are stored and administered safely. Provision for those who have EAL or SEND is excellent. Careful note is taken of any additional requirements so that pupils' needs are fully met.
- 4.18 Registration of pupils in the morning and afternoon is carried out thoroughly. Any unexpected absences are followed up promptly and effectively. The school's admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored for the preceding three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The quality of boarding is sound.
- 4.20 The outcomes for boarders are sound. Boarders' personal development is promoted by their boarding experience. Boarders are self-reliant, courteous and tolerant, demonstrating high standards of conduct. In conversations, they are articulate and friendly. They are particularly appreciative of the support from staff within the school day and almost without exception feel that they are making good progress in their work. In their responses to the questionnaire, most boarders stated that they enjoyed boarding, although a few expressed criticism of some areas, which included relationships within the houses, provision of food and the balance of free time and activities. Parents were all positive about the boarding arrangements.
- 4.21 Boarders form strong friendships, mostly with others from their own background and culture. They are highly diligent and their work ethic is strong but some have little interest in participating in activities that will take them from their studies. When coupled with their narrow friendship groups, the outcome is that they do not form a strong loyalty to the whole community within the boarding house. They are reluctant to become fully involved in whole group activities during the evenings and weekends because they prefer to study independently or meet with their own group of friends. This separation of boarders into groups with a shared culture has resulted in tension between some. Boarders reported that disputes are resolved so that instances of bullying are rare and that care is taken by staff to meet their cultural needs so that they do not experience inappropriate discrimination. The PSHE programme promotes tolerance and an understanding of different cultures so that relationships are generally harmonious.
- 4.22 Boarding principles and practice are clearly detailed in the comprehensive handbook. All new boarders are given an effective induction programme so that they quickly learn the routines of daily life. Each new boarder is paired with a boarder who has attended the school for some time so that they do not feel isolated or uncertain during their first few weeks. Boarders have good access to information about the wider world through newspapers, television and the internet.
- 4.23 There are good opportunities for boarders to take on positions of responsibility within the two houses. The role of head boarder is clearly defined and she is well supported by two deputies. Each year group within boarding has an elected representative. This forms the house committee whose function is to share ideas and give the pupils an opportunity to make their views known. Feedback is not always clearly reported by staff and as a result boarders do not feel involved in decision-making. Boarders with leadership roles take their responsibilities seriously and their support is greatly appreciated by younger boarders, many of whom are living in a different country for the first time.
- 4.24 Boarders have a pleasant and constructive relationship with the boarding staff, reporting that they are friendly and approachable. In their responses to the questionnaire, a very small minority of boarders stated that boarding staff did not treat them fairly. Scrutiny of records and logs showed that the small number of sanctions were appropriate. In conversations with a selection of boarders, they commented that they have an excellent relationship with members of the house staff who make themselves readily available to boarders to discuss any concerns or problems. Boarders felt that the strongest relationships are made with academic

staff. The recommendation from the previous inspection of boarding was to implement the results of consultations with boarders regarding reward systems, this has not been completed. Senior managers stated that the existing boarders do not feel that this is necessary. In conversations with inspectors, pupils confirmed that the introduction of new reward systems had been discussed but that the majority view was that praise and encouragement was sufficiently motivational. The behaviour of the majority is consistently excellent.

- 4.25 The quality of provision and care for boarders is sound. Almost all boarders agreed that they have a wide range of people to whom they can turn for help and advice. House notice boards provide contact details for sources of help, which include an independent listener, a counsellor and relevant outside agencies. Medical care for those who are unwell is good. Records are kept securely and medication is appropriately stored and distributed. Qualified nursing staff are on site during the school day and return at other times to meet the needs of boarders who are too unwell to remain in the boarding house and need to be cared for in the medical centre. Arrangements to visit the local surgery, dentist or optician are all easily made. Those who are deemed sufficiently competent to self-medicate are allowed to do so. The rights of boarders to medical confidentiality are appropriately respected.
- 4.26 In their responses to the questionnaire, a minority of boarding pupils reported dissatisfaction with meals. A scrutiny of menu plans and discussions with pupils revealed that the meals are attractively presented and offer a range of healthy options. The school has met in full the recommendation from the previous inspection to consult the pupils with regard to food. There is a food committee for boarders which has been active in discussion with catering staff so that their preferences are heard and implemented. A suggestion book is available to all in the dining room so that individuals can communicate any additional dietary or cultural preferences. Almost all boarders felt that sufficient snacks and drinks were available outside meal times. Inspection found the kitchens in both boarding houses are well stocked but snacks and drinks were not available during the school day. Senior managers acknowledged this and agreed to increase availability.
- 4.27 Boarding accommodation is comfortable. In addition to well-equipped common rooms and kitchens, there are sufficient and suitably private shower and toilet facilities. Boarders can personalise their bedrooms, although the majority do not choose to do so. Both buildings are generally well maintained. Laundry arrangements are efficient. Sixth form pupils can use the laundry independently, if they choose to do so; staff give support if required.
- 4.28 Suitable health and safety procedures are followed. Appropriate fire risk assessments and fire prevention policies are well implemented; regular fire drills take place and these are carefully recorded, with any recommendations immediately implemented. A few boarders felt that their belongings were not safe. Inspection confirmed that boarders have access to lockable boxes but for some these are too far away from the bedrooms to be of practical use to store valued possessions. A minority of boarders said that they do not find it easy to contact family and friends. However, inspection found that contact could be reasonably achieved because boarders have ready access to a house telephone, unrestricted use of their personal mobile telephones, as well as easy access to emails and other electronic media.
- 4.29 A small minority of boarders were unhappy with the balance of free time and activities in the evenings and at the weekend. Evidence from a scrutiny of the

programme showed that the organised activities are appropriate. Participation is compulsory for younger boarders, some of whom state that they do not always enjoy these events. Inspectors found that boarders were asked to contribute suggestions, mostly by email, so that the programme could be better matched to their interests, but there was little to indicate that senior boarding staff actively promote engagement so that enthusiasm was minimal. There is good access to quiet spaces if boarders want to be alone.

- 4.30 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are sound. Staff training in the safeguarding of children is up-to-date. All appropriate checks are made during recruitment and a careful induction system ensures that staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities in the care and supervision of boarders. Boarders are at all times under the supervision of staff who are appropriately experienced and trained. Boarders know who is on duty and understand how to make contact during the day or night, should the need arise. In meetings and in their responses to the questionnaire, boarders stated that they feel safe in their house. There is at least one member of staff sleeping in each boarding house. Most staff accommodation is separated fully from the accommodation and facilities provided for boarding pupils. Once alerted to the shortcomings of some accommodation, the school acted immediately to put appropriate arrangements in place so that by the end of the inspection, the accommodation for staff fully met the regulatory requirements.
- 4.31 The leadership and management of boarding are unsatisfactory. There is a lack of clarity about where the responsibility for the practice and development of boarding lies. While communication is regular and formal minutes are recorded, the outcomes from meetings are not shared effectively with all staff. The separation between academic and boarding staffing means that links between boarding and the rest of the school are not fully established. For example, boarders cited as a strength the support received during the school day from academic staff, but this is not extended into supervision of prep and boarding activities. Managers do not engage sufficiently with boarding staff to cultivate a sense of shared purpose and common goals for boarding.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 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. However, oversight of the quality of boarding care and provision has not been sufficiently rigorous.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 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.

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 good.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 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.

- 5.9 The number of committees at middle management level leads to staff involvement in a number of different meetings with overlapping agenda items and repetition of information. Senior leaders had already recognised the need to simplify the present structure to improve communication between all levels. Management of boarding is ineffective because boarding is not fully integrated into the school's thinking and there is limited overlap between boarding and academic aspects of the school. Under the new leadership an imminent re-structuring of the framework for management is intended to provide clearer lines of responsibility, so that information can be given more directly to staff to guide the school's future development.
- 5.10 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.
- 5.11 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.
- 5.12 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.
- 5.13 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.
- 5.14 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.

- 5.15 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.

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