



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Plymouth College

Full Name of School	Plymouth College
DfE Number	879/6004
Registered Charity Number	1105544
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Head of Senior School	Dr Simon Wormleighton
Head of Preparatory School	Mr Christopher Gatherer
Chair of Governors	Mr Christopher Robinson
Age Range	3 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	770
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (429 boys; 341 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 154 3-5 (EYFS): 74 11-18: 542
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 610
Number of Boarders	Total: 160 Full: 160 Weekly: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Sally Raymond-Jones
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	22 Jan 2013 to 25 Jan 2013

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 November 2007.

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 on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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

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

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

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

inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', '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 governors, 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 John Dunston	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Ann Stranack	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr John Aguilar	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Headmaster, HMC school)
Mr Graham Best	Team Inspector (Head, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Elizabeth Ferrand	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr James Fowler	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mrs Sarah Graham	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Susan Hunter	Team Inspector (Senior Manager, IAPS school)
Mrs Susan Jones	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Geoffrey Link	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Susan Nebesnuick	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Director of Studies, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Sue Bennett	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Plymouth College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from 3 to 18. The school aims to produce happy, knowledgeable and confident young adults; to promote self-discipline, motivation, excellence and consideration for others; and to emphasise the importance of appreciating individual differences. The ethos of the school is intended to enable pupils to become independent and self-sufficient, and to contribute responsibly as members of a global community. The governing structure dates from the merger between Plymouth College and St Dunstan's Abbey School in 2004, following which a new governing board was formed, Plymouth College and St Dunstan's Abbey Schools Trust, which controls the operating company. The preparatory (prep) school is overseen by a discrete sub-committee of the governing board.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1877 as a boys' school near the centre of Plymouth. Since 2004 the prep school has been located on the former St Dunstan's site. Plymouth College was a direct grant grammar school until 1976, when it became fully independent. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprises a Nursery for up to twenty-four children and two Reception classes of twenty-five children in total. Boarding accommodation comprises three houses, of which one is co-educational, for between forty and fifty boarders, and three single-sex houses for between seven and ten pupils, established since the previous inspection. Also since that time, assessment in the prep school has been developed to include individual targets. Information and communication technology (ICT) facilities have been installed in every classroom in the senior school. The senior management teams in both the senior and prep schools have been restructured. The senior school curriculum now includes the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme and a number of subjects at International GCSE (IGCSE). The elite swimming programme has expanded and similar programmes now exist for modern pentathlon and basketball.
- 1.3 The senior school has 542 pupils, 317 boys and 225 girls, of whom 160 are boarders. Around half the boarders are from international backgrounds, and a small number are from families in the forces. In the prep school, there are 228 pupils, including 112 boys and 116 girls. Many pupils join the prep school from local nursery and primary schools.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the prep and senior schools is above the national average overall, although a wide spread of abilities is represented. One hundred pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom nineteen receive specialist learning support. Three pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Eighty-two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom forty-six receive language support.

- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used by the school up to the sixth form and throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school in the sixth form and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Senior School

School	NC name
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school is extremely successful in fulfilling its aim to produce happy and knowledgeable young adults who strive to reach their potential and gain confidence in their learning. Pupils benefit from an extremely broad, balanced and flexible curriculum in both the prep and senior schools, and from an exceptional elite sports programme in the senior school as part of wide-ranging extra-curricular provision. Both examination results and evidence from the inspection indicate that pupils achieve at a high level and make good progress. Pupils' achievements in drama, art, music and national competitions are excellent. Pupils show great commitment to their work, are good listeners and show good levels of scientific skills and creativity. They show fluency in reading and writing. Pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. The quality of teaching is good, with some outstanding features. In both the prep and senior schools and in the EYFS, teaching is stimulating and characterised by enthusiasm and concern for the needs of individual pupils.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent at all stages, in keeping with the aims of the school. Pupils' spiritual awareness is strongly developed and they learn to respect other faiths and beliefs. They show a keen concern for moral issues and are actively involved in projects reflecting their sense of social responsibility. They benefit from the international nature of the school community. Older pupils display a genuine care for the younger ones. The pastoral care from which pupils benefit is excellent and fosters the warm relations that characterise both day and boarding life. Pupils feel safe and always have someone to turn to in case of need. Boarding is a positive and happy experience. The houses themselves are of varying quality, the best providing excellent accommodation. Pupils are overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the school. They enjoy being part of it and feel very well supported by their teachers. They enjoy their studies and their wider involvement in school life. They feel well looked after.
- 2.3 Good governance, leadership and management support the achievement of the pupils and the implementation of appropriate policies, though systems for monitoring their implementation by governors are not consistently robust. The school meets all the statutory requirements for independent and boarding schools, except in relation to the maintenance of the single central register of appointments. All EYFS requirements are met. Lighting in parts of the senior school campus is not adequate. The small prep school senior leadership team has many demanding roles to fill. In response to recommendations from the previous inspection, the school has developed its provision for pupils with particular needs, especially those with EAL and the most able, and increased opportunities for governors' involvement with staff. Since the previous Ofsted and ISI inspections, the school has begun a programme of refurbishment of the boarding houses, expanded the elite athletes' programme, and broadened the range of qualifications available to pupils. Parents are very appreciative of the facilities, the care, and the curriculum and activities provided by the school. The few concerns raised by a small number in response to the pre-inspection questionnaire were not borne out during the inspection, except in respect of the quality of some of the older boarding accommodation.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:
- implement appropriate safeguarding arrangements by recording all recruitment checks on staff in the single central register of appointments [Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), and for the same reason 8.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety, and Part 4, paragraphs 22.(3)(b) and (g), (4), (6) and (7)(a) and (b), under Suitability of staff and proprietors, and National Minimum Standards 11, under Child protection, and 14.1, under Staff recruitment and checks on other adults].
- 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 points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the planned revisions to management arrangements and governors' monitoring enable more effective oversight of regulatory procedures and their implementation.
 2. Improve the lighting in parts of the senior school campus.
 3. Review and clarify senior leadership responsibilities in the prep school.
 4. Ensure that all boarding accommodation is brought up to the standard of the best in order to reduce inconsistent provision.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.

Preparatory school

3.2 The excellent quality of the pupils' achievement supports the school's aim to encourage pupils to develop to their full potential.

3.3 Pupils display strong factual knowledge and are articulate, expressing their ideas confidently, with notable use of sophisticated vocabulary. They are enthusiastic and confident learners, who engage very well in class and clearly enjoy their learning. The presentation of work is of an extremely high standard.

3.4 High standards of attainment are seen throughout the school. Pupils show well-developed mathematical skills and are capable of clear and logical thought. They enjoy reading and make enthusiastic use of the school library. Pupils develop strong investigative skills in science: for example, Year 4 pupils were able accurately to describe how and why to control variables in fair testing exercises. In French and Spanish lessons, pupils speak with confidence and good accents. Pupils use their well-developed ICT skills to support their learning and to disseminate their findings. Their creativity is demonstrated particularly in excellent artwork. Pupils of all ages perform confidently in a range of high quality drama productions. Their singing in chapel is especially enthusiastic.

3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 and 2011. These are the years in which pupils have been entered for national tests in English at the age of 11. Results have been good in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools, showing improvement in 2011 from 2010, when almost half the pupils achieved Level 5 or higher. These results, interpreted in the light of standardised data that is available, together with evidence from lessons observed across the curriculum during the inspection, indicate that pupils are making good and often excellent progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. This applies equally to boys and girls, and includes pupils with SEND or EAL as a result of an increased focus on specialist literacy support and the setting of specific targets.

3.6 Over half the pupils move on to the senior school, many with academic awards, including scholarships gained in sport, drama, music and dance; others take up places in local grammar schools. Pupils' achievement in sporting activities is also high. School teams compete successfully in a range of sporting and other activities, especially swimming and hockey, but including also fencing, cross country, athletics and street dance. Pupils regularly achieve success in ballet, music, and speech and drama examinations.

3.7 In the EYFS, children of all abilities make excellent progress overall in relation to their individual starting points. They make choices confidently and are highly enthusiastic, motivated and independent learners, who enjoy their time in school. Excellent opportunities are provided for children to become investigative learners as they use information books to find out about dinosaurs and enjoy sensory exploration with the noodle tray. Children are highly articulate, using complex vocabulary, such as 'astronomical' to describe the size of a dinosaur. Children in the

Nursery recognise initial sounds. They sequence numbers to five and use comparative mathematical language correctly in their play. Reception children write simple sentences independently and have an excellent understanding of numeric place value.

Senior school

- 3.8 The excellent quality of pupils' achievements supports the school's aim to produce happy, knowledgeable young adults who strive to reach their potential and gain confidence in their learning.
- 3.9 Pupils demonstrate high levels of skill, knowledge and understanding across the curriculum and outstanding achievements in some extra-curricular activities, most notably in sport where they have secured Olympic success in swimming and reached highly competitive levels of achievement in other areas.
- 3.10 Genuine commitment to high achievement by pupils is seen in the approach to their academic work. They show fluency in reading and writing from Year 7 onwards which leads to stimulating empathic responses in work in English. Pupils spoke confidently in class in a Year 8 history debate on sources relating to Elizabeth I, and in presentations by those from overseas as part of their IB course. They listen sensitively to each other and to teachers, and respond appropriately. Pupils have very good levels of scientific skills and are encouraged to incorporate mathematical applications within their work, as seen in the use of logarithms to solve business problems and in graphical work in science. The good level of provision for ICT throughout the school is not consistently reflected in pupils' work. A significant level of creativity is evident, especially in art and drama. Examples were seen of pupils thinking independently, for example when older pupils discussed communism in history lessons or during role play in a religious studies class. Younger pupils had less opportunity for such independence.
- 3.11 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The school's GCSE results have been above the national average for maintained schools. Forty per cent of the grades achieved were A* or A, the proportion of girls achieving those grades being slightly higher than that of boys. At IGCSE, results in mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics are above the worldwide average, while results in first language English and ICT are similar to the worldwide average, and results in English literature are below. In 2011, over half the grades achieved in biology and mathematics and approximately a quarter of the grades achieved in English were A* or A. At A level, results have been above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Around two-thirds of all grades were A* to B. Results in the IB in 2011, the first year in which pupils were entered, were well above the worldwide average and similar to the UK average, where the benchmark is higher. The total points average for pupils in that year was 34.3. Examination results, interpreted in the light of both the nationally standardised progress data that is available, and evidence from lessons observed during the inspection indicate that pupils make good progress in relation to their ability. Pupils with SEND or with EAL were also seen to make good progress in relation to their ability, benefiting from the additional specialist support they receive that enables them to respond well to the challenges set for all pupils.
- 3.12 The level of achievement reached in extra-curricular activities is excellent. Outstanding amongst these are pupils' swimming and diving achievements, which

brought international success, including two medals, at the 2012 Olympic Games. All pupils have the opportunity to develop through physical activity and several have been members of national teams in fencing, rugby and modern pentathlon. Many pupils participate in a wide range of outward-bound activities. Forty-six pupils have recently gained The Duke of Edinburgh's Award at gold level and many have been successful in local Ten Tors expeditions. There have been outstanding performances in the national Young Enterprise competition, the national Student Investor Challenge and a national business management competition. Pupils are members of the National Youth Theatre and National Youth Choir, whilst others have won Salters' chemistry awards. Pupils regularly achieve success in ballet, music, and speech and drama examinations.

- 3.13 Almost all pupils proceed to universities in the United Kingdom or overseas, a significant number making constructive use of a Gap Year in advance.
- 3.14 Pupils bring a positive approach to their activities and to all aspects of their work. They are highly supportive of the school and appreciate the opportunities it gives them to achieve at a high level in an extremely wide range of activities. They work enthusiastically in lessons, both as individuals and in groups. They communicate effectively, expressing their own opinions and listening attentively to those of others. Pupils often show considerable enjoyment during lessons, reflected in their willingness to participate and to co-operate with each other.

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

- 3.15 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

Preparatory school

- 3.16 The high standard of provision contributes significantly to the school's aim of educating pupils to achieve their full potential. The excellent curriculum provides a wide range of experiences for pupils; it includes two modern foreign languages, creative arts, drama, music and sporting subjects in addition to the requisite areas of learning. The introduction of a new mathematics scheme, alongside initiatives to support the teaching of phonics, has strengthened provision developing numeracy and literacy skills; these are, in turn, used well to support learning across the curriculum. The introduction of the Year 6 Baccalaureate has enabled the school to celebrate pupils' achievement in all subjects. Cross-curricular links are strongly reinforced, helping pupils to think imaginatively and develop an active sense of enquiry. For example, Year 4 pupils learning about changes of state in science easily made the link with their work on volcanic rocks in geography, and a Year 2 project on houses and homes successfully linked learning in literacy, history, geography and science. The recent introduction of food technology has been popular. Excellent support is provided for pupils with SEND or EAL, which allows them full access to the curriculum. Additional challenges in many lessons extend the most able pupils. Information and communication technology is used extensively to support learning in all subjects, providing pupils with opportunities for individual research. The curriculum is enhanced by high quality displays around the school.
- 3.17 The academic curriculum is well supported by an extremely wide range of extra-curricular activities. Creative activities include sugar craft, in which pupils displayed high levels of manual dexterity when making sugar flowers, a military modelling activity and a very popular gardening club. Sporting activities, which are open to all pupils regardless of ability, include fencing, gymnastics and rugby. Opportunities in

performing arts include drama, orchestra and ballet. Pupils prepare for London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art speech and drama examinations.

- 3.18 The EYFS setting makes excellent provision in meeting the needs of the range of children across all seven areas of learning. Children's individual needs are extremely well supported through learning experiences carefully matched to their needs. All children, including those with SEND, are extremely happy and settled within the setting and make substantial progress in their learning, from their individual starting points.

Senior school

- 3.19 The senior school curriculum is extremely broad, balanced and flexible, and often tailored to individual pupils' needs. The curriculum provides effectively for all areas of learning and contributes significantly to pupils' achievements. The excellent provision meets well the school's aim of educating pupils to achieve their full potential.
- 3.20 Throughout the school, pupils have opportunities to develop an extensive range of skills. All pupils study biology, physics and chemistry as separate subjects in Years 7 to 9. Four modern foreign languages are offered, including Mandarin Chinese, as well as Latin and classical civilisation. There is very good provision for fostering pupils' aesthetic and creative development through music, art and drama. Pupils' choices of option subjects are carefully guided at each stage. The school has successfully introduced the IGCSE in several subjects for more able pupils. Where necessary, pupils receive additional support in English and mathematics from Year 8, and GCSE support clinics are offered to all pupils. In the sixth form, pupils are able to choose from a wide range of subjects at both AS and A level. There is also the opportunity to study for the IB Diploma and the BTEC in sports and outdoor activities. More able sixth formers are offered the opportunity of studying for the Extended Project Qualification, providing an increased depth of knowledge in a specific area. Sixth formers receive interview practice and comprehensive advice on university entrance. Pupils' personal development is enhanced by a wide-ranging personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that includes careers education. Specialist support is available for pupils with SEND or EAL and has been strengthened since the previous inspection. All teaching staff are made aware of the individual needs of each pupil. Pupils with EAL also benefit from a rigorous induction procedure.
- 3.21 The extra-curricular programme is excellent, with some outstanding features. The school encourages all pupils to take part in an exceptionally wide selection of activities, which includes the elite sports programme of diving, swimming, modern pentathlon and basketball. Pupils on the programme, who come from several countries, have the opportunity to participate at the highest level. They receive specialist coaching, physiotherapy care and nutritional guidance. The outdoor pursuits programme, incorporating kayaking, sailing, scuba diving, mountain biking, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the Ten Tors challenge, is popular and demanding. Pupils take advantage of the school's close links with the local community, which include joint activities with maintained schools and with universities. Pupils raise considerable sums each year through the school's charitable fund raising.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

3.22 The contribution of teaching is good.

Preparatory school

3.23 Excellent teaching supports the development of confident, independent learners and effectively prepares pupils at each level for the move to the next stage in their education. It supports the school's aim to produce knowledgeable young adults with confidence in learning.

3.24 Pupils are given a high level of individual attention and benefit from the positive and encouraging environment. Planning in most lessons is excellent, promoting pupils' learning through a structured approach supported by well-prepared resources. The majority of teaching demonstrates excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm, encouraging pupils to develop a love of learning. In many lessons pupils are challenged to think independently through skilful questions, and to participate in discussions confidently. The use of ICT enhances pupils' learning and many examples of good practice were observed. Interactive whiteboards are installed in most teaching rooms and where these are fully exploited, they greatly enhance the quality of pupils' learning.

3.25 In many lessons, effective use is made of adapted material both to support less able pupils and to provide appropriate challenges for the most able. Support for pupils with SEND or EAL is clearly and effectively targeted. They are well supported by specialist teachers. Subject and class teachers are provided with detailed guidance for the support of individual pupils in the classroom.

3.26 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and now offers greater opportunity for independent thinking and investigative research.

3.27 The marking of pupils' books is thorough and often provides excellent and constructive feedback to pupils. The collection and use of assessment data have greatly improved since the previous inspection. Careful analysis of standardised testing results and the results of regular classroom tests are used effectively by teachers to inform planning. Teachers make effective use of target setting and in the best examples, where pupils fully understand their targets, this has a significant effect on motivation and progress. The pupils' excellent behaviour in lessons is supported by a combination of imaginative teaching and the dedicated attention paid to individuals.

3.28 The staff in the EYFS demonstrate a highly knowledgeable understanding of how young children learn. They enthusiastically plan a vibrant breadth of curriculum experiences that provide an excellent balance of adult-directed and child-initiated activities for both the indoor and outdoor environments. These opportunities excite and motivate children to learn, effectively challenging their critical thinking development. Careful processes of observational assessment and profiling track children's progress and achievements, helping staff to plan the next steps in their learning. Resources are plentiful and well organised, enabling children to explore and become independent learners. These skills prepare them extremely well for their educational transitions.

Senior school

- 3.29 Teaching, which is good overall and often excellent, effectively promotes pupils' learning, and accords with the aim of the school to produce knowledgeable young adults with confidence in learning. Most lessons are well planned and delivered at a good pace. Teaching often strongly stimulates pupils' interest. The creation of the new teaching and learning community for the sharing of best practice demonstrates the commitment of staff to self-reflection and constant improvement.
- 3.30 Teaching shows a high level of subject knowledge and expertise. Great enthusiasm and energy were shown, for example in a Year 10 art lesson in which pupils were inspired to produce creative work of a high standard. The friendly and courteous relationships between pupils and staff promote an encouraging atmosphere for learning. Most teaching is characterised by concern, kindness and professional care for each pupil. Teaching helps pupils to organise their work well. A particularly good example of this was seen in the biology department resource booklets in which pupils wrote responses and annotated diagrams.
- 3.31 In the most successful lessons, a stimulating range of activities and a wide variety of approaches and teaching materials are used. Effective lessons observed began with challenging or engaging activities, for example use of a Dutch poem at the start of an English lesson, or the awarding of a brightly coloured hat for correct answers in religious studies. Practical activities which stimulated pupils' interest included an interactive demonstration of enzyme tests on sandwiches in biology, and the building and testing of wind turbines using hair dryers in physics. At times, worksheets are overused. More able pupils receive extension tasks, notably in history and modern foreign languages. Teaching is successful in fostering interest and independence, and is often specifically aimed at providing appropriate support for pupils with SEND or EAL, for which additional guidance is provided by a specialist department. Teaching meets the needs of pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- 3.32 The assessment of pupils' work is generally thorough and detailed, though occasionally superficial. Supportive marking and constructive comments enable pupils to improve the level of their work. Grading systems are not always understood by all pupils, though the recent introduction of a learning grade to replace effort grades has helped to motivate them further. Nationally standardised test results are combined with teachers' understanding of pupils' ability to enable challenging but motivating targets to be set. This information is also used to monitor and track performance in all year groups. Teachers are now able to judge pupils' performance more accurately in relation to their ability, and tutors work effectively with pupils to help them improve.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.

Preparatory school

4.2 Provision fully supports the school's aim of encouraging pupils to respect themselves and one another, and to appreciate individual difference. Pupils have excellent standards of personal development by the time they leave the prep school.

4.3 Pupils show excellent spiritual development. One pupil described the school as a joyful place. Chapel plays a central role in the life of the school. Pupils benefit from occasions such as Remembrance Day and harvest festival. Strong links with a church enhance pupils' spiritual experience through the annual carol service or the weekly assembly taken by the church youth team. Pupils are proud of their achievements and exhibit a high level of self-esteem. All pupils have a piece of artwork framed, which promotes confidence, as does the Year 6 Baccalaureate, which encourages all pupils to feel a sense of achievement. Pupils are respectful in their dealings with adults.

4.4 Extremely high levels of moral understanding are evident and pupils show a well-developed sense of right and wrong. The weekly community awards reflect the importance the school attaches to appropriate behaviour, keenly adopted by the pupils. Pupils enjoy competing for stickers, house points and the coveted house cup.

4.5 Pupils develop excellent social skills. The house system allows pupils of different ages to bond in competitions of varying kinds. Pupils in Year 6 become prefects and take on responsibilities, such as supervising younger children in the Friday assembly. Infants also help those younger than themselves. Pupils keenly organise cake sales and charity days to support local projects. Pupils in a Year 5 presentation in chapel showed a good grasp of the principles behind human rights. Classes visit the local council chamber and learn of the work of local services through visits to the school by firemen and the police.

4.6 Pupils show excellent cultural awareness and are notably tolerant of those from other backgrounds. Aspects of both French and Spanish cultures are introduced in lessons alongside the language. Diwali and Chinese New Year are celebrated and Year 6 pupils showed an extensive knowledge of Hinduism. There is an annual trip to France for the older pupils, and each year a teacher visits from a school in Ghana. Some pupils in Year 2 are learning English country dances.

4.7 Children's personal development is particularly well supported in the EYFS through the clear behavioural guidance that staff provide. Their self-esteem is nurtured through positive praise strategies, such as stickers and community awards, preparing them exceptionally well for future life challenges.

4.8 The children's personal and emotional development is excellent. Children of all ages interact with their peers very well. They share toys, take turns when playing games, help their friends, for example to fasten clothing, and understand activity instructions. By the end of the EYFS, children are confident and self-aware individuals, who have positive attitudes to learning and social relationships within school.

Senior school

- 4.9 The school successfully achieves its aim of developing pupils' self-discipline, self-respect and consideration for others. Pupils are aware of moral issues and of the responsibilities to face in and beyond school. Their exceptionally high standard of behaviour and commitment both reflect and strengthen the strong sense of community.
- 4.10 Pupils' spiritual awareness is strongly developed. They take responsibility for their actions and embrace the challenges they face with determination and good humour. They study major world religions and learn to respect other faiths and beliefs, drawing in particular on the international nature of the school. They appreciate non-material aspects of life through literature and music, as well as in art: in an A-level class, photographic images were superimposed to demonstrate the beauty of nature.
- 4.11 Pupils show a keen moral awareness. They are polite and have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, appreciating the need for rules and a code of conduct in the running of the school. Moral issues, such as racism, are tackled in tutorials and lessons. Sixth formers visiting Auschwitz gave a subsequent presentation to the rest of the sixth form in order to share the lessons learned.
- 4.12 Pupils' social development is excellent. They undertake a wide variety of leadership and other roles of responsibility, for example as school prefects or within the Combined Cadet Force, and pupils also volunteer as 'buddies' to help new pupils to settle in. The school council provides a forum where pupils' ideas and opinions are taken seriously, and through which change has been effected, for example in respect of uniform and the tuck shop. Pupils' own initiatives illustrate their sense of social responsibility and care for the environment. Examples of these include the Gutter Grow plant watering project, the Young Enterprise bird feeder and the *Rail Trails* publications. Pupils are well aware of the needs of others in and beyond the school. They show initiative in their charitable work for local and international causes, for example a project supporting children in Malawi.
- 4.13 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. Their awareness is successfully developed through lessons, educational visits and house or school assemblies. Pupils benefit from the international nature of the school and celebrate other cultures through talks and festivals.
- 4.14 Pupils are mature and articulate, proud of their school and eager to benefit from the many opportunities available to them. The self-confidence and self-awareness they develop while at the school prepare them well for the next stage of their lives.

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

4.15 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent

Preparatory school

4.16 The quality of pastoral care fully supports the aims of the school. The prep school creates a strong sense of community. Relations between pupils and teachers are excellent, and an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect is always evident. Pupils are supportive of one another, taking obvious pleasure in the successes of their peers. The house system fosters a sense of team spirit and identity. Pupils throughout the school feel safe and confirm that they have many adults to whom they can turn for help. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents described the pastoral care as excellent, indicating that both teaching and non-teaching staff know their children well and that the school provides their children with a safe and friendly environment.

4.17 Food at lunchtime is plentiful and nutritious, and takes account of pupils' dietary needs. The lunchtime staff know the pupils by name and encourage them to eat well. Pupils feel that they are given advice on healthy eating. Throughout the school, exercise is encouraged through physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities.

4.18 Pupils are encouraged to behave well at all times and have a copy of the school rules in their planners. Rewards and sanctions are in place to reinforce the high expectations of behaviour and are seen as fair by the pupils.

4.19 The care of pupils with SEND is supported sensitively by teaching staff, either in a class setting or with one-to-one assistance. Pupils are also very supportive of their peers with SEND and willingly help them.

4.20 The school provides good opportunities for pupils' views to be heard. The school council has been successful in launching several pupil-led initiatives, such as new after-school clubs for the infants.

4.21 The provision for children's well-being in the EYFS is excellent. Relationships at all levels are strongly nurtured within the setting; the effectiveness of the key person system enables children to form secure emotional bonds with the staff. Staff model positive interaction through their exemplary teamwork. Children mirror this as they play co-operatively together, helping their friends to complete puzzles and make models. During activities, children talk confidently about their interests and contribute their ideas. For example, those in the Nursery use imaginative skills exceptionally well when they go on a 'magic carpet ride'.

4.22 In the EYFS, a strong emphasis is placed on promoting children's health, such as encouraging parents to provide healthy snacks. Children understand the importance of personal hygiene routines, such as washing hands before eating. Children have excellent opportunities to enjoy daily fresh air and exercise, which make a considerable contribution to their well-being.

Senior school

- 4.23 The school community is happy and caring, as shown in the extremely positive relationships between pupils and staff and amongst the pupils themselves. The pastoral care provided is in line with the aims of the school.
- 4.24 Pupils feel that they can easily discuss a concern with a member of the pastoral staff. Day and boarding pupils are well integrated, as are the elite athletes, and the school community shows genuine respect for all, including all pupils with SEND or EAL, celebrating their achievements at every level. House assemblies provide an excellent opportunity for staff and pupils to work together as equals, experienced for instance at an uplifting occasion marking Burns Night.
- 4.25 All pupils are encouraged through the PSHE programme to be healthy by taking regular exercise and through sensible diet. Specialist individual health programmes are designed for the elite athletes. A programme of visiting speakers emphasises the importance placed by the school on healthy living. Tutor periods are a valuable opportunity for the discussion of pastoral issues of concern to pupils.
- 4.26 A range of measures is in place to encourage good behaviour. Pupils respond positively to these, as seen in their treatment of each other around the school. Anti-bullying measures are complemented by the PSHE and tutorial programmes; pupils have ready access to help from outside sources, the trained listener and the nurse. Bullying is felt by pupils to be very rare but dealt with effectively should it ever arise. Pupils speak well of the new 'merit e-praise' system, which offers imaginative rewards for positive behaviour.
- 4.27 Pupils are able to express their views through the school council. Minutes of its meetings are published and action is taken as appropriate. Issues are also raised by pupils in carefully structured and effective tutor periods.
- 4.28 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.29 Since the previous inspection, a more widely understood behaviour management system and more efficient recording systems have been introduced. Restorative justice now plays a significant part in the successful resolution of behaviour issues.

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

- 4.30 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.31 All necessary measures are in place to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. These are reviewed regularly and incorporate informed input from staff. Pupils are aware of what to do in an emergency and where to assemble in case of fire. There are regular fire drills and clear records are kept. Certain areas of the school site, especially outdoor passageways, are inadequately lit. Comprehensive risk assessments are undertaken for all off-site trips and activities. A health and safety committee, which includes a representative of the governors, meets regularly.
- 4.32 Arrangements for first aid and to ensure the pupils' health are good. Pupils who are ill or injured receive excellent care in the dedicated health centre in the senior school, which provides a warm welcome and appropriate care or a chance to rest, especially after particularly demanding sporting activities. The sick bay in the prep school reception area is carefully monitored; members of staff receive training in first

aid and the school nurse is available when required. A Year 5 science lesson showed excellent attention to pupil safety. Medication in both the prep and senior schools is kept suitably secured and detailed records are maintained.

- 4.33 Appropriate safeguarding measures are in place and implemented with care and rigour, with the exception of the maintenance of the single central register of appointments. All staff receive regular training in child protection and new staff benefit from thorough induction. Pupils themselves are regularly reminded of the need to be vigilant and to support each other. A safeguarding committee of senior pastoral staff meets regularly to review all concerns relating to the welfare of pupils and to agree action in their support. The site is a safe environment that contributes to the general well-being of the pupils.
- 4.34 The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years. Registration of pupils is undertaken in an orderly and efficient manner and any absences are followed up quickly. In the senior school, registration is carried out electronically, with effective back-up measures when needed.
- 4.35 Staff in the EYFS promote children's developing awareness of safety particularly well, for example by signifying the importance of holding handrails when descending stairs and following walkways when moving around the school campus.
- 4.36 A comprehensive programme of safeguarding training ensures that EYFS staff have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities. Children are well supervised by highly qualified and experienced staff. Risk assessments, including those for off-site visits, are comprehensive and any concerns quickly addressed. Fire practices take place regularly and children have a clear understanding of emergency evacuation procedures. Effective vetting checks are in place for new staff joining the setting. The setting implements a range of high quality policies and procedures, which assure a safe, welcoming and stimulating environment for children to enjoy. Staff prioritise children's safeguarding and welfare needs and in turn, children readily trust in the support of the adults who care for them.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.37 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.38 In accordance with the aims of the school, boarders' personal development is promoted by their boarding experience. As they move through the school, boarders show increasing confidence as they are challenged to achieve the highest standards in all areas of their school life, supported by decisive leadership and dedicated house staff.
- 4.39 Boarders were universally positive about their boarding experience. Elite athletes have demanding training commitments and most live in discrete accommodation on the prep school site run by staff who understand their particular needs. They are made to feel fully part of the school community. Other boarders see the dedication that elite athletes bring to all aspects of their life and this helps to underline the benefits of a disciplined lifestyle. The boarding community is drawn from a wide range of international backgrounds. This encourages pupils to understand and value different cultures.
- 4.40 Boarders make a positive contribution to ensure that the houses are well run and orderly. Prefects are suitably trained and mentored, and gain valuable leadership

experience. They are aware of the need to support pupils and to ensure that staff are aware of any who might need help. Pupils become increasingly self-reliant. The positive ethos embraced by all those involved with boarding means that excellent relationships between staff and pupils are a central pillar of boarding. Staff provide positive role models for boarders, ensuring that harmonious and tolerant relationships exist amongst all those involved in boarding.

- 4.41 Boarders receive detailed induction, with advice about what to expect on arrival at the school. This induction continues once they have arrived. All boarders have a mentor to help them to settle in. They also have a range of staff to turn to if they need to discuss any issue. A trained listener is also available. The health centre is friendly and welcoming, and its work is supported by appropriate policies. House matrons add a further tier of care within the houses. The boarding houses meet all health and safety and fire regulations. Fire practices are held regularly in all houses. Fire routines are known by staff and pupils, and appropriate records are kept.
- 4.42 Excellent sporting facilities and access to a local leisure centre ensure that boarders enjoy many opportunities to keep fit and healthy. A well-planned programme of events during the evenings and at weekends enables boarders to enjoy positive recreation time. Boarders also have the opportunity to enjoy unstructured free time.
- 4.43 Boarding accommodation is good overall but with a very wide range of quality. Implementation of a development plan has begun to improve facilities for all boarders but progress has been slow, resulting in significant differences in the level of provision within and between boarding houses. A small number of parents commented in response to the questionnaire on the poor condition of some accommodation and the inspection judgement confirms this view.
- 4.44 Contact with parents is maintained through various means. Staff are sympathetic to boarders whose parents live in different time zones and try to ensure that boarders can easily keep in touch with their families. House staff are in regular contact with parents, a fact commented on positively by parents in response to the questionnaire.
- 4.45 Particular care is taken to ensure that bullying is kept to a minimum and pupils confirmed the effectiveness of staff in this regard. There are always sufficient numbers of qualified staff on duty and senior staff are available if needed. Many staff who live on site are present in the boarding houses in the evenings. This adds greatly to the social and academic support available and strengthens the friendly and purposeful atmosphere in the houses.
- 4.46 Boarding priorities are clear. The dedicated team of house parents and resident tutors is led effectively by well-qualified and experienced senior staff. The reflective practices of the team ensure that staff are constantly seeking ways to improve the boarding experience and that change is considered as positive.
- 4.47 Pupil questionnaire responses were positive except in relation to food. Inspectors discussed this with boarders and sampled several meals. Meals were found to be nutritious, varied and appetising.
- 4.48 There were no recommendations from the previous Ofsted boarding inspection.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governance strongly supports the aims and vision of the school. The members of the governing body bring a range of experience to reflect its responsibilities, and contribute effectively to the work of its five main sub-committees, including the recently established foundation and estates committees. New governors receive induction training provided by the school, and further training takes place for all governors annually. Governors take a keen interest in the work of both the senior and the prep schools, the latter benefiting especially and directly from the support of a discrete sub-committee.
- 5.3 Individual governors take on responsibility for particular aspects of the school's work, including boarding, health and safety, safeguarding and welfare, although the effectiveness of governors' monitoring and oversight is inconsistent. Governors have a keen insight into the working of the school, and their understanding is enhanced by regular visits to academic departments by the education committee and to boarding houses by individual governors. Board meetings are held termly. Detailed minutes reflect the wide range of strategic and educational issues on which governors receive regular reports. Governors' oversight of the finances of the senior and prep schools has enabled recent improvements to academic and boarding facilities.
- 5.4 The governors' prep school sub-committee gives valuable advice and encouragement to senior staff in the prep school. Governors are felt to be approachable and supportive. Presentations by both prep and senior school staff are made to governors' meetings. Governors' involvement with staff has increased since the previous inspection.
- 5.5 As part of their annual review of safeguarding, governors receive a detailed report and presentation from the school on all matters relating to child protection, and discuss this in detail. Insufficient attention has been paid to monitoring of the recording of recruitment checks.
- 5.6 The EYFS setting is well supported by governance overall, particularly following the recent appointment of a governor with specific responsibility for this section of the school.

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

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

Preparatory school

- 5.8 Effective leadership and management ensure that daily routines run smoothly. In line with the school's aims, the leadership and management maintain a friendly and caring environment where pupils develop confidence and tolerance. Job descriptions are regularly reviewed. The members of the small senior leadership team take on a wide variety of roles and reporting lines are not always clear to other staff. Appropriate policies for the safeguarding of pupils are in place, fully understood by all staff, and mostly implemented, although recruitment checks on some staff have not been rigorously recorded on the single central register of appointments.
- 5.9 The excellent educational standards achieved by the pupils and their outstanding level of personal development are the result of the clear educational direction provided by the leadership of the school. Results in standardised tests are carefully analysed and plans adjusted to guide the staff as they encourage all pupils to realise their full potential.
- 5.10 Staff receive regular and effective appraisal and have many professional development opportunities. All members of the school community contribute to the development of the school improvement plan. This is regularly reviewed and monitored. Subject co-ordinators have responsibility for budget control and curriculum development. Staff receive specialist support and training in ICT. These developments, and the establishment of a new post with responsibility for the curriculum, have been implemented since the previous inspection. There is excellent liaison between the co-ordinators for infant and junior pupils. This helps to provide a smooth transition for the pupils, which is further reflected in links that exist in some subjects with the senior school.
- 5.11 Suitable arrangements are in place for the recruitment of high quality teaching and support staff. They frequently take part in training to ensure that they are able to meet the needs of all the pupils, especially for their safeguarding, welfare, health and safety.
- 5.12 Parents are very satisfied with the broad curriculum and caring support provided for their children. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, they also commented positively on the timely responses received to queries and concerns.
- 5.13 Parents are very familiar with the welcoming reception staff. A television screen by the front door displays the news for the day, celebrates pupils' birthdays and announces events in which parents can be involved. The weekly newsletters inform parents of all that is going on in the school, the visits, the visitors and the achievements of their children; in addition, parents receive all the information the school is required to supply. The parents' association provides effective support, enabling parents to be fully involved in the school.
- 5.14 Comprehensive reports are sent to parents twice a year. They are clear and helpful, detailing work covered and achievements reached, and setting targets for each subject, enabling parents to support their children's learning at home. Parents have

opportunities to make comments on their children's work and progress as they sign the planners each week.

- 5.15 The leadership and management of the EYFS are excellent. The educational programmes are regularly monitored by the head of the infant section, who has a thorough understanding of the statutory learning and development requirements. Resources are of high quality and effectively support children's needs. Highly experienced and knowledgeable staff plan vibrant learning experiences for children. Robust policies and procedures, together with regular staff training, ensure that the highest priority is given to safeguarding children and ensuring their welfare. Additionally, the setting's ethos strongly promotes inclusivity, ensuring that children's individual needs are extremely well supported, and that they are treated equally and without discrimination. Highly effective processes of self-evaluation support the continuous improvement of the setting. Regular EYFS staff meetings review the provision and identify clear targets for development, clearly signifying the setting's ambitious vision. Parents have excellent opportunities to contribute their views on the provision, further supporting the setting's development, as a result of which the environment of the setting is welcoming, safe and stimulating.
- 5.16 Staff in the EYFS have established exceptionally strong links with parents. Taster sessions and informal meetings between key staff and parents help new children to settle quickly. The setting's 'open door' policy is highly valued by parents, who receive excellent information about their children's progress and have a wealth of opportunities to contribute towards learning and development portfolios, such as recording children's home achievements on 'wow' vouchers. During interviews and in their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, parents overwhelmingly expressed their high satisfaction with the quality of care that staff provide and comment that children are happy and settled within the setting's safe and secure environment.
- 5.17 The EYFS setting has comprehensive self-evaluation systems in place to support its ambitious vision and continuous improvement, and to identify clear priorities for future development, to which all staff members contribute. Senior managers monitor, appraise and support staff effectively, and this, together with opportunities to attend relevant training courses, ensures their continuing professional development. They constantly monitor the setting's educational programmes.
- 5.18 Partnerships between parents and staff to support children's developmental needs are particularly strong in the EYFS. Outside agencies are involved to support children's learning if the need arises. The setting also receives highly beneficial levels of support from the local authority for training updates and practice guidance.
- 5.19 Since the previous inspection, considerable improvements have been made to the provision, such as greater cohesion between the EYFS classes, improvements to assessment and tracking systems, and the introduction of a new literacy scheme. These measures clearly demonstrate the setting's strong commitment to continuous improvement of outcomes for children.

Senior school

- 5.20 At all levels, the aims of the school are strongly promoted. The success of leadership and management is clearly reflected in the pupils' academic and other achievements. The excellent arrangements for pastoral care ensure that the school's aims for the personal development of pupils are achieved.
- 5.21 Members of the senior management team provide clear and effective educational direction. Regular meetings take place involving the senior management team and the smaller leadership and strategy group, who generate and discuss ideas in accordance with the school's development plan. Regular monitoring ensures the implementation of policies across the school; there are close co-operation and communication between senior management and the management of boarding.
- 5.22 Middle leadership and management are a strength of the school. Heads of department value the work and support of the senior management team and contribute to the school development plan. Comprehensive academic and pastoral appraisal processes are effectively managed. Lesson observation and the sharing of good practice take place on a regular basis. There are many opportunities for self-evaluation by staff and departments, which contribute to whole-school self-evaluation. Departments carry out detailed analysis of results. The management of boarding is excellent.
- 5.23 Many opportunities for training and professional development are provided for all staff. Members of the senior management team are aware of and responsive to the needs of staff. Staff receive regular training in child protection, welfare, health and safety. The school is very successful in making strong appointments of both teaching and support staff.
- 5.24 Current lines of reporting and allocation of responsibilities within the senior management team do not at present enable clear oversight and monitoring of the staff recruitment records, which are held in several different locations. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place for the recruitment of staff. However, the single central register of appointments has not been consistently maintained. The school is aware of this and has taken immediate steps to ensure that all the necessary checks are recorded in the future.
- 5.25 There are good links with parents, many of whom speak warmly of the school's caring ethos. Responses to the parents' questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive. Parents are very satisfied with the education and support provided for their children and with the quality of communication they receive from the school, including all the required information. A small number of parents expressed concerns over perceived cases of bullying. No evidence was found during the inspection to support this, and pupils themselves gave a very different and strongly positive impression. The small number of documented cases had been appropriately dealt with.
- 5.26 Complaints are handled sensitively and in accordance with the school's policy. Detailed records are kept.
- 5.27 Parents receive full and constructive guidance every term in written reports about their children's work and progress, supplemented by interim grades and comments from tutors and heads of year. Regular meetings for parents by year group are held to discuss pupils' progress and future plans as appropriate.

5.28 The parents' association plays an active role in the social life of the school and offers enthusiastic support, enabling parents to play a full part in their children's education.

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