



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
BARNARD CASTLE SCHOOL**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Barnard Castle School

Full Name of School	Barnard Castle School		
DfE Number	840/6003		
Registered Charity Number	527383		
Address	Barnard Castle School Newgate Barnard Castle County Durham DL12 8UN		
Telephone Number	01833 690222		
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Email Address	genoffice@barneyschool.org.uk		
Headmaster	Mr Alan Stevens		
Chair of Governors	Mr Alan Fielder		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	698		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed		
Numbers by Age	4-5 (EYFS):	15	5-11: 189
	11-18:	494	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	547	
Number of Boarders	Total:	151	
	Full:	149	Flexi- 2 boarding:
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Laura Turner		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection Dates	19 to 22 Jan 2016		

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. 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 boarding intermediate inspection was in January 2013 and the previous ISI full standard inspections, one for each section of the school, were in April 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.

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

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

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 children aged under two), 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 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 Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mr David Bown	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school)
Mrs Victoria Hall	Team Inspector (Head of Juniors, GSA school)
Mr Patrick Lee-Browne	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mrs Janet Lowe	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Laurence McKell	Team Inspector (Former Head, HMC school)
Mrs Anne Price	Team Inspector (Former Senior Leader, HMC school)
Mr Jack Williams	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Richard Gibbs	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Marcus Johnson	Team Inspector for Boarding (Housemaster, HMC school)
Mrs Ann Richards	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Barnard Castle School is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils aged four to eighteen. The prep school educates pupils aged from four to eleven and includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The senior school is for pupils aged from eleven to eighteen. Both sections of the school offer boarding, mostly full-time and occasionally through flexible arrangements. The school is a non-denominational Christian foundation. It is housed within a 50-acre site on the eastern edge of Barnard Castle, in south west County Durham. It is a charitable trust overseen by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school aims: to offer a broad curriculum in order for pupils to achieve knowledge, enjoyment of learning and the acquisition of skills necessary to be responsible members of society; to encourage academic enrichment and the development of curiosity; to ensure that all pupils fulfil their academic potential at each stage of their education; to promote the value of application, perseverance, initiative, independent thought and co-operation; to promote a community which values honesty, mutual respect, enjoyment, service and good citizenship, placing an emphasis on leadership; and to prepare pupils for the next stage in their lives, whatever that may be.
- 1.3 The school educates 698 pupils: 204 in the prep school, including 15 children in the EYFS, and 494 in the senior school, including 150 pupils in the sixth form. There are currently 151 boarders, nearly all full-time. Boarders in the prep school, aged from eight to eleven, are accommodated in Old Courts. They number nine, including a flexi-boarder. There are three houses for boarders aged 11 to 18: Longfield House for girls, and Northumberland House and York House for boys.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, the school has built several new prep school classrooms, including a new science laboratory, and a new sixth-form centre. It has taken exemption from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS and offers its own curriculum. The school has appointed a new head of the prep school, along with other members of the senior management team; these include newly created posts focused on the sixth form and pastoral care. A development office and foundation board have been instituted.
- 1.5 Most pupils are from the north of England and are white British. Boarders are mostly British and include a small number from overseas, representing 18 nationalities. Of the 53 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), 27 receive specialist support for their English. No pupil has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 203 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to half of whom it provides specialist learning support. Pupils demonstrate ability that is in line with the national average on entry to Year 2. The ability profile in Years 3 to 11 is above the national average. That in the sixth form is in line with the national average for pupils in sixth-form education, with a wide spread of abilities represented.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement is good, enabled by a well-planned, broad and balanced curriculum and excellent provision of activities throughout the school. Children in the EYFS demonstrate excellent progress; the recommendation of the previous inspection to extend resources in the outdoor classroom has been met. Pupils' learning is characterised by perseverance and, when encouraged, a facility to work independently. Pupils with SEND or EAL achieve at levels equal to their peers. The more able, gifted and talented achieve high standards in creative subjects, performance and sport. These achievements are enabled by teaching that demonstrates many strengths, such as rapid pace, thorough planning, a high level of challenge, imaginative use of resources and a wide range of teaching methods. However, some teaching, which does not share these characteristics, does not promote pupils' progress consistently. The school has made progress in meeting the recommendations of the previous full inspections, to improve marking and meet the needs of all pupils, including through tracking, but there has hitherto been some lack of strategic direction in doing so. Recent appointments at senior level have led to policy initiatives to improve academic areas.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. The school promotes high standards of behaviour from the EYFS onwards. Pupils are emotionally mature, demonstrate initiative, and have a strong sense of right and wrong. They demonstrate tolerance and cultural understanding, and develop excellent relationships amongst themselves and with staff. These characteristics are promoted by excellent pastoral care and strong personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programmes throughout the school. Arrangements to promote the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent. Checks on new staff are efficiently undertaken and are now recorded comprehensively, meeting the requirement of the previous inspection. Boarding makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' personal development. The recommendation of the previous boarding welfare inspection has been met.
- 2.3 Excellent governance promotes the school's ethos and has supported recent highly successful capital building projects in the prep school and sixth form, the latter resoundingly effective in meeting the recommendation of the previous full inspections. Governors maintain the required oversight of areas where they have legal responsibilities. Leadership and management are excellent, particularly in the EYFS, and pastoral and welfare areas, and in maintaining strong links with parents. They enable the school's aims to promote breadth in pupils' academic and personal development to be met. The school is a community where mutual care is strongly evident. Monitoring at middle management level has improved since the previous inspection but is not yet fully effective across all academic areas. Those parents who responded to pre-inspection questionnaire showed extremely high levels of satisfaction with the education provided by the school.

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 teaching demonstrates suitable pace and variety, and offers the requisite challenge to match individual pupils' needs.
 2. Apply clear strategic direction to ensure that teaching and learning policy is fully implemented.

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 good.
- 3.2 The school successfully fulfils its aim to enable all pupils to fulfil their academic potential, across the broad range of abilities evident. Often, pupils exceed their potential.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, all children make excellent progress in all areas of learning and achieve beyond the levels expected for their age. They quickly learn the sounds that words make, and most know and can spell words using combinations such as 'oo', 'oa' or 'ai'. They write sentences, as when in a class book about penguins, each child wrote and illustrated a relevant fact independently. In numeracy, they are beginning to recognise and order numbers greater than ten and to grasp the idea of 'one more'. Children showed enthusiasm about a class topic on birds and were able to name and recognise common garden species.
- 3.4 Throughout the school, pupils achieve well. At some ages achievement is excellent, particularly in Years 1 and 2, but progress is slowed in some other year groups or subject areas when teaching lacks pace, stimulus or sufficient challenge. The pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding are secure. In the prep school, pupils' speaking, reading and writing skills are well developed for their age, as are their numeracy and scientific skills. They use technology effectively and are beginning to develop basic computing skills. In the senior school, pupils acquire good knowledge, skills and understanding. They develop literacy skills rapidly in Years 7 to 9. Pupils excel in some areas in relation to age, particularly in creative areas such as art and GCSE musical composition. Pupils develop strong technological skills; they are confident users of tools and materials in design technology (DT). In the sixth form, some pupils reach high levels of articulacy when presenting arguments, including in writing for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).
- 3.5 Pupils are successful in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, where their physical development is excellent. The school enables achievement at high standards by gifted sportsmen and women at regional level and occasionally through participation in national teams. The school has recently enjoyed consistent success in the final stages of a national schools' rugby competition. Pupils achieve well in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme and Combined Cadet Force (CCF) competitions. They are successful in instrumental examinations. The chapel choir regularly performs in prominent cathedrals, including in London, and drama enables pupils to perform regularly in musicals and plays with success.
- 3.6 The following analyses use the national data for the years 2012 to 2014, where possible. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Pupils' attainment in national tests at the age of 7 is well above the national average for maintained primary schools. Their attainment in Years 3 to 6 cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm. On the evidence available from standardised tests, and from the pupils' performance in lessons and other work, it is judged to be good. These levels of attainment, as judged in Years 3 to 6, indicate that pupils make good progress.
- 3.7 Results at GCSE are above the national average for maintained schools, and those in the International GCSE have been above worldwide norms in English and history,

and similar to worldwide norms in physics and chemistry. Results in 2015 maintain this level of attainment. At A level, results are in line with the national average for maintained schools, with similar results evident in 2015. Pupils are consistently successful in gaining places at university, including at some with demanding entry requirements. These levels of attainment, considered alongside the pupils' responses in discussions, in their written work and in lessons, indicate good progress relative to those of similar ability.

- 3.8 Such results represent substantial progress for some pupils of below average ability and those with SEND. Pupils with SEND attain in line with their peers due to systematic support and well-defined strategies communicated to teachers. Those with EAL are supported in the classroom and enabled to achieve well. Pupils identified as more able and those who are gifted and talented fulfil their potential, particularly in designated activities in music, sport and science competitions. Their progress is sometimes less consistent when the tasks they are given are repetitive or too easy. The school has recently clarified its expectations in this area in response to the recommendation of the previous inspection and there was evidence that this has begun to have an impact on outcomes.
- 3.9 Pupils develop good learning skills. In the EYFS, children are active learners. They concentrate well, work independently and creatively, and play purposefully in the well-planned outdoor and indoor environments. Presentation, organisation and a desire to succeed are developed well in the prep school and these skills are soon assimilated by new entrants to the school in Year 7. Many pupils show the facility to work well independently but some in the senior school lack confidence to do so as yet and teaching does not always encourage this. Pupils are interested in their work and some show genuine intellectual curiosity. Their perseverance is a notable characteristic.

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 successfully supports the school's aims. It is well planned throughout the school so that it is suited to all ages, abilities and needs and covers all the required areas of learning. This includes comprehensive PSHE programmes in both sections of the school which prepare pupils well for life in modern Britain. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents expressed themselves satisfied with the school's provision.
- 3.12 In the EYFS, exemption from the learning and development requirements of the EYFS has been used to excellent effect. It has given staff the confidence to develop a well-balanced curriculum that meets the needs of all the children who attend. This includes all of the elements typical of the EYFS, with the addition of French, swimming, music and physical education, taught by subject specialists. Since the previous inspection, the Reception class has moved rooms and now has the benefit of a well-planned outdoor area. This fulfils the recommendation of the previous inspection to extend and develop resources in the outdoor classroom.
- 3.13 In Years 1 to 6, the curriculum places successful emphasis on literacy and numeracy skills, with pupils being grouped by prior attainment in these subjects in Years 5 and 6. There is focus on key skills in communication, problem solving, critical thinking, and social and personal awareness. Recent initiatives include weekly practical

mathematics investigations and a programme to promote positive thinking. Specialist teaching in several areas is enhanced by use of senior school resources, including the DT workshop and the fitness suite.

- 3.14 In the senior school, most pupils study a full range of subjects to GCSE, at which level pupils are expected to study at least one foreign language in addition to three further option subjects. All pupils in Year 11 currently study separate sciences. A recent initiative to unify examination board choices in science enables some pupils to study for a dual award. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a useful certificate course in computer skills.
- 3.15 Sixth formers study for international A levels and the Pre-U in some subjects, and their programme is enhanced by the EPQ, a wide-ranging lecture programme given by outside speakers, field studies, and cultural trips in the UK and abroad. Extensive information and communication technology (ICT) provision ensures that the curriculum supports modern learning approaches. At the previous inspection the school was recommended to establish a working and social centre for the sixth form. The recently completed sixth-form centre is an excellent, up-to-date resource for independent and collaborative working, which pupils use with enthusiasm.
- 3.16 Suitable assessment of, and very effective structures to support pupils with SEND and EAL ensure their strong progress; each pupil has a curriculum tailored to his or her needs and aptitudes, including one-to-one support lessons where desirable. The more able, gifted and talented are provided with a range of activities linked to academic subjects and areas of personal interest.
- 3.17 Impartial careers advice begins in Year 7, through the PSHEE programme. This includes guidance in Year 11, with sixth-form choices and advice on work experience. The school is developing useful links with parents and alumni to enrich this area. University applications are very well supported.
- 3.18 Links with the local community are encouraged and promoted within activities organised through the DofE and CCF. Prep pupils collect and distribute harvest gifts, and children from local nurseries are invited to nativity plays and concerts.
- 3.19 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities throughout the school contributes significantly to the educational, intellectual and personal development of pupils. In the prep school, a wide choice ranges from a construction club to hip-hop dancing or taekwondo, and foreign language clubs. A variety of educational visits extends the pupils' knowledge and experiences. Visitors to the school such as a local policeman and representatives of different religions enrich the pupils' understanding of the wider world. In the senior school, varied sporting activities include team sports as well as a range of more individual activities such as swimming and fell running. Events such as a whole-school run for charity are enthusiastically supported. Pupils work on the school magazine, engage in debating and perform in the wide range of musical and dramatic groups.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.20 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.21 Teaching across the school is successful in supporting the school's aims. It provides a nurturing environment in which all pupils are encouraged to develop their talents and confidence, and to reach their academic potential. It promotes tolerance and respect, and is non-partisan in the coverage of political issues. Some progress has been made in meeting the recommendations of the previous inspection with regard to marking and meeting the needs of the most able. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent throughout the school.
- 3.22 The excellent teaching in the EYFS is evident in the enthusiasm it inspires in children when they are learning. Planning is detailed and takes the interests of all children into account. Staff are extremely knowledgeable about the curriculum and how children learn best. Work is tailored to individual children's needs and uses good quality resources. Staff know the children well and have high expectations of them. Assessment of each child's progress is thorough. It gives a clear picture that is used to inform future planning.
- 3.23 Most teaching is of high quality. The overwhelming majority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that their teachers help them to learn and make good progress. Most teaching is characterised by rapid pace, thorough planning, high level of challenge, imaginative use of resources, including ICT, and a wide range of teaching methods. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. Frequently, excellent teaching successfully promotes deep interest and engagement, and pupils clearly enjoy working collaboratively and are enabled to succeed. Pupils' independent learning skills are fostered, for example by undertaking project work and research tasks which deepen and broaden their learning. Some less effective teaching lacks pace, variety and challenge. Staff recognise the learning needs of individual pupils but the level of work set is not always appropriate. Sometimes, a lack of encouragement for pupils to take responsibility for their learning leads to a teacher-led approach that limits the pupils' opportunities to develop their independent learning skills.
- 3.24 Responding to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils said they do not feel that homework helps them to learn. Inspection evidence showed that homework tasks set in lessons are suitable both in content and in the amount of time teachers indicate that pupils should spend on them. In discussions with inspectors, pupils were positive about the usefulness of homework.
- 3.25 Teaching supports the learning of pupils with SEND or EAL. More able and gifted pupils are more effectively engaged in lessons, and consequently make good progress, when skilful questioning enables them to reinforce previous learning and to consider creative solutions to problems. Such provision is not consistent and some teaching does not always stimulate higher-order thinking skills.
- 3.26 Most work is marked regularly. This ensures that pupils receive frequent feedback about their current levels of achievement and understand the steps required for improvement. However, this support has not always been consistent, hindering progress in some areas. The school has taken steps to clarify expectations in this area. It makes good use of standardised testing to identify pupils' potential and track their progress against national norms. Staff have begun to use this information to inform their lesson planning although this is an area that is not yet fully developed.

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 demonstrate excellent personal development, in accordance with the school's promotion of a community that values honesty, mutual respect, enjoyment, service and good citizenship. The school also takes active steps to promote characteristic British values such as individual liberty, the rule of law and tolerance.
- 4.3 In the EYFS, children are extremely well behaved and confident; they interact extremely well with each other and with adults. The setting has a code of behaviour, enshrined in an excellent PSHEE scheme of work that successfully teaches children to be kind, safe, respectful and tolerant of differences. Regular participation in chapel services gives children spiritual experiences and they join in the actions of worship songs in assembly with vigour. Children benefit from regular visits to the senior school for lunch, and other staff and pupils visit the EYFS. Good links with Year 1 ensure that children are well prepared for transition.
- 4.4 Throughout the school, pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent. Pupils develop high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem in a supportive and nurturing environment. Teachers support pupils in developing self-knowledge. Pupils reflect effectively on non-material aspects of life through regular attendance at assemblies and chapel services. Pupils have a strong awareness of faith, as represented in varied traditions. This is raised during religious studies lessons, where a conscious effort is spent studying a wide range of religions in depth, with respect for differing beliefs.
- 4.5 Pupils' moral development is excellent. From an early age, they understand the difference between right and wrong, the need for rules and the importance of taking responsibility for their own behaviour. They develop an understanding of the law of England and how it is made. Pupils make informed decisions and judgements because they are carefully guided by staff in their emotional development. For example, younger pupils discussed justice and retribution in Christianity and Sharia law with notable maturity. The fundamental school principle that pupils should value themselves and others, including those with protected characteristics, is widely upheld. Pupils care about others and are keen to support a wide variety of local, regional and national charities.
- 4.6 Pupils show a strong sense of social awareness. They develop a mature awareness of social problems and the contribution they can make to helping to resolve these through a wide range of activities. They gain a knowledge of the key public services and institutions of England. Pupils are able to present opposing sides of an argument and pose challenging social questions, for example when examining Napoleon's rise to power. A sixth-form politics lesson demonstrated pupils' deepening awareness of constitutional principles in the UK. Prep school pupils wrote to the Queen as part of their examination of the UK's democratic structures. Pupils demonstrate initiative and are eager to assume a range of roles within school, including as peer mentors, house captains and representatives on the school council. Sixth-form pupils recently wrote children's books and read them to the children in the EYFS. Mentors are trained well to offer friendship and support; they are identified by a highly regarded school badge and demonstrate strong family values.

- 4.7 Pupils develop understanding of other cultures and faiths to a high degree, and from an early age. A very good series of visiting speakers and visits by religious representatives is linked to displays of cultural and religious artefacts. Lively debates encourage pupils to be tolerant of different traditions while appreciating respect for, and appreciation of, their own culture. This is amply demonstrated in the many musical, artistic and dramatic activities in which pupils throughout the school participate at high levels.
- 4.8 Pupils have an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave school. They are mature and thoughtful, with an excellent understanding of life in British society and in the wider world.

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

- 4.9 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 Pastoral care in the EYFS is excellent. The class teacher is the key person for each child. The setting provides a caring and supportive environment, where children are helped to develop positive relationships. Children feel safe, understand the rules and boundaries of appropriate behaviour, and know that there are many trusted people with whom they can build relationships. They learn about keeping safe and leading healthy lifestyles.
- 4.11 Throughout the school, staff provide highly effective support and guidance for the pupils through a well-structured house system. Tutors know their pupils extremely well and adeptly help them to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the school. Detailed records enable overall patterns of behaviour to be identified. Relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst pupils, are excellent. Mutual respect and warm regard are apparent throughout the school. Pupils can turn to any member of staff if they have a concern. New pupils in Year 7 are allocated a 'buddy' from Year 8, and the sixth form provides trained peer mentors who also offer valued guidance. The all-age house system in the senior school encourages mixing between year groups.
- 4.12 A healthy lifestyle is promoted through regular exercise in curricular sport and activities. Pupils' participation is monitored and, if necessary, they are encouraged to be more active. School meals are appetising, nutritious and substantial; there is a good variety, with vegetarian, gluten-free and healthy options always available.
- 4.13 The behaviour of pupils is excellent. The prep school promotes the highest standards of behaviour. The behaviour policy includes a detailed system of rewards and sanctions, which are used consistently. A small minority of pupils in response to the questionnaire in the senior school considered that teachers are not always consistent when giving sanctions. Records of sanctions show that the school's effective behaviour policy is followed and sanctions are applied that are appropriate to the misdemeanour. Serious sanctions are recorded appropriately but are few in number.
- 4.14 The school has a highly successful anti-bullying strategy. A very positive ethos ensures that pupils readily recognise that bullying or harassment of any kind are unacceptable. Pupils are confident that all incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. A very small minority of parents responding to the questionnaire considered that the school does not deal well with bullying. Records show that any instances of bullying are recorded, with details of the incident logged, together with

the actions taken. When appropriate, guidance is sought from external agencies and is followed. This indicates effective implementation of the school's strategy.

- 4.15 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.16 The school employs effective methods to seek the views of pupils. Pupils can voice their opinions, for example through school councils in each section of the school and the food committee. Responses to the questionnaire indicate that a very small minority of pupils were not satisfied that the school listens to their views and responds to them. Inspectors found that the school does take the pupils' views into account, and responds appropriately. Reasonable requests are granted immediately if possible, such as having hot chocolate at break, while others, such as the request for an artificial play surface in the prep school, may take a little longer to be met.

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

- 4.17 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.18 The school has good arrangements for safeguarding. These are reviewed regularly to reflect the most recent requirements and are implemented well, including in the EYFS, where regular attendance is promoted. Arrangements reflect the school's boarding provision effectively. Regular contact is maintained with local agencies and referral is prompt both for any children in need and those at risk. Those staff with safeguarding responsibilities are fully aware of potential links between bullying and safeguarding. Training for all staff is well organised and understood. Staff show a clear understanding of appropriate reporting arrangements. The school provides e-safety training to all pupils through ICT lessons and the PSHEE programme. Staff appointments reflect safer recruitment guidelines.
- 4.19 Day pupils who are ill receive suitable care from school nurses in the well-resourced medical centre. The first-aid policy provides well for emergencies. Appropriate numbers of staff are qualified in first aid, including paediatric first aid in the EYFS. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of any pupils with special learning needs.
- 4.20 Arrangements for health and safety are strong. Policies provide well for all recommended areas and these are implemented with care. Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are thorough, and checks are recorded effectively and centrally. Regular evacuation drills are held and the outcomes recorded, stored and analysed. Areas for action identified in the fire risk assessment are systematically attended to. Electrical testing is methodical. Assessments of risk are thorough and the school has a suitable risk assessment policy, including for trips. The school assesses suitably the risks arising from its extensive grounds and around both the prep and senior sections.
- 4.21 Registration is regular and methodical, and recorded electronically. Any unauthorised absence of pupils is followed up efficiently. The school maintains and stores an appropriate admission register.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.22 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.23 Boarding meets its published aim to provide a happy, purposeful community, based on such values as integrity, compassion and duty.
- 4.24 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders are fully integrated into the school and most indicated in response to questionnaires that they enjoy boarding. Senior and prep school boarders act as enthusiastic and articulate guides to visitors, and there is a very strong sense of community. Relationships are strong across the houses, and new boarders, including those with SEND or EAL, settle quickly into the school. Boarders are given handbooks on arrival and the induction process is comprehensive. There are many adults to whom to turn over personal issues, including house staff, a chaplain, a counsellor and an independent listener. Senior boarders can be elected to the role of monitor and some have been trained as peer counsellors. There are systems for boarders to voice their views at individual house committee meetings and through the half termly school council. Boarders are well motivated, polite and sociable.
- 4.25 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. The promotion of boarders' health is effective and arrangements for medical care are excellent. There is a very well-equipped medical centre, and male or female school doctors hold daily surgeries. In response to the questionnaire a very large majority of boarders stated that they are well looked after if they feel unwell or are injured. In the mornings, evenings and at weekends, boarders' medical needs are provided for by house matrons, who work closely with the school nurses. A minority of boarders stated in response to the questionnaire that the school food is not entirely to their taste, and a small minority said that snacks are insufficient. Inspection evidence showed the food and snacks provided to be of good quality and nutritious. In discussions, boarders praised the catering department, which provides for special diets and is attentive to boarders who may suffer from allergies. Drinking water is readily available throughout the school. The school provides an efficient laundry service, though older boarders are able to use washing and drying machines if they wish.
- 4.26 Boarding accommodation is being upgraded on a rolling programme. Boarders report that recent changes in accommodation, such as the improvements in house kitchens, have been positive. Currently, some of the showers are in need of refurbishment and some of the furnishings and decorations are worn. The school is aware of this and the programme of refurbishment includes changes in these areas. Boarders are provided with secure storage. All boarders except for those in the prep school boarding house can lock their rooms. A large majority reported that their possessions are safe. Boarders can contact their families and friends, although mobile telephone coverage is patchy around the main site. The school provides a wireless network that is filtered and closely monitored; although video-calling is possible, social networking is unavailable. Boarders are allowed off site at appropriate times and they may walk to the shops according to age-related rules.
- 4.27 There are regular communications from the school to parents, including newsletters from the headmaster. In case of need, parents are kept up to date with information concerning their children by telephone or email from house staff or the school nurses. There is a suitable complaints procedure which is implemented effectively. Health and safety requirements are met. Evacuation drills are practised at least once a term in boarding time. In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of

boarders stated that they are not happy with the balance of free time and activities in the evenings and at weekends. Inspectors found that there are many sporting and extra-curricular-activities on offer in the school day, and boarders make use of the extensive school grounds when daylight and weather permit. There are suitable facilities for boarders to spend time alone, if they wish. Boarders are offered trips on Sundays in addition to DofE activities, rehearsals and opportunities for informal games.

- 4.28 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent. The school complies with requirements and statutory guidance with respect to safeguarding and recruitment checks. All adults associated with boarding are up to date in safeguarding training and know who to contact should they have concerns. Pupils say that bullying is very rare in boarding, and sanctions, which are clearly understood, are infrequently needed. Behaviour is good, with sanctions being perceived by boarders as just and effective. Suitably trained members of staff take responsibility for boarders in boarding time and there is always an adult on call at night in each of the four houses. The whereabouts of boarders are regularly monitored, and the missing person policy is known to staff. Visitors are signed in to school and access to the boarding houses is suitably restricted.
- 4.29 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. Boarding is highly regarded, is well led and managed, and promotes a good standard of opportunities for personal development and responsibility. Boarding documentation and policies are up to date. These and statutory requirements are known to staff, who have appropriate job descriptions. For boarding staff with academic roles, there is a cycle of professional development review, and a similar appraisal system is being introduced for support staff. Records are appropriately kept and monitored, and information about boarders is shared with medical and academic staff as needed through email or telephone contact, the school database, or formal or informal meetings. There are clear aims for boarding and boarders benefit from a good standard of care for their individual needs. School development planning takes boarding into account, and the changing nature of boarding, for example a move to encourage flexible boarding further, is under consideration. The school currently lacks a co-ordinated development plan for boarding.
- 4.30 The recommendation from the most recent boarding welfare intermediate inspection, to develop consistency between the houses, has been acted upon; any remaining minor differences are consistent with school policy and appropriate, reflecting the individual character of each house.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governing body includes a suitable range of skills and experience which enables support for the pupils' excellent personal development and their good achievement. Governors are committed to the boarding ethos of the school and to the school's ongoing development. This is reflected in support for recent appointments to senior management posts. Support is also provided through regular visits to the school, including observation of lessons and liaison with staff who have particular responsibilities, such as for safeguarding. Some governors have accompanied trips that extend provision for the more able. Effective oversight of the EYFS is provided and its activities are reported to the board through a governor linked to the prep school. The decision to take exemption from the EYFS learning and development requirements has proved successful in promoting children's progress.
- 5.3 The board has high expectations of the level of education provided by the school. It supports improvement effectively and individual governors utilise their expertise in the support of senior managers, particularly in the development of new facilities. Governors maintain an open dialogue with senior managers and review academic performance systematically, although other mechanisms to provide formal challenge are less developed; for example, there is no formal appraisal scheme for the headmaster. Support through financial planning is excellent and has resulted in the completion of several capital projects, most recently the new sixth-form centre and prep school classrooms. All governors receive induction training and information about current issues, such as radicalisation. Some attend other events but additional formal training for governors is currently limited.
- 5.4 The board reviews health and safety arrangements through a designated committee. Monitoring of welfare arrangements includes an appropriate annual review of safeguarding policy and procedures. Checks on newly recruited staff are carried out with efficiency and are recorded comprehensively on the single central register of appointments. The register is monitored effectively.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 The school is led with a clear focus on its aims, particularly successfully in the aim to enable all pupils to achieve knowledge, enjoyment of learning, and the acquisition of skills necessary to be responsible members of society. This includes active encouragement for all pupils to develop values that encourage respect for others and democracy. Senior leaders do so within a community where mutual care is strongly evident. Leaders are aware of such strengths and also of areas for development.
- 5.7 In the EYFS, the quality of leadership and management is excellent. The recently appointed head of the prep school ensures that there is an ambitious vision for the setting and there are effective systems in place for self-evaluation. The exemption

from the learning and development requirements has been a positive step, and there are suitable measures in place for planning and assessment which are effectively monitored. Sharing good practice with other similar schools, combined with a rigorous appraisal system and regular supervision of staff, leads to identified needs for professional development. Equality, diversity and British values are actively promoted. The recommendation of the previous inspection has been met.

- 5.8 Leadership and management maintain the good academic achievement of the pupils. Recent successful appointments to senior management posts have led to policy initiatives to develop academic areas, including completing the school's response to recommendations from the previous inspection about marking and provision in lessons for the full range of abilities. Hitherto, there has been a lack of strategic direction in doing this. Although now evident in day-to-day practice, the impact of recent changes has yet to be reflected in examination outcomes. Leadership and management plan effectively, both to consolidate current success and explore new dimensions in teaching and learning, for example through recently instituted groups to review related strategies in both sections of the school. Monitoring at middle management level has improved since the previous inspection. Management in pastoral and welfare areas is strong, including safeguarding and the EYFS. The management of boarding is good. Overall, leadership and management promote the pupils' excellent levels of personal development.
- 5.9 Planning for development makes effective use of accurate self-evaluation, informed by development planning by individual departments. No detailed boarding development plan exists as yet although broad aims for boarding are reflected in the whole-school plan. Successful planning has resulted in considerable development of buildings and resources since the previous inspection. Efficient budgeting provides different areas of the school with sufficient human and material resources, including a separate budget for the prep school.
- 5.10 The school appoints staff of good quality, both teaching and non-teaching. Procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are methodical and secure. Historically, some appointments were made without all checks being undertaken before work began but the school had taken all possible steps to remedy this before the inspection was announced. Checks are now comprehensively reflected in the single central register of appointments. This meets the requirement of the previous inspection.
- 5.11 New staff appraisal systems have recently been introduced in the prep school where appraisal systems for pastoral staff are strong and all staff observe each other's teaching. Good appraisal and professional development systems in the senior school include mutual observation by staff, although this is not yet consistent. There are some examples of excellent practice in staff development undertaken by senior and middle managers but these are not evident across all academic departments.
- 5.12 The school occupies a significant place in the life of the town and links are strengthened by the many non-teaching staff who live locally and play a full part in the school community. They work with success to ensure the upkeep of the extensive buildings and grounds, to provide administrative support and to care for the pupils.
- 5.13 Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the school and the support given to their children. Responses to the questionnaire show that the vast majority of parents are

pleased with the progress that their children make in school, and believe that their children are happy and feel safe in school and that they are well looked after.

- 5.14 In the EYFS, relationships with parents, and other agencies where appropriate, are excellent. Daily communication either personally or through an excellent 'home school book; keeps parents informed. Parents feel that their views are listened to, and their children are cared for very well. They are involved with their children's learning and progress.
- 5.15 Parents throughout the school believe that communication with the school is excellent and any concerns they have are dealt with quickly. The school has an appropriate complaints procedure that is implemented effectively, including at the panel stage.
- 5.16 Parents have many opportunities to be involved with the life of the school, including through regular curriculum evenings, plays and events, sports fixtures, where they are invited into school for tea and cakes, and social events organised by the parents association, Barney Friends.
- 5.17 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with a wealth of information about the school through an informative website. A parents' portal contains handbooks, information about daily routines and school policies, although prior to the inspection being announced, some of these policies were outdated. There are regular weekly newsletters and an annual magazine, as well as email communications from the school. Reports are comprehensive and sent out termly, informing parents of their children's progress.

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