



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**HURTWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

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## Hurtwood House School

Full Name of School	<b>Hurtwood House School</b>
DfE Number	<b>936/6564</b>
Address	<b>Hurtwood House School Holmbury St Mary Dorking Surrey RH5 6NU</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01483 279000</b>
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Email Address	<b>info@hurtwood.net</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Cosmo Jackson</b>
Proprietors	<b>Mr Richard Jackson and Mrs Linda Jackson</b>
Age Range	<b>15 to 19</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>336</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (128 boys; 208 girls)</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>33</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>303</b>
	Full: <b>303</b> Weekly: <b>0</b>
Inspection dates	<b>28 Feb 2012 to 02 Mar 2012</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in January 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and disability).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning corporal punishment.

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

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. 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. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in June 2011 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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.

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

**same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietors, and observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period. 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 Colette Culligan	Reporting Inspector
Mr James Burns	Team Inspector (Assistant Head, HMC school)
Mr Neil Mason	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr Richard Robson	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, SHMIS school)
Mr James Sheridan	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Michael Higginbottom	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Jan Scarrow	Team Inspector for Boarding (Head, GSA school)

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

- 1.1 Hurtwood House, founded in 1970 by the father of the present headmaster, is an independent non-denominational school for girls and boys aged 15 to 19. Almost all are boarders and a small number are day students. The school is situated on high ground, close to the border of Surrey and West Sussex. The boarding houses are within a short drive of the main school campus. The school is a limited liability partnership; the founding headmaster remains a member of the senior management team (SMT). There is no governing body.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide an education for sixth-form students that bridges the gap between compulsory schooling and university. Its intention is to create a culture of creativity, originality and professionalism within a caring, structured environment that recognises the uniqueness of each individual. It sets out to expect and encourage students to work hard to achieve their full potential, and to reach the right balance between work and play.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the kitchen and dining room have been upgraded and an extension built that has allowed the creation of film and dance studios. Washroom and changing facilities have been refurbished. The curriculum has been expanded by the introduction of A-level geography and dance. A dance company and an acting academy have been created to cater for especially talented students.
- 1.4 There are currently 336 students enrolled at the school. Just under half of them come from overseas, mostly from non-European countries; more than twenty nationalities are represented in the school. Students come from a range of social backgrounds, although the majority are from professional families. Admission to the school depends upon interview and academic potential rather than prior attainment, although it is expected that applicants will have sufficient ability to benefit from the academic and creative courses the school offers. Inspection evidence suggests that the students are of above average ability. Virtually all students are pursuing A-level studies, although a very small number are engaged in an intensive one-year GCSE course to prepare them for A-level work at the school.
- 1.5 There are 131 students with English as an additional language (EAL). Of these, 79 require support from the school. The school has identified 65 students as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No students have a statement of special educational needs.
- 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 Hurtwood House School provides its students with a broad curriculum that successfully combines creativity with academic rigour. Students are articulate in speech and writing. They manipulate numbers well, use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently as a matter of course, show a high level of understanding of scientific concepts and achieve exceptionally high standards in performing and creative arts. Standards of results in A-level examinations are excellent in comparison with national averages. Students of all abilities make excellent and rapid progress, supported by a rigorous and highly effective system of monitoring. They approach their studies with genuine interest, and are highly motivated and ambitious to succeed, responding well to the good teaching they receive. Their eagerness to learn and to achieve success in their chosen field results in a vibrant, stimulating atmosphere in school and in the boarding houses.
- 2.2 The school provides excellent pastoral care and academic guidance while expecting students to meet its high expectations of behaviour and to take considerable personal responsibility. As a result, students develop into mature, self-confident, interesting and articulate individuals, who behave with cheerful courtesy and respect towards their teachers and peers. They have an excellent aesthetic sense, take care to demonstrate civilised behaviour and are attuned to responsibilities to the world and to others. Students learn to exercise leadership and social responsibility in house committees and school councils, and in organising school activities. Relationships within the school are based on tolerance and mutual respect. The vibrant multi-cultural nature of the school enables students to have an excellent awareness of diverse cultural beliefs, so that they are well prepared for a career in a global workplace.
- 2.3 Governance and leadership of the school are good throughout, with many areas of excellence. The school has addressed the regulatory issues raised at the previous ISI inspection, so that all health and safety requirements are met and policies for child protection are reviewed annually. However, although practice was found to be robust the child protection policy did not include all the required elements. The school quickly acted to address the deficiencies and the policy now fully meets requirements. Most of the recommendations from the previous Ofsted boarding welfare inspection have been addressed, with the exception of concerns over the separation of the sexes in some boarding houses, now being addressed, and issues regarding adequate adult supervision in two houses. Senior leaders provide an excellent sense of educational direction based on a clearly stated philosophy that is understood by staff and students alike. The procedures for monitoring students' work are excellent. Those for monitoring the consistency of teaching are less effective as there is some inconsistency in the standard of teaching. Responses from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed a very high overall rate of satisfaction with the school. They were particularly appreciative of the pastoral care provided in the boarding houses, the range of opportunities available and the treatment of each student as an individual.



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

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

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010 and therefore it is required to:

- improve arrangements to safeguard the welfare of all boarders while accommodated at school, ensuring the required level of adult supervision in all boarding houses whenever boarders are present [Part 3, paragraphs 8.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety, and National Minimum Standard 15.7, under Staffing and supervision].

2.5 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, as described above.

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

2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action point, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure regular and rigorous reviewing of guidance on safeguarding so that school policies always comply with the most current requirements.
2. Ensure that all departmental heads meet the expectations of their responsibility for monitoring standards of teaching in their subject.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the students' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Students are well educated, and the school meets its aim to guide them towards fulfilling their potential. Students display excellent levels of knowledge and understanding across all subjects, demonstrating well-developed skills in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Standards of literacy are high. Written tasks are diligently completed to a good standard, showing efficient skills in note making and presentation. Students listen attentively, reason logically, argue persuasively and are articulate when expressing their views, as seen in sensitive discussions in drama lessons and in a stimulating debate on the nature and purpose of education as explored in literature. Students use ICT with high levels of competence. They demonstrate high standards of numeracy and of scientific knowledge; all students, including those with EAL, manage technical language and terminology with ease.
- 3.3 Students achieve significant success in national competitions, both academic and creative. They recently achieved gold awards in the UK Maths Challenge, and gold and bronze awards in the physics Olympiad. In line with the school's emphasis on the performing and creative arts, students have enjoyed particular success in these areas. Their work was exhibited recently in a London art gallery. Spanish students won a Spanish Embassy national film competition and a group of performing arts students won top awards in a youth film festival. Students have taken roles in professional theatre and television productions, and they are regularly involved in productions at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Students achieve well in debating competitions and in Young Enterprise companies. The majority of students attain places at the institution of their first choice for the next stage of their education.
- 3.4 Students reach high levels of attainment. The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. A-level results have been well above the national average for all maintained schools and above those of maintained selective schools, with more than 90 per cent of grades achieved at A\* to B. The numbers entering for GCSE have been too small to allow for any meaningful statistical analysis, but inspection evidence indicates that such students attain in line with their ability and go on to make excellent progress at A level.
- 3.5 Examination results, lessons observed and work scrutinised in the course of inspection indicate that all students make excellent progress in relation to their varied levels of prior attainment on entering the school. Frequent tests indicate that students with EAL or SEND make equally good progress. Levels of attainment between boys and girls are similar, in contrast to the situation at the time of the previous inspection.
- 3.6 Students almost invariably have a very positive attitude to their learning and are highly motivated. They come to their lessons ready to co-operate and to engage fully in the tasks set. They concentrate on the work and apply themselves well. They are eager to achieve and take great pride in their work. Their committed, confident and co-operative attitude, combined with good behaviour in class, contributes significantly to their high levels of achievement.

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

- 3.7 The overall quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum is highly successful in meeting the school's aim to recognise the uniqueness of each individual and to encourage all to achieve to their full potential. The subjects available cover all the required areas of learning and provide a wide choice for all students, with an especially strong provision for the creative and performing arts. The curriculum is reviewed on a regular basis to reflect the interests of prospective students. A few subjects, such as Russian and Chinese, are offered by arrangement outside the timetable. The timetable is constructed around the students' options, with considerable efforts made to ensure that all can study the subjects of their choice. The students value having daily lessons in each of their chosen subjects.
- 3.9 Students with EAL have separate specialist lessons, ensuring excellent progress in reaching the requirements for university entrance. A small number of students follow a one-year GCSE course as a foundation to their intended A-level studies. The GCSE curriculum is intentionally limited, to enable students to make swift progress in a core of required subjects, supported as necessary by EAL lessons. The school has good systems for identifying and supporting students with SEND. Individual education plans are drawn up and regularly reviewed, which ensures that staff are aware of specific strategies to support the students' progress. Additional teaching on an individual basis is provided by subject teachers where necessary. Students identified as having special talents are very well supported by the provision of academies or companies for film, dance or acting. Academically gifted students are encouraged to take the Extended Project Qualification.
- 3.10 The students benefit from extensive enrichment activities that include numerous trips to nearby venues and some challenging ventures further afield, such as expeditions to Snowdonia and a cross-curricular trip to Cuba. Visits from professionals from the world of theatre or media, some of whom are parents of students, further enhance the students' experiences. Students also benefit from the school's excellent facilities for individual research and study, including a pleasant library.
- 3.11 The students' school life is enhanced by a wide variety of stimulating courses within the extra-curricular activities that complement the main academic curriculum. The school's distinctive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme Enigma, together with its life skills programme, contributes considerably to the students' personal development. Voluntary options range from cookery and meditation to more physical activities such as fitness training and self-defence. Some of these courses, such as Chinese for Beginners, are led by students. The activity programme changes termly and includes a number of community projects. More traditional sporting options such as football, rugby, netball, basketball and hockey are available on site but because space is limited, some other sports such as badminton, squash and swimming are available to students at local off-site sports centres. Attendance at such activities is not compulsory, however. Many students opt to spend their time in private study sessions and do not make the most of the many opportunities on offer. Some students involved in the extensive performing arts programme expressed frustration that their commitment to rehearsals limits their opportunities for involvement in fitness activities, although they accept this as a consequence of their chosen specialism.

- 3.12 An excellent careers department offers informed advice for students on university entrance as well as for those entering the workplace directly. Guidance for those wishing to go on to drama and arts colleges is equally comprehensive.

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

- 3.13 The quality of teaching overall is good.
- 3.14 Teaching in many lessons is good, and together with the monitoring of students' work, is highly effective in promoting their progress. The teaching is firmly based upon an understanding of the individual student's needs. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge, which they use both to explain and to ask questions that stimulate students to deepen their thinking. They know their students well as individuals, and provide additional support for those who need it, giving generously of their free time.
- 3.15 Teaching is generally characterised by clear objectives, well-planned lessons, good use of resources, a lively pace and effective time management. In most lessons teaching is challenging, allowing students to engage in open-ended debate and sophisticated discussion. This enables them to develop their higher-order thinking skills and generates an air of genuine involvement and intellectual excitement. This was observed in discussions on a definition of 'high culture' and on which country has the fairest tax system. In a few cases, closed questioning and excessive domination of lessons by teachers limit active learning and hinder the students' progress. Teachers are often highly skilled in facilitating interesting discussions on a range of international social, political and economic issues, drawing on the diversity of the student body.
- 3.16 Skilled classroom management ensures that all students, including those identified as having SEND or those with EAL, grasp the key principles covered in each teaching session. The most able are challenged in class by skilled questioning, and by a variety of more demanding tasks provided in many subject areas such as mathematics and science. Relationships between teachers and students are excellent, and an atmosphere of mutual respect ensures that students feel confident to explore their subject and to take risks in their thinking. To prepare students for examinations, teachers use past papers effectively in many lessons and refer to useful examination skills. Teaching in most subjects, however, is founded on the notion of inspiring intellectual engagement with the subject. The school has responded well to the recommendation of the previous inspection, so that students are now regularly encouraged to think independently and to read beyond examination specifications. In interviews, the students' lively minded and well-informed approach to each of their subjects was very apparent. Students speak warmly of all the support, help and encouragement they receive. This enables them to achieve highly, and to develop a sense of intellectual curiosity that enhances their enjoyment of their studies as well as their progress.
- 3.17 Marking of work is regular and in some subjects detailed and thorough. Excellent feedback on written assignments is frequently given and greatly appreciated by the students. Assessment systems are thoroughly implemented, with rigorous and precise weekly tracking of each student's progress against examination assessment objectives. This ensures that difficulties are detected early and that good progress is both noted and praised.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

- 4.1 The quality of students' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Students' personal qualities are developed in accordance with the aims of the school, which is non-denominational and does not have daily assemblies. Students are confident and display striking emotional maturity; they are reflective and many show a clear awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses. Their awareness of non-material dimensions of existence is enhanced by their environment, with attractive buildings and grounds that afford scenic views over the countryside. Their awareness of a variety of human potential is further enhanced by their frequent exposure to beauty in music and movement in performances. Students' discussions in many areas of the curriculum, such as those on poetry or photography, further enhance the development of their natural awareness of spirituality.
- 4.3 Students have a clearly developed sense of moral values. They respond positively to the school's ethos of creating as few rules as possible but rigorously enforcing those in place. Students feel that these rules and the school's high expectations of them are reasonable and enable them to develop a good sense of personal responsibility. Students speak with respect of their tutors, who consistently reinforce the significance of moral values in communal life. Their dealings with staff are informal, purposeful and productive, creating a relationship in which they develop clear moral codes. Students are very polite and well aware of behaviour which is and is not acceptable. In discussions, they show a very good ability to reflect on complex ethical issues, as observed when exploring positive and negative influences of British colonial rule in India.
- 4.4 Students respond well to strong encouragement to accept personal responsibility for their behaviour and academic progress. Those who choose to can develop their leadership skills through pursuits such as outdoor education ventures, representing their boarding house in the school council or leading their own Enigma activity. Many students enjoy the opportunities to develop their life skills by taking advantage of the range of activities available to enrich their education. They speak appreciatively of the opportunities to reflect on social issues such as addiction or dangerous driving in sessions led by outside speakers. Some students undertake community service such as environmental work or assisting in charity shops. Their awareness of responsibility to the wider world, and to others who are less fortunate than they are, is encouraged through the school's commitment to supporting charities, including a school in Kenya.
- 4.5 Students develop a very clear understanding of and mature respect for other faiths because of the multi-cultural nature of the school community. Students from different nationalities mix well and they are keen to represent perspectives from their own countries in discussions. They demonstrate a keen awareness of cultural diversity, including the traditions of the Western world, in art, music and theatre studies.
- 4.6 By the time they leave the school, students are exceptionally well prepared for the challenges of careers and lives in an increasingly global society.

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

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The school has a highly effective pastoral structure, based on the boarding houses, which enables the staff to provide excellent support and guidance for all students. The structure supports the school's aims and is committed to the development of the full potential of each individual.
- 4.9 Students appreciate the very high level of care and support they receive throughout their time at the school. They say that staff are extremely approachable and can be contacted should any pastoral issue arise. House staff know their students extremely well and relationships are excellent. House staff work hard to help students to become independent and self-assured. The weekly grading meetings, attended by all key staff, including house staff and school nurses, are effectively used to monitor students' well-being. Academic progress is also reviewed so that any concerns are dealt with swiftly, with a holistic view of each student.
- 4.10 Students are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles through participation in the many sporting and outdoor activities that are on offer. The school canteen provides healthy, nutritious and appetising food that includes fresh fruit and salads, and students are generally positive about its quality.
- 4.11 The school is highly effective in promoting good behaviour; any breach of expectations is dealt with swiftly and appropriately. The school is extremely robust in enforcing its anti-bullying policy. Students are unanimous in saying that there are no bullying issues at the school.
- 4.12 The school has a sound policy to improve educational access for students with SEND.
- 4.13 The school consciously seeks students' opinions, not only through discussions in school and boarding house councils, but also through frequent questionnaires. Students feel that the school listens and responds to their opinions.

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

- 4.14 The quality of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good overall.
- 4.15 Effective policies and procedures for safeguarding students which have regard to official guidance are now in place. Staff throughout the school are aware of their responsibilities in this respect and are appropriately trained. A named individual at senior level has overall responsibility for safeguarding and a named deputy takes on this role in his absence. They receive appropriate, updated training every two years. House staff demonstrate an excellent level of awareness of safeguarding issues and procedures.
- 4.16 Policies and procedures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are excellent. Risk assessments for all aspects of school life are extremely comprehensive. Kitchens are hygienic, numerous first-aid kits are available around the school and each laboratory is fully equipped with all necessary safety documentation and safety devices.

- 4.17 Visits and expeditions are meticulously planned with excellent risk assessments. A comprehensive debrief and review document produced after each trip provides valuable information to minimise risk further.
- 4.18 The medical centre, accessed by some narrow steps, is centrally situated. It is staffed throughout the day by well-qualified individuals who provide a caring environment for those students who are ill or injured. They also maintain a record of first-aid training so that there are always good numbers of first aiders available on site.
- 4.19 The attendance and admission registers are suitably maintained and are available for the previous three years.

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

- 4.20 The overall quality of boarding is good.
- 4.21 Most of the recommendations from the previous Ofsted boarding inspection have been implemented. Concerns over the separation of the sexes in some houses have now begun to be addressed. However, the requirement for at least one adult member of staff sleeping in each boarding house is still not met in the case of two small boarding annexes.
- 4.22 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Their personal development is strongly promoted, and so they show marked levels of confidence and maturity, tolerance, growing responsibility and very positive attitudes to school life. Students interviewed during the inspection spoke of their growing self-confidence, and the assurance of their excellent preparation for life after school. Parents, in their questionnaires, spoke very positively of the benefits of the boarding experience to their children's progress and development. Inspection judgements support these opinions.
- 4.23 In their questionnaires and during the inspection, boarders said how much they enjoy being part of the school and house community. All contribute to the friendly and supportive ethos of their house. Many contribute more widely in the school. Relationships are excellent amongst boarders, and between boarders and staff, particularly house tutors and wardens. Students and adults show mutual respect, and boarders are appreciative of the care and support readily offered by the house staff.
- 4.24 The quality of provision and care in the boarding houses is excellent overall. Boarders are very well cared for, from their initial welcome and careful induction, to the help provided with their applications to universities and higher education arts colleges. They feel safe and very well supported, and they are encouraged to keep fit and healthy. The high quality and variety of food on offer at school are supplemented by facilities in the houses to provide snacks and drinks. The arrangements for dealing with student illness or injuries are appropriate and reassuring, and include all necessary procedures for handling medicines. Boarders say that they are well cared for if they are unwell. Effective means exist for laundry and providing personal and stationery items. All boarders have a lockable safe in their rooms although these are not always used. Some in their response to the questionnaire expressed concern over whether their belongings are safe, related mainly to thefts of cash or items which had not been locked away.
- 4.25 The facilities in the houses are good. Common rooms are equipped with a television, a kitchen area, indoor games facilities and in some cases a fitness room.

The houses stand in large grounds or within the school campus, some with access to a tennis court and basketball court. Health and safety issues are securely managed. Fire drills are carried out regularly and houses are free of potential hazards caused by trailing flexes, as required by the last Ofsted report. The school is in the process of ensuring that all windows on upper storeys are fitted with limiters, as also indicated in the last Ofsted report. Activities are mainly arranged during the school day. At weekends, boarders enjoy a large measure of freedom, and with permission they can go home, visit friends or arrange an outing to London or elsewhere. The house staff help where they can with transport, although students would welcome an evening school bus collection if it were possible. Those remaining at school are able to use many of the school facilities or visit friends in other houses.

- 4.26 The boarding accommodation is comfortable and secure. Boarders are either in single or double study bedrooms, and occasionally share in groups of three. Standards of decoration and cleanliness are good, and the houses are well maintained. Recent refurbishment has centred on improving the washing and toilet facilities, ensuring that provision matches current requirements. Most boarders and parents praise the quality of the accommodation.
- 4.27 Boarders are able to keep in regular contact with their families, subject to local telephone and internet reception. House staff and parents communicate as necessary, often by email, for example to provide weekend leave permission for their children, and a wealth of information is available on the school website. When parents or guardians visit the school, house staff facilitate meetings for them with teachers and tutors.
- 4.28 Arrangements for boarders' welfare and their safeguarding are comprehensive. Good behaviour is strongly encouraged and achieved. There is a useful code of conduct as well as clear guidelines for dealing with bullying should it occur, although this is rare. Students understand the rules and the school's expectations, and readily comply and meet them. They are confident that there will always be someone to turn to in case of need. They are aware of relevant helplines and the name and contact number of the school's independent listener.
- 4.29 The leadership and management of the boarding houses are excellent. Consistency of approach and uniformity of procedures are maintained without compromising the unique identity and flavour of each house. Boarding principles are clearly set out and the boarding provision is at the top of the school's priorities. The provision is reviewed regularly, staff training is encouraged and continual improvement is considered in house staff meetings or by each house team. Boarders are loyal and proud of their houses, which reflects the effective leadership of each house and the quality and commitment of the team of tutors and wardens. The quality of leadership and management is strengthened by the close ties established between boarders and staff, time spent in the house and organisation of the academic tutoring system.



## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The school is governed well by the three partners, without the formal structure of a governing body. Governance and management are very closely intertwined. The founding headmaster and the current headmaster, together with three senior members of staff, form the SMT. The partners are kept well informed of curricular developments, staffing and the day-to-day life of the school through this close contact with senior leaders and with staff, enabling them to discharge their legal responsibilities for oversight of educational issues effectively, although they have not kept up to date with some regulatory matters. Good financial management has allowed for sizeable investment in improved accommodation and the development of new facilities.
- 5.3 In response to the recommendations in the previous report, the partners have now developed a more formalised system for checking compliance with safeguarding regulations and an annual review of safeguarding procedures. The school has relied on briefings from an external company which have not always precisely reflected the latest guidance. School policies and procedures, especially regarding child protection policies and the correct implementation of the National Minimum Standards for boarding, have not kept up with necessary requirements. Child protection policies are now compliant.
- 5.4 Welfare, health and safety procedures are given a very high priority and the partners have ensured that the requirements of the previous inspection have been addressed. The partners are very successful in ensuring that the school provides an environment in which students feel that their physical and mental well-being matters to those in authority.

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

- 5.5 The leadership and management of the school are good.
- 5.6 The members of the senior management team bring a vigorous, wholehearted commitment to supporting the school's special ethos. Excellent senior leadership ensures that the energetic, lively sense of educational direction is responsive to the changing needs and interests of the school's student community. Senior leaders promote the school's clear educational philosophy with dedicated consistency so that it is understood by staff and students. Senior leadership and management are highly successful in meeting the school's aim of creating a culture of creativity, originality and professionalism within a caring, structured environment that recognises the uniqueness of each individual.
- 5.7 Senior leaders have responded positively to most of the recommendations of the previous ISI inspection and the Ofsted boarding welfare inspection. Legally required checks on all new members of staff are carried out in good time and correctly recorded, as required by the last Ofsted report. A consistent, rigorous system for recording references that have been received over the telephone is now in place. Child protection policies are now compliant. Although a process exists for reviewing

these annually, this had not ensured that policies reflect the most recent guidance. This has now been corrected. However, although the school has begun to address concerns raised over the separation of the sexes in some boarding houses, issues remain with regard to adequate adult supervision in some houses. Staff are appropriately trained in child protection. New staff receive training as part of their induction process. The excellent awareness of boarding staff contributes directly to the students' view of the school as a place where they can feel safe and secure without being unnecessarily restricted.

- 5.8 Senior leaders maintain a very effective oversight of the students' academic progress and success by means of weekly staff meetings. High standards are expected and maintained. In SMT meetings a range of matters, including staffing issues, curriculum development and facilities development, are subject to thorough discussion. These, and discussions with heads of department, contribute to a wide-ranging development plan. Discussions between the SMT, house staff and tutors ensure that the appropriateness of the provision and curriculum for the current body of students is regularly evaluated.
- 5.9 Senior leaders are successful in ensuring that the staff recruited are eager to contribute to the school ethos and to help students achieve to the best of their ability. Requests by staff for further training are usually met; there is currently no system of ensuring that training is linked to the school development plan. There is an annual appraisal system for teaching staff, based on self-review and a dialogue with a member of the SMT. Heads of department are not formally included in the appraisal of the staff of their department. While this system encourages close co-operation with the partners, it means that heads of department are not encouraged to be aware of their accountability for ensuring consistently high standards within their department. Occasional classroom observations by departmental heads take place, but not all middle managers are effectively discharging their responsibility for ensuring that variations in the quality of teaching are addressed.
- 5.10 The school has excellent links with parents, carers and guardians. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the majority of parents were very pleased with the quality of education, support and pastoral care provided for their children and with the ease of communication with the school.
- 5.11 The school maintains a constructive relationship with parents. Parents receive regular letters and email from the school. The use of websites for social networking and for video contact support communication links. Parental views are sought by the school through an annual questionnaire. The school has a suitable complaints policy and parents are satisfied that their concerns are dealt with effectively.
- 5.12 Parents are encouraged to be involved in the life of the school and several contribute to the PSHE programme. The school's website provides all necessary information for parents of current and prospective students. The student handbook, also available on the website, contains a useful section for parents.
- 5.13 Highly informative weekly, half-termly and termly reports are sent to parents through the website portal, which is invaluable for the many parents based overseas. A small number of parents felt that they do not receive adequate information on their children's progress, citing a lack of parents' evenings as an example of this. Inspection evidence indicates that the school makes every effort to ensure parents have excellent information on their children's progress. In view of the global nature of the student body, parents' evenings would be of use to a very limited number of

parents. The school encourages parents to be in contact and many accept the ready offer of individual consultations with staff.

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