



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ABBAY GATE COLLEGE

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Abbey Gate College

Full Name of College	Abbey Gate College		
DfE Number	896/6018		
Registered Charity Number	273586		
Address	Abbey Gate College Saighton Grange Saighton Cheshire CH3 6EN		
Telephone Number	01244 332077		
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Email Address	<u>headmistress@abbeygatecollege.co.uk</u>		
Headmistress	Mrs Tracy Pollard		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Maria Heywood		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	524		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (281 boys; 243 girls)		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	15	5-11: 119
			11-18: 390
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	524	
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Rebecca Findlay		
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection Dates	25 to 28 March 2014		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2010.

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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 Michael Buchanan	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Valerie Clark	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr John Greathead	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mr Grant Whitaker	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)
Mrs Val Barnes	Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Mr Tom Keenan	Team Inspector (Head of Sixth Form, HMC school)
Mr David Roberts	Team Inspector (Head of Department, IAPS school)
Mrs Julie Thompson	Team Inspector (Head of Pastoral Care, SOH school)
Mrs Sally Gray	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Abbey Gate College is an independent day school for pupils from the ages of 4 to 18. The college is situated south of the city of Chester in Saighton Grange which was formerly the principal country house of the Abbots of Chester. The senior school accommodates pupils from 11 to 18 and is located in the village of Saighton, while the junior school, known as Aldford School, is a few miles away. The junior school covers the age range of 4 to 11. Abbey Gate College was founded as an independent co-educational school in 1977 and remains under the control of the Deeside House Educational Trust. The same governors oversee both sections of the school and a number of the original members, now known as founding governors, continue to help to administer the school.
- 1.2 The college aims to create happy, confident, fulfilled young people with a love for learning and an understanding of the world, by providing an environment to enable them to achieve at the highest levels.
- 1.3 Currently there are 524 pupils on the roll, 281 boys and 243 girls, of whom 390 are in the senior school and 134 are in the junior school, including 15 in one Reception class in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The college accepts pupils with a range of abilities; the ability profile of the college is above the national average. One hundred and eleven pupils require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and eleven for English as an additional language (EAL). One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Most of the pupils come from families living locally with business and professional backgrounds; they are mostly of white European origin.
- 1.4 A new headmistress was appointed in 2013 and, since the previous inspection in 2010, the governors have added safeguarding and strategic development committees to their structure. A drama studio and teaching classroom have been built at the senior school; geology and economics have been introduced into the curriculum. At the junior school, the EYFS has been relocated to a new classroom; a sensory garden and an adventure playground have been created, and the pupils now follow a curriculum based on creative themes. The provision of information and communication technology (ICT) has been extended in all sections of the school. On both sites an after-school club has been introduced.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is good throughout the school including in the EYFS and Years 12 and 13. The pupils are well educated in accordance with the aims of the school. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND, EAL and the highly able, demonstrate good subject knowledge, skills and understanding. Pupils achieve well in a variety of activities; the senior school choir is particularly vibrant and successful. The pupils' progress is supported by good teaching which meets the needs of all but the most able, and an effective curriculum. Specialist, one-to-one teaching for pupils with specific needs is particularly effective in developing skills for independence. In some lessons, the pupils are not fully engaged or stimulated and planning in the EYFS is not yet fully based around the individual child. At its best, marking is constructive and helpful but some is merely congratulatory, and assessment processes are not yet fully developed. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and often excellent. In the senior and junior schools, the provision of ICT facilities is greatly improved since the previous inspection, but sometimes teaching in the senior school does not provide routine and regular opportunities for pupils to enhance their learning in this way.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development throughout the school including EYFS and Years 12 and 13 is excellent and is supported by extensive and high quality pastoral care. EYFS provision for the children's well-being is also very strong. They are articulate, self-assured and show great pride in their school, reflecting very effectively a 'can do' attitude. The older pupils are excellent role models. Pupils feel confident to talk to adults whom they respect and trust. They are very well cared for by a variety of staff. The school is effective in promoting good behaviour. The school's arrangements for welfare, health and safety are sound. A number of failures to follow and record the statutory recruitment checks have now been rectified as has the failure to properly record changes to the attendance register.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is sound and that of leadership, management and links with parents is good. The governing body provides effective oversight of the EYFS, junior and senior schools to ensure the successful delivery of their collective aims. The leadership has been partially successful in its response to the recommendation from the previous inspection to improve the impact of appraisal on the quality of teaching and learning. The governors conduct the annual review of safeguarding and child protection in the school but this did not identify all deficiencies in their procedures and record keeping. All such checks are now in place, as are up-to-date policies and safeguarding training. Committed, vigorous and focused senior leadership in the junior and senior schools is successfully establishing an aspirational, innovative ethos amongst the staff and pupils, and is setting ambitious goals for future development. However, the senior leadership in the junior school has multiple, demanding responsibilities and is overburdened. The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent in all parts of the school. Most pupils and parents are highly positive about their experiences at the school.

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:

- ensure that attendance registers are kept in ink and that any change, and the reason for it, is entered alongside the original entry together with the date of the change and the name or initial of the person making the change [Part 3, paragraph 17, under Welfare, health and safety of pupils];
- ensure that the required recruitment checks, including barred list, qualifications, references and overseas checks, are made on all staff, supply staff and volunteers as applicable, before they begin work at the school [Part 4, paragraphs 19.(2)(a) and 19(3); 20.(2)(a)(i) and (ii), (b) and 20(3); 22.(3)(b), (4), (5)(a)(i) and (ii), and (5)(c), under the Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors; and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraphs 7 (a) & (b), under Welfare, health and safety of pupils].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Evaluate and develop the quality of teaching and learning including assessment and marking regularly and systematically throughout the college.
2. Challenge appropriately the most able pupils and children in all sections of the college including the EYFS.
3. Build on the existing initiatives to develop the use of ICT to aid pupils' learning particularly in the senior school.
4. Provide the necessary resources in the junior school to allow senior leadership to delegate effectively.
5. Ensure that assessment and planning show the next steps in learning for individual children in the EYFS.

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 good.
- 3.2 The pupils are well educated in accordance with the aims of the school to create happy, fulfilled young people with a love for learning and an understanding of the world, and to explore every available opportunity in a stimulating environment.
- 3.3 Pupils of all abilities throughout the college, including those with SEND, EAL and the highly able, demonstrate good subject knowledge, skills and understanding. They have good mathematical skills, are literate, logical and listen well to others. For example, children in the EYFS use phonics to sound out basic words and write simple punctuated sentences, and are enthusiastic speakers of French; in Years 12 and 13, pupils use their understanding of mathematics to engage in conceptual discussions on topics such as the impact of inflation in macro-economics. Children in the EYFS and junior school employ ICT with assurance, using cameras, tablet computers and programmable toys with dexterity and confidence. By the end of the EYFS, most children achieve the Early Learning Goals with some working beyond them. Throughout the school, the most able write extensively, using a good range of vocabulary and accurate grammar, for example as seen in the preparations of Year 8 pupils for the BBC School News reports. Pupils are creative musically and have particular physical prowess in drama and sport.
- 3.4 Outside the classroom, pupils successfully compete, sometimes at county and national levels, in a variety of sports including athletics, biathlon, cross-country running, dodge ball, netball, rugby and skiing. Pupils of all ages achieve highly in speech and drama and in a range of choirs and ensembles, including the chapel choir and concert band in the senior school, or in drama. Pupils show initiative through fund-raising ventures such as that successfully promoted for a cardiac charity, or the junior school pupils successfully entering a national Young Enterprise competition. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 are successful at achieving places on their chosen courses, including at universities and medical schools which have a high standard of entry.
- 3.5 The pupils' attainment in the junior school cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, as seen in lessons, curriculum interviews with pupils and in their work, is good in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress, including those with EAL, SEND and the most able. Children in the EYFS, including those requiring support, make excellent progress.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses national data for the years 2011 to 2013, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Results in GCSE are good in relation to the national average for maintained schools and have shown improvement from 2011 to 2013. In 2013, around three quarters of all grades were at A* to B. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. A-level results are similar to the national average for maintained schools. Results in 2013 were lower than in 2011 to 2012, where results had been above the national average. This performance, combined with evidence from observations and success in achieving higher education places, indicates that pupils make sound progress which is in line with the average for pupils

of similar ability. Pupils with EAL and SEND make good progress as a result of the support that is provided.

- 3.7 In the junior school and senior school, pupils' attitudes are excellent. They are enthusiastic, confident and are able to successfully articulate highly complex ideas or tackle significant practical and intellectual challenges. Many show maturity and sensitivity in their work such as in art, drama and singing. Pupils throughout the college, including the EYFS, are accomplished performers and sympathetic listeners. They enjoy opportunities to investigate and present, and to work independently and collaboratively, such as in a senior research project on fracking, and owl booklets produced by younger pupils. The most able pupils are sometimes frustrated by limited opportunities to be challenged in lessons and hence their progress is hindered. Pupils willingly ask questions when they need assistance, are focused, engaged and keen to learn.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.9 The school offers a wide and balanced range of opportunities which supports its aims. The curriculum across the college, including the EYFS, is well planned, suited to all ages, most abilities and needs and covers all the required areas of learning, including an effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme and careers guidance for older pupils. The curriculum for children in the EYFS covers the seven areas of learning and helps them to reach their expected levels of development. Pupils throughout the college with EAL and SEND are well catered for through one-to-one teaching and detailed individual plans which are regularly reviewed with pupils and their parents. Pupils of high ability are identified but their needs are not always specifically catered for in lessons. Some specialist teaching in the junior school in French, Spanish and the sciences allows even the youngest pupils to explore these areas effectively. In the senior school, pupils in Years 7 to 9 explore a range of subjects before making choices of GCSEs from a suitable breadth of options and following a discussion of the future implications of those choices. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 also choose from an appropriate range of subjects with some recent additions such as geology and economics adding further opportunities. An extensive programme of general studies for these pupils includes talks on varied topics including possible future careers by invited speakers. Pupils can choose to undertake an Extended Project Qualification as part of their studies and a number do so each year.
- 3.10 Parents and pupils both expressed their satisfaction with the range of experiences and activities offered by the college. In response to the previous inspection, ICT is now effectively and extensively used to assist pupils in the junior school with their learning. For example, younger pupils made good use of hand held devices to capture photographs as a stimulus for creative writing and older pupils effectively carried out research on water safety. In the senior school, the provision of ICT facilities is greatly improved and pupils make good use of them, for example, in independent study and project work. Nonetheless, teaching often misses out routine and regular opportunities for pupils to enhance and facilitate their learning in this way.
- 3.11 The school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities and visits which enable pupils to widen and develop their interests. Many of these activities make an important contribution to pupils' academic achievement and to their wider personal

development. Most pupils in the senior school take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and there is a good range of visits including a week-long residential trip to France for Year 6 and team building expeditions for Years 7, 9 and 12. Activities include choirs, musical ensembles and bands as well as cheerleading, sports, cookery, drama, debating, science and engineering clubs, and rugby tots. There are good opportunities for pupils to perform in a variety of school drama productions and concerts. Pupils benefit at an early age from the opportunity to take part in entrepreneurial projects such as Year 6 pupils who invested £10 to raise £1500 for charity and were invited to tell their story on national television and radio. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 enjoy a variety of social events including an annual ball.

- 3.12 Pupils at the school foster strong links with the local community including the National Gardens scheme and the choir entertaining the elderly at the Silver and Gold service. Local primary school pupils are invited to an art, design and technology day. There are extensive opportunities for charitable fund-raising, often led by pupils, to support national and local causes such as the British Heart Foundation.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is good.

3.14 Teaching is generally successful in promoting pupils' good progress and is in line with the aims of the school to provide a stimulating environment to enable pupils to achieve well. In the EYFS, staff provide purposeful activities with a good mixture of child-initiated and adult-led tasks, so that children are able to develop and learn effectively indoors and outdoors, using a range of suitable resources. Sometimes these tasks are not sufficiently challenging to meet the needs of the most able children. Activities such as looking at the different types of seeds or the challenge of the week promote the children's engagement and their enthusiasm to investigate. For the most part, teaching elsewhere in the junior school and the senior school, including Years 12 and 13, is well planned and motivating. In some class lessons, the teaching does not have high enough expectations resulting in activities that do not engage pupils and little being achieved. Pupils with statements of special educational needs are well provided for in that their teaching makes the provision as required by their statement. Throughout the school, pupils with EAL and SEND are also given the support that they need. This specialist, one-to-one teaching is particularly effective in helping pupils to develop skills for independence. In the senior school, the learning needs of individual pupils are often identified in planning, for example, as requiring help with processing ideas or using strategies to assist with reading or language, but the teaching does not always specifically address these needs. Equally, the most able pupils are identified in planning but on occasion their specific needs are not directly addressed either. Nonetheless, much teaching is energetic and stimulates deep thinking on the part of the pupils, such as in a discussion of the impact of inflation on the national economy or the nature of being human as part of the study of literature in English.

- 3.15 In the EYFS, staff regularly document children's progress and achievements in their individual, photographic learning portfolios. These assessment processes are not systematically used as yet to plan the next steps in learning for individual children. Elsewhere in the college, assessment and marking vary in quality and in the impact it has on the progress pupils make. Useful assessment data is available; sometimes, this assessment data is used well to inform and plan the next steps for an individual but its effective use is not yet consistent, particularly in the senior

school. At its best, marking is constructive and helps pupils to improve their understanding, knowledge and skills. In the junior school some inconsistencies occur between year groups and pupils of different abilities, most often with the higher ability pupils receiving the most helpful comments. The “two stars and a wish” method of marking is very popular with pupils throughout the junior school as it allows them to understand how they can improve. In the senior school marking is inconsistent within subjects and across the school; the school’s marking policy is not applied at all times. Much marking focuses exclusively on checking factual recall or congratulating pupils rather than promoting further thinking and synthesis. Identifying ways in which pupils might improve is a feature of the best marking as are suggestions for further reading or extension.

- 3.16 Teachers’ subject knowledge is good and often excellent. The most successful teaching is characterised by high expectations and energy. These lessons are well-paced, challenging and good use is made of varied resources. They actively engage pupils and focus closely on their learning and progress. Lively discussion stimulates independent thinking, for example when senior school pupils were discussing cause, responsibility and possible solutions to climate change. The teaching carefully assesses the understanding of pupils through skilful questioning and adjusts the demands on the pupils accordingly. In the less successful lessons, pupils are given little opportunity to take responsibility for their learning, lack stimulation and are largely passive. Behaviour is effectively managed for the most part and a variety of positive approaches are used, to which pupils respond well.
- 3.17 In their responses to the questionnaire and in interviews, most pupils were highly positive about the progress they are making and the individual help they receive. Teachers generally have excellent relationships with their pupils.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The college successfully fulfils its aims of providing a welcoming environment in which courtesy, kindness and respect are fostered. From the earliest age, pupils demonstrate excellent interpersonal skills, being kind and considerate to each other. Children in the EYFS enjoy coming to school and happily share resources, take turns and are able to make independent choices about their play, learning and behaviour. Pupils throughout the college are self-assured and show great pride in their community. They reflect very effectively the desire to develop a 'can do' attitude. They are friendly, warm and welcoming. Pupils express themselves enthusiastically about their learning and they appreciate the many opportunities they have.
- 4.3 Pupils are exceptionally well mannered, polite and courteous. Strong social awareness is evident in the ease with which pupils interact with adults and with each other. They demonstrate tolerance when thinking about others. In each school, older pupils are excellent role models for those younger than themselves by offering help and guidance. Pupils are mutually supportive in recognising each other's achievements. They are active members of their community and assume roles of responsibility and service with enthusiasm and sincerity such as house captains and monitors. Junior school pupils derive significant benefit socially from their contact with local businesses and the Young Enterprise scheme. This is a particularly positive feature of their personal development. Throughout the college, pupils benefit from the ethos in the community which encourages them to grow into politically and economically well-informed young people with a strong sense of who they are and in what they believe.
- 4.4 Pupils display excellent moral understanding. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and demonstrate readiness to follow the rules which guide their behaviour. Pupils understand well the highly effective system of rewards and sanctions. They are aware that the choices they make about their behaviour have consequences; they appreciate the reward of house points and the celebration of their achievements in assembly. Pupils move around the schools quietly and listen respectfully to their teachers and to one another. Their involvement in fund-raising for local, national and international charities successfully increases their understanding of the needs of others.
- 4.5 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Pupils from EYFS onwards gain a strong sense of spirituality through music, which plays a prominent part in the life of the school, and through religious festivals and celebrations such as visits to Chester Cathedral. Pupils take the many opportunities to reflect, for example, during musical performances, in art, in the gardens around the college and in lessons.
- 4.6 Pupils gain a well-developed understanding of their own and other faiths and cultures through the many opportunities provided, such as the good use made of pupils and parents of different cultures who share and explain their customs and heritage. Pupils enjoy their links with schools in rural Queensland and in Cairo and gain good understanding of the differing circumstances of children living in those parts of the world. Children in the EYFS are well-prepared for transition into the junior school through the use of specialist teachers and effectively planned liaison

between staff. By the time they leave the college, pupils demonstrate an excellent standard of personal development and they are well equipped to continue into the next stage of their education.

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

- 4.7 The quality of the school's pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 It strongly supports the pupils' personal development in accordance with the school's aim to create happy, confident, fulfilled young people. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. This view is reinforced in the high proportion of positive responses to the parent and pupil questionnaires particularly in respect of pupils' overall progress. There is a strong sense amongst the pupils that the staff know them well. Pupils feel confident in talking to adults whom they respect and feel that they can trust. The school has a positive ethos and a warm and friendly atmosphere. Pupils' pastoral care is enhanced by regular review meetings held by senior staff in the junior and senior schools which cover both academic progress and welfare. There is a good variety of events to help pupils move from one stage of their education to the next. For example, junior school pupils spend some of their week being taught at the senior school.
- 4.9 EYFS provision for the children's well-being is also excellent. A high priority is given to the welfare of the children and they form strong relationships with their key person so that children feel safe, happy and confident to share their concerns. Staff give clear guidance on standards of courtesy and behaviour expected so that children demonstrate exemplary levels of behaviour, show respect for each other and play co-operatively as seen in the pupils' excellent collaboration when making a flotilla of ships out of three-dimensional shapes. Staff support independence well, for example in the children's personal hygiene and in child-initiated learning.
- 4.10 Pupils across year groups of both schools develop positive relationships which are particularly promoted by the competition and co-operation provided by the pastoral structures, particularly the houses in the senior school. Pupils' achievements are routinely recognised and applauded through the awarding of certificates and other rewards in assemblies, lessons and tutorials. The omnipresence of the senior leadership team in the junior and senior schools allows individuals regularly to receive personal recognition and praise. From the early morning supervision during a busy school day through to after-school events, the pupils are very well cared for by a variety of staff.
- 4.11 The pupil questionnaire responses indicated that a number of pupils in the senior school do not believe their views are listened to or acted upon. The inspection found that the pupil forum has regular meetings where Year 11 pupils take on the responsibility of co-ordinating the suggestions and preparing an action plan to take to their termly meeting with the headmistress. As a result of such meetings, there are mirrors in the girls' toilets and plans are well developed for a revamping of the provision of food at lunchtime; wireless internet access has been introduced in the Years 12 and 13 area and uniform changes have also been implemented. Most pupils were highly positive about the support offered to them and the care provided. Nearly all pupils expressed enjoyment about being at the school.
- 4.12 Pupils are encouraged to have a healthy diet and take exercise. In the junior school, staff diligently monitor their eating habits. In the senior school there is a mix of views from pupils with regards to the quality and quantity of the food provided. Some

would like a greater variety and larger portions whilst other pupils speak appreciatively of the food available and the menu which offers healthy options. The inspection found that the quality and quantity of food was appropriate for the needs of the pupils. Staff working in the dining room at the senior school understand their responsibility for monitoring healthy eating and alert teachers appropriately of any concerns.

- 4.13 The school is effective in promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying, and it deals constructively with any unacceptable behaviour, taking due account of any related difficulty or disability. A small number of parents and pupils expressed concern in their responses to the questionnaires about the way the school deals with cases of bullying. Interviews with pupils and examination of the records confirm that incidents are followed up, records are appropriately kept, suitable sanctions are given and positive relationships are promoted. Pupils recognise that bullying is not acceptable and that this has been recently re-emphasised by the senior leadership of the school.
- 4.14 The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- 4.15 The school's arrangements for welfare, health and safety are sound.
- 4.16 The school fulfils its aims to provide care where pupils come first, and this makes a suitable contribution to pupils' personal development. All staff are appropriately trained in child protection and the policy is clearly communicated to parents, staff and volunteers during their induction and when it is updated; there are effective relationships with the Local Safeguarding Children Board. Governors are regularly trained in child protection procedures and a number have undergone further training in safer recruitment procedures. However, the inspection identified a number of failures to follow the appropriate recruitment procedures for staff, supply staff and volunteers.
- 4.17 The school has thorough arrangements for reducing the risk from fire and other hazards. Regular fire drills are held in all parts of the school and these are carefully recorded. Fire alarm systems are tested weekly and fire safety documentation is up-to-date. The school's health and safety policy and procedures are reviewed and updated annually and implemented well. The school engages an external firm of health and safety consultants to audit its procedures and this is bringing a more systematic approach.
- 4.18 Provision for pupils who are unwell is good in both the junior and senior schools. The administration of medicines is duly recorded and pupils who have particular medical or learning support needs are well cared for. Accidents are recorded and junior school parents are personally informed by class teachers. The school's first aid policy is comprehensive and clear. An appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid and three have appropriate training for the youngest children; they provide excellent care.
- 4.19 The school has taken steps to ensure that all attendance registers are now properly completed whereas previously some were not. Changes to the register are now inserted in ink, dated and reasons for the change initialled alongside the original entry. The admission register is properly kept and both registers are stored for the correct number of years.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The governing body provides much effective oversight of the EYFS, junior and senior schools to ensure the delivery of their collective aims. The recent introduction of strategic development and safeguarding committees is beginning to improve the ability of the governors to monitor, evaluate and further develop the school. The varied and specific skills of the individual governors are complemented well by the experience of the founding governors. For the most part, the governors ensure the school is well resourced, appropriately staffed and accommodated. However, the leadership of the junior school is significantly hampered by limited administrative support and a lack of capacity to delegate. Governors take seriously their responsibility for financial planning and oversight of educational standards.
- 5.3 The members of the governing body keep themselves well informed about the progress of the school through periodic personal visits and by receipt of regular evaluative reports from the school leadership. The strategic plan provides a clear stimulus for future improvement.
- 5.4 The governors conduct their annual review of safeguarding and child protection in the school, and this identified a number, but not all, of the deficiencies in the timeliness and completeness of recruitment checks and their recording on the single central register of appointments. All such checks have now been undertaken and the governors have recognised that their previous system of monitoring the school's compliance with the regulatory requirements was not sufficiently rigorous.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.6 Committed, vigorous and focused senior leadership in the junior and senior schools is successfully establishing an aspirational, innovative ethos amongst the staff and pupils and is setting ambitious goals for future development. However, the senior leadership in the junior school has multiple, demanding responsibilities and is overburdened. At all levels leadership and management, by both teaching and non-teaching staff and by those in the EYFS, successfully foster the school's aims through a mutually supportive and collegiate approach. Leadership and management have a clear understanding of the educational direction of the school and many successful steps have been taken recently to ensure greater consistency in the implementation of policies and procedures. Priorities for improvement in teaching and learning have been clearly identified and appropriate plans are in the early stages of implementation. The recommendations of the previous inspection, to use the appraisal system to improve the quality of teaching and learning, has been only partially successful, particularly in relation to marking and assessment.
- 5.7 The quality of departmental planning is good although monitoring of outcomes is not always sufficiently rigorous. The use of data to improve pupil achievement and to support staff in improving academic standards is inconsistently used. The senior

management has successfully identified academic priorities for development and has begun to make successful changes which are appreciated by pupils and parents; these include a review of the current curriculum, timetable and reporting to parents.

- 5.8 Leadership and management at all levels is successful in recruiting high quality staff and in supporting, motivating and providing opportunities for continuing professional development. All staff, including those in the EYFS, are provided with appropriate training in child protection and other welfare, health and safety matters and newly appointed staff undergo helpful induction. Steps recently initiated by the senior leadership identified some, but not all, failures in the required policies and training, and completeness of recruitment processes concerning barred list, qualifications, references and overseas checks, and those required on supply staff and volunteers; these have now been rectified. Effective systems exist for monitoring the educational standards in the EYFS and for informative self-evaluation which helps to set targets for improvement.
- 5.9 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. The school's outstanding relationship is demonstrated by the highly positive responses of parents to most areas in the questionnaire. Most parents also agreed that their concerns have been handled well. The inspection found that the school is actively involved in dealing with any concerns in a timely manner. Recent improvements to procedures ensure that all such complaints are now properly recorded.
- 5.10 The overwhelming majority of parents expressed satisfaction in their responses to the questionnaire with the leadership of the school and, in particular, the emphasis evident from the new leadership in the senior school on improving teaching and rapidly addressing any inappropriate behaviour from pupils. All parents who responded to the questionnaire agreed that their child is well looked after and nearly all that their child is happy and safe.
- 5.11 Parents are kept well informed by the school and detailed information is readily available through the website and other electronic communication systems including the parents' section of the Virtual Learning Environment in the junior school. Regular reports and progress cards provide useful information on each pupil's development and areas for improvement; these are complemented by regular parents' evenings and easy access to pastoral and academic staff. Parents are also kept up-to-date with information regarding school events and successes through a variety of methods including a termly magazine called *The Broadsheet*, and, in the case of some subjects, a weekly information update. Parents of prospective and current pupils are provided with the required information about the school and its policies, or they are made available on request at the school.
- 5.12 Parents are welcomed, and actively encouraged into the school through events such as termly coffee mornings in the EYFS, at sports games, drama and musical productions in both the senior and junior schools. The school choirs perform at national and local venues. Parents have initiated new opportunities for pupils, such as handball and equestrian clubs. Parents usefully have the opportunity to be involved further in the school through the active parents' association who organise regular fund-raising and social events.
- 5.13 The EYFS is very successful in working in partnership with parents to enhance the learning and progress of each child. Parents are highly appreciative of the continuous support provided by staff and there is a strong partnership between

school and home. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress verbally, through sharing the learning profiles, the day book, written reports and a weekly newsletter.

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