

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Slindon College

Full Name of the School	Slindon College
DCSF Number	938/6094
Registered Charity Number	1028125
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Age Range	9 to 16
Gender	Boys
Inspection Dates	30th November to 3rd December 2009

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate. The Ofsted report is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Slindon College was originally called Lindfield School and started in Westbourne in 1946, before moving to its present site near Arundel in 1956. The school, administered by a board of governors, adopted its present name in 1972. It is an independent day and boarding school for boys between the ages of nine and sixteen years. It was last inspected by ISI in 2003.
- 1.2 The school occupies a building leased from the National Trust in a parkland and beech wood site, which was that of a medieval residence of the archbishops of Canterbury. The present Tudor structure was owned by the Kempe family in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the Earls of Newburgh in the 18th and 19th centuries. Used by recusants, there was a Catholic chapel on the site and a priests' hiding-hole. Slindon House served as a convalescent hospital in the Great War and as a billet for evacuees and Canadian troops in the Second World War.
- 1.3 Dedicated to the academic, social and personal development of every one of its pupils, the school considers that its curriculum and provision helps it to identify aptitudes and interests in a way that other, larger institutions would find difficult. It aspires to teach its pupils in a fun and friendly environment. It focuses on removing the barriers that can prevent pupils from enjoying and benefiting from their education, both academic and social. The aims of the school are: to teach all pupils to believe in themselves; to inspire pupils to achieve their potential academically and socially; to ensure that each pupil leaves with the skills to succeed in the future; and to be certain that no child will leave the school saying "no-one understood me".
- 1.4 Ninety-two boys are in the school, of whom 38 are boarders. There are nine in Years 5 and 6 and the rest are in the secondary phase. The day boys come from, or around, the local area; the boarders are from far and wide and their parents are often very concerned to find a suitable school for their sons. Pupils come from a wide variety of family backgrounds. The majority come from families where there is no past tradition of sending pupils to independent schools. A very small number of pupils are boarders from overseas or are otherwise from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school considers that every pupil has individual learning needs such that many of the traditional teaching and disciplinary techniques are not appropriate. Many have concentration problems sometimes caused by attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Asperger's syndrome or autism. Dyslexia is also a difficulty for some. Six pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). Most pupils have a formal diagnosis, with 90 identified as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), of whom 28 have statements of special educational needs (SEN). Of these, seventeen are funded by a local authority.
- 1.5 The school has a broad ability range, the mean of which is below average. Consequently if pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results in tests (at GCSE) will be below the average for maintained schools.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a good range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities that are appropriate for the aptitudes and interests of its pupils. The education as a whole is consistent with the declared aims and philosophy of the school, a view corroborated by the parents. The previous report also described the curriculum as good and judged that its breadth and balance was meeting the needs of a very diverse group. Since the last inspection the school has extended the range of GCSEs for the more able, introduced modular GCSEs in some subjects and adapted courses for the less able, for example an entry level GCSE and an NVQ in horticulture.
- 2.2 The academic curriculum is broad and well balanced and strongly linked to the National Curriculum both in Years 7 to 9 and at GCSE. In most subjects there is a certain amount of course-work and practical work which means pupils are constantly building their chances of success, whilst continuous assessment enables teachers to develop pupils' individual strengths. The curriculum contributes effectively to linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative development, and makes provision for acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. All pupils are offered vocational studies from practical skills in food and design technology, to the writing of curriculum vitae and job applications in personal, social and health education (PSHE). The school offers its pupils the opportunity to gain essential skills such as communication, letter-writing, health and hygiene, and group work using their extensive grounds for environmental and farm studies. In addition to the above opportunities, pupils also attend classes in religious education (RE), PSHE, physical education and games. The PSHE programme is effective in all year groups, reflecting the aims and ethos of the school. For example, pupils showed a clear understanding of the importance of good working against evil. There is a modest but appropriate programme which links in with the wider community. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 follow a class-based programme with some lessons in other areas of the school such as information and communication technology (ICT), games and food technology.
- 2.3 The school provides a very wide range of sporting and other cross-curricular activities. Sports include: football, rugby, basketball, cricket, athletics, swimming, softball, tennis, squash, badminton, and cross-country. Activities include: golf, squash, the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme, stage lighting, cookery, basketball, football, board games, arts and crafts, martial arts, film club, band, electric powered go-kart construction, motor mechanics club and a farm club. Music is a strong feature of school life, and a music concert is held every term where pupils of all standards perform to the school and to parents. All these activities strongly develop pupils' self-confidence.
- 2.4 Due attention is given to the preparation of pupils for the next stage of their education, training and for adult life. Pupils moving up from the junior to the senior part of the school are supported by taster days. Subject option blocks in Year 10 are arranged according to pupils' requests and aptitudes. For careers advice the school uses a commercial careers education programme and the local Connexions service. The headmaster is the pupils' individual careers advisor and his advice is strongly appreciated by pupils. Work experience is available to all pupils after their GCSE examinations although the number who participate is small, most preferring to follow arrangements made by their parents. All pupils go on to follow vocational or A-level courses, mainly in post-16 college settings, although not all complete their programmes. Many eventually undertake degree courses.

- 2.5 Provision for individual pupils with SEN and LDD is good. The school caters for pupils with a wide range of learning difficulties and does so in a professional and sensitive manner. There is a good system for the construction of individual education plans (IEPs) and information about the nature and extent of pupils' difficulties is quickly disseminated to classroom teachers. The school meets the requirements of those with statements. Pupils with EAL attend small group tuition in English. In spite of the fact that the tuition is examination focused and not directly linked to their immediate needs, they make good progress.
- 2.6 The planning of the curriculum is satisfactory and responsive to pupils' needs, although this is inconsistent across subjects. The planning of schemes of work and departmental handbooks again varies between departments. Good examples were seen in English, mathematics and geography where there was guidance for teachers in setting expectations.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 Given the nature and extent of pupils' initial learning, language and emotional difficulties, their achievements overall as they progress through the school are good in a wide range of accomplishments and similar to those reported at the time of the last inspection. On the academic side pupils develop knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects they study. Consequently the school is successful in meeting its aim to send each pupil out into life with the skills to succeed and the confidence to use them.
- 2.9 Pupils exhibit good critical and creative skills in subjects such as art and photography, and in the composition of harmonies in music. They are able to demonstrate some of these skills in other subjects such as in the production of posters and other display materials in science. As they grow older, and as their confidence and self-esteem improves, pupils rapidly develop their listening and speaking capability. By the time they leave the school, pupils who were once withdrawn and lacking in communication skills are able to discourse freely with adults. Confidence and competence in reading and writing steadily improve to a level that is adequate for the next stage of their education and development. A similar picture pertains in mathematics. Many pupils use ICT with confidence as was observed in art, photography, science, PSHE and learning support lessons. Word processing is widely used for course-work assignments at GCSE level in order to plan, draft and proof-read writing.
- 2.10 Pupils' attainment in the GCSE is good in relation to their abilities. Taking the cohorts and the subjects as a whole the results over the last three years for which comparative data are available are in line with the national average for all maintained schools. Pupils do best in the creative and aesthetic subjects, and least well in the linguistic and mathematical domains. Progress amongst different groups of pupils is similar although, in line with the findings of the last inspection, there is evidence that the more able do not progress sufficiently well because some teaching lacks pace and challenge. Nevertheless, given pupils' starting points, this represents positive achievement.
- 2.11 Although the school does not engage in competitive team activity with other schools, there are many examples of pupils distinguishing themselves in local sports teams. Many achieve success in music instrumental examinations including a solo performance at the Fairfield Hall, Croydon. Pupils have won a number of first prizes in art competitions over the last few years within the London region and the Green Power group which constructs electrical go-karts are regular finalists in the relevant national competition.

- 2.12 In addition there are many significant personal achievements, for example, when pupils develop the confidence to perform in front of the school, as was observed in the mini music festival. Other pupils express pride in receiving awards for sporting achievements, for helping and considering others or for overcoming their own learning, behavioural or social difficulties.
- 2.13 Pupils' attitudes to learning improve steadily. Initially and inevitably, there is a heavy reliance across the curriculum on worksheets that provide the necessary structure and support for learning. However, by the time pupils reach Year 10, they demonstrate greater independence in learning. In Years 10 and 11 in science, they use independent note-taking skills and pupils in Years 8 and 10 were observed taking responsibility for their own learning in prep time.
- 2.14 By the time the pupils reach Year 11, they listen to each other, show considerable mutual respect and support younger members of the school. Prefects work well together as a team. Some pupils still find social interaction difficult, but cooperative work was evident in cookery and photography.
- 2.15 A strength of the school is that, whilst pupils on arrival are sometimes difficult to handle, un-cooperative, have low self-esteem or need considerable support from teachers, by the time they leave they have become calm, confident, articulate and sociable. They are willing to enjoy their work, keen to participate in activities and house competitions and persevere to make a success of their lives, in line with the school's aims and objectives.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.16 The quality of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is an outstanding strength of the school, which effectively meets its aims to assist pupils to acquire a sense of confidence and self-worth. This is a similar judgement to that of the previous inspection.
- 2.17 Pupils develop spiritually in the sense that over their time in the school they acquire a strong feeling of identity and self-confidence. In religious education and Friday services pupils treat religious views with respect and begin to understand their significance in their own and other peoples' lives, and the way they relate to each other. In a lesson on Hinduism the topic of death was introduced and in the subsequent discussion pupils responded sensitively and positively.
- 2.18 Pupils have a strong moral awareness; they respect the law and can distinguish right from wrong. They consider that the school rules are fair and should be observed. Lessons often raise moral issues and encourage pupils to explore ways of resolving them. They recognize that many people in this country and abroad are less fortunate than themselves and they actively support charities that seek to assist children in developing countries. This was seen in their willingness to give one pound each for a mufti day in order to give a child in Africa the opportunity to be fed, clothed and educated for the rest of this academic year.
- 2.19 Many pupils arrive at the school with underdeveloped social skills. Great emphasis is placed on social development in the junior part of the school and pupils develop socially exceptionally well as they progress through the school. Pupils accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life within the school environment and beyond. They are helpful and polite to adults and they generally relate well to one another in class. Older pupils in particular can adopt leadership roles, such as prefects. Pupils participate in a school council each term and feel that they have a voice. There is also a boarding council and, in both, pupils take an active part in making representations to the headmaster and the boarding staff. This was borne out during the

headmaster's assembly when he read out the suggestions he had received for the use of £500 which had been received in donations. They have a good general knowledge of public institutions in England.

- 2.20 Pupils' cultural development is excellent; they acquire an appreciation of, and respect for, their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. Chinese pupils are taken to Chinatown to celebrate Chinese New Year; one member of staff and five pupils had been to Kenya to visit and stay at the house of one of their classmates who is Kenyan. Religious education lessons introduce pupils to the faiths of other religious groups and to different forms of religious symbolism.
- 2.21 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.22 The overall quality of teaching is good and has improved slightly since the last inspection. This time no unsatisfactory teaching was observed and a significant proportion was good. The teaching supports the school's aim of helping its pupils develop academically. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire strongly believe that the teaching helps their sons to make progress, a judgement corroborated by the inspection findings. The quality of the teaching was uniform across different sections of the school. Assessment supports teaching and provides good reporting to parents. It is less effective at indicating to pupils what they should do to improve.
- 2.23 A strength of teaching is the knowledge teachers have of their pupils and their individual difficulties and obstacles to learning, which generally enables all pupils, including those with SEN, LDD and EAL to make good progress. Lessons are often well planned with notably good examples of this observed in English, history, geography, art, ICT and science, where the pace and variety of tasks maintained pupil interest and motivation. However, some lessons lacked pace and challenge, particularly for the more able pupils. A broad range of teaching methods is used which generally meet their individual learning needs. Effective teaching showed repetition, reinforcement and consolidation so that pupils became secure in new knowledge and skills. As a result of the teaching, pupils generally see learning as fun and, despite the entrenched difficulties experienced by some, they show perseverance to complete tasks.
- 2.24 Teachers demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter taught, and are skilful in developing approaches and using resources to make work accessible so that pupils experience success. The relationship between teachers and pupils is good and further encourages responsible behaviour. Behaviour management is a strength of the school.
- 2.25 The resources to support pupils' learning are satisfactory. The provision of ICT facilities is much improved since the previous inspection and they are used to support learning across the curriculum. Work shows skilful use of various suites of software, for example in art and photography, and spreadsheets in various applications.
- 2.26 Since the last inspection the school has appointed learning support assistants (LSAs) to provide some pupils with higher levels of individual support. However, teachers do not always capitalise on this support sufficiently well and LSAs themselves believe they have not received enough training in order to have a fully effective impact on pupils' learning.

- 2.27 The implementation of the school's marking policy, the assessment of pupils' written work and the recording of information lack rigour and consistency across departments. Books scrutinised showed little evidence of written feedback on progress or clear written guidance for improvement. Whilst it is recognised that teachers need to be sensitive to individual pupils and to avoid negativity, pupils were not always sure what they needed to do to improve work other than make it neater. Some pupils explicitly requested more written comments, whilst others said they appreciated the positive reinforcement that was given when there were brief written comments. At worst, some marking was unsatisfactory with pupils' work left uncorrected. Whilst good teaching would not correct every slip or misspelling, there were some unfortunate examples which could mislead pupils about success in their attainment of a subject.
- 2.28 In some subjects there is detailed record keeping which enables teachers to monitor progress well. Twice-yearly IEP reviews, and individual tutor interviews, enable both teachers and pupils to reflect on work and progress. In some departments, such as science, history and geography, assessments are clearly used to inform staff of what pupils need to learn next and support some individual target setting. Motivational stickers, stamps and credits are used to reward and recognise effort and progress. The annual updating of reading, spelling and numeracy scores is analysed. This results in adjustments in the level of support for individual pupils and a rewriting of the objectives to be met. Overall however, the approach to these aspects of assessment is not consistent across subjects and, as was the case at the last inspection, the school does not use a standard system of target setting which results in pupils widely taking more responsibility for their own learning.
- 2.29 Assessment data from the cognitive abilities testing is used for curriculum monitoring and influences teaching through the choice of subjects and examination syllabuses offered to pupils and the organisation of teaching groups in English, mathematics and science. The recording and discretionary reporting of progress against National Curriculum levels has helped to sharpen the focus of provision for individual pupils. By these means, as well as by GCSE assessment, the school is able to evaluate pupils' performance against national norms.
- 2.30 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care for pupils at Slindon College is outstanding and the school is very successful in its aim to provide high standards of welfare and health and safety for all its pupils. This is also a similar judgement to that of the last inspection. The deputy head (pastoral) successfully oversees pastoral care, supported by two staff in charge of boarding and nine tutors covering the age range.
- 3.2 All staff contribute to what is an effective structure for the help and guidance of all pupils. As in the last inspection, information on pupils' needs and their problems is passed between staff both verbally and formally through written records. Communication links are swift and effective.
- 3.3 The school counsellor offers support to both day and boarding pupils and the structures in place for the boarders are supportive for the individual, and offer guidance when needed. All staff work in harmony within the established pastoral system, they feel supported by senior managers in their pastoral duties, and they are confident when discussing pupil problems with senior colleagues.
- 3.4 Staff are deployed appropriately in the supervision of pupils both during the day and at night. Pupils have a high level of respect for each other, particularly at the upper end of the school. This is also the case with staff and pupil relationships. Pupils hold these open and easy relationships in very high regard and the excellent level of mutual respect is a strength of the school. Pupils look to their teachers for academic help and guidance and this is given generously. They feel comfortable sharing their concerns with teachers and are at ease in discussing problems with adults. Appropriate and effective policies ensure that pupils are aware of the rules for behaviour and discipline and have due regard for these.
- 3.5 Bullying issues are quickly and sensitively dealt with. More senior pupils play a crucial part in this with the support they offer the younger pupils. This is seen as a real asset, particularly by those who are new to the school. Similarly, issues dealing with cyber bullying are dealt with effectively. An independent listener is available to pupils at the college but has not been contacted in the last four years.
- 3.6 Rewards and sanctions work well and the credit system is appreciated by the pupils, together with the fact that punishments follow incidents in a firm but fair manner. Credits are awarded for good work and behaviour to promote a collegiate approach by all pupils at the school. At the end of each term and the academic year, those pupils with the most credits are given an award, and, for others, they can be traded in for money to put towards clothing and personal items. Significant emphasis is placed upon success and achievement of the pupils, many of whom have come to the school having been deemed failures in other establishments. Child protection measures including the policy are good with all staff having been trained. The headmaster is the child protection officer and pupils are aware of this. Procedures for safeguarding and promoting pupils' well-being are successfully established.
- 3.7 All staff have been trained in relevant methodologies for ensuring the safe management of pupils. Day pupils and those in the boarding house feel both safe and secure. Risks from fire and other hazards are taken very seriously and measures to reduce these are effective. Fire safety equipment is in place with signage and fire exits clearly marked and exit routes being kept clear from obstructions. Training in fire fighting for staff is carried out. Pupils are aware of the need for fire drills and treat these seriously. Records of fire drills lack some

detail. Health and safety measures are effective and the school pays due regard to undertaking risk assessments. Access to the swimming pool is secure and the handling of chemicals, fumes and dust are dealt with effectively.

- 3.8 Meals prepared for both boarders and day pupils are appetising, and offer the choice of a hot meal or salad with a selection of desserts and fruit. The school is committed to healthy eating and provides a nutritious diet. In addition, the boarders have a tuck shop run by staff and senior boys in the evening. Through games pupils do exercise on a regular basis.
- 3.9 The admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained.
- 3.10 The medical facilities of the school are good and well established. The documentary information for staff on what to do in the case of medical need is clear. The school matron regularly attends opportunities for professional updating. The school fulfils its duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act and has prepared a suitable accessibility plan within affordable resources.
- 3.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.12 The quality of links with parents and the community is good. The school has no specific aim of giving pupils an awareness of how they fit into the wider community, but insofar as this aspect is part of its curriculum for PHSE, the school is successful. There has been much improvement in the links with parents since the last inspection and the school has worked hard to develop a more open and accessible school community for all.
- 3.13 Parents are highly satisfied with the education and support provided for their sons by the school. Parents interviewed and those who responded to the parental questionnaire state that their sons are very happy at Slindon College and the school enables them to develop as individuals in a way which they are convinced would not have happened elsewhere. All the parents interviewed spoke movingly and appreciatively of the difference that transferring to the college had made to their sons. Only a very small number of criticisms of the college were voiced and these were made with a constructive tone.
- 3.14 Since the last inspection, the opportunities for parents to be involved in activities in the school have increased and all but a tiny minority report that the school encourages them to take part in its life and work. Parents talk of the family atmosphere. Some energetic parents run the parent and teacher association and this has raised money for the school. Inevitably, some parents are so far from the school that it is difficult for them to participate in its activities. Parents have been invited to hear distinguished speakers who have been invited to broaden the school's intellectual offerings such as, recently, the astronomer and television presenter Patrick Moore.
- 3.15 The school provides parents of pupils and prospective pupils with the required information about the school through the school website and electronic 'notice board', and within the school prospectus when requested. Within the whole school framework for assessment and reporting, half-termly reports provide pupils and parents with grades for all aspects of learning, commenting on motivation, achievement and behaviour and a fuller commentary is provided at the end of each term. The grades given in Years 10 and 11 are linked to predicted GCSE grades. Parents are highly appreciative of the detail written in the termly reports. There are annual parents' meetings for all year groups and two for Year 11. In addition parents are able to telephone teachers during the evening and at weekends, and the adoption of a Friday tea event for parents of pupils and prospective pupils provides an

important and welcomed opportunity for parents to meet staff on an informal basis. Email contact is effectively used and enables quick response to parental concerns. The strong relationship between the school and parents is evident and is appreciated.

- 3.16 The school handles the concerns of parents with due care. There is a record of official parental complaints, and all such complaints are followed up and resolved in an appropriate manner. Parents interviewed said that teachers were easily accessible and were always available to deal with any issues they may have. Teachers are willing to give as much time as necessary to deal with individual parents and give them support both academically and socially. This is a strength of the school.
- 3.17 The school's secluded location in a rural setting means that the scope for extensive links is limited. A range of events is held on the site. Pupils assist in the running of the annual village fete and a service is held afterwards. There are other annual events such as the 1940s afternoon and the New Year party. In the past the site, its tennis and squash facilities, and its swimming pool, have been used by the local community but child protection policies have made this less possible. The headmaster has been a member of the Parish Council for many years.
- 3.18 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.19 The quality of pupils' boarding experience is good and supports their education and development. This represents an improvement since the last inspection. Relationships between pupils throughout the boarding house and relationships between staff and pupils are excellent with a family atmosphere prevailing. Appropriate levels of support are in place and the staff know their pupils very well, thus demonstrating a high level of commitment and support for the aims and ethos of the school.
- 3.20 The school provides a good range of activities during the evening and at weekends. A good balance between structured activities and the opportunities for pupils to relax with others or by themselves exists. Some activities and trips are in direct response to the suggestions of pupils themselves. Many pupils say that the boarding experience is "the best part of the school".
- 3.21 The quality of accommodation and resources available is satisfactory and appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Accommodation ranges from single rooms for the older pupils to dormitories of no more than four people for the younger members of the house. Pupils have a pool room and there are two age-related common rooms. Other school facilities are available to the pupils depending upon staffing, weather conditions and the time of year.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The governance of the school is satisfactory. Governance is exercised by a board of governors who are very supportive of the school.
- 4.2 The governing body consists of nine governors, of whom four are appointed to represent special interests, whilst the remainder are people who possess skills and experience which are of particular benefit to the school. Up to four governors form the finance and general purposes committee. One governor holds specific responsibility for health and safety and another for child protection. The governors are aware of their responsibilities and bring to governance a wide range of important experience of a legal, financial and managerial kind. This is being usefully supplemented by the recent addition to the ranks of a retired head able to bring in an external educational perspective. The well-managed state of the site and Slindon House and the continuation of this small school in a difficult economic climate are good examples of the governors' financial commitment to the long-term future of the school and its provision for pupils who might otherwise have unhappy school experiences.
- 4.3 The relationship between the headmaster and the governing body works well, but it is acknowledged that it has been one where the latter has been over-dependent on briefing and advice from the headmaster. Consequently, the governing body has been reactive and less capable of giving advice, support and stimulus for growth and development than might otherwise be the case. This is gradually changing. The new chair of governors is keen for the governing body to be more pro-active. The governing body has joined the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools, and regular visits are being initiated so that governors are better appraised of the school's educational provision. It is intended that they will be able to provide the headmaster with a better element of supportive challenge. All governors are also encouraged to take part in various key activities.
- 4.4 The head is accountable to the board but has delegated powers to provide educational discretion and day-to-day management. He and the bursar attend all board and committee meetings where they provide governors with reports and analysis, which enables them to monitor the overall quality of the school's performance. To a large extent, governing body meetings have focused principally on publicity, finance, budgets and their staffing implications, and health and safety. The system of governance does not include a system of internal or external review or the use of self-evaluation. In this regard the school relies on the peer review element of regular inspection and its follow-up.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The quality of leadership and management, as judged overall across all levels of the school, is satisfactory, with some good features, but uneven, as was reported at the last inspection. The structure of middle management, the clarification and improvement of which was an inspection recommendation, remains unclear and there are still no clear management objectives at each level.
- 4.6 Within the structure the headmaster is widely respected and trusted, and both he and his senior management team are hard-working, so that their knowledge of the school's pupils, teachers, current achievements and of the school's current arrangements is very strong. Pastoral management is good. However, there are shortcomings in some areas of leadership on the academic side. Too much reliance is placed on the fact that the school is small enough for information to be passed between staff informally and for plans to be made on this basis.

- 4.7 The headmaster is personally concerned with the school's welfare and success. He provides effective educational direction and leadership based on his knowledge of the school through his years of experience in the school, as well as the firm belief that in a small community both strengths and weaknesses come to light quickly. He has been vigorous and single-minded in his pursuance of the long-term financial viability of the school, for example, in relations with the National Trust as property owner and in his energetic campaign to recruit sufficient pupils. However, some of the college's development planning lacks depth and rigour. The analysis of the school's needs is often centred on compliance issues, with financial constraints seen as a major contributing factor.
- 4.8 The school accepts that consultation within and between departments has been informal in nature so that there has been no structured liaison to share good practice and inform progression. This is particularly evident between the junior and senior sections of the school. It is because of this awareness that appropriate policies and procedures are now in place and a system has now been set for reviewing their effectiveness.
- 4.9 Management at all levels is satisfactory. A three-year appraisal system exists for staff and individual professional development is usually dependent on staff requests. Priority for in-service training is given to compliance issues and examination board changes. A full programme is provided for the induction of newly qualified teachers, although at the time of inspection there were no teachers on the staff in this category.
- 4.10 The school has relatively limited financial resources and these are well managed by the bursar to secure adequate accommodation and resources in support of the school's aims.
- 4.11 The administration of the school is efficient. Support staff are effective in maintaining the attractiveness of the site; catering staff are successful in providing a healthy, balanced diet for all; office staff are welcoming, approachable and helpful.
- 4.12 The school's arrangements for checking the suitability of staff have improved. The records kept are accurate, and all the necessary checks, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau, have been carried out.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school successfully meets its published aims, in particular to inspire pupils to achieve their potential academically and socially. It provides a curriculum well matched to pupils' needs. The school has excellent standards of pastoral care, and places a high priority on each pupil's personal development. Most pupils' individual needs are very well understood and met by a dedicated and skilled staff. As a result it is able to dismantle the barriers to educational and personal development that pupils have on arrival. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. Achievement levels are high. Teaching is generally good and pupils benefit from small class sizes. On the other hand, the systems of assessment vary too much across departments and can disadvantage pupils by their informality, and LSAs are not yet used to best advantage. The boarding experience is good and is valued by the pupils. Both governance and leadership and management across the school are satisfactory overall.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection the school has maintained its provision and outcomes and improved features such as boarding. Attention to the external factors facing the school has been good, but progress on internal matters since the last inspection has been less marked. There have been some small improvements in the match of the curriculum to the wide range of ability, in assessment and in teaching. Links with parents have considerably improved. However, the school recognises that aspects of governance, management especially at the middle level, and assessment are not yet sufficiently developed.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to improve its provision further, the school should take the following steps.
1. Raise the quality of teaching by:
 - sharing the school's best practice;
 - providing training for learning support assistants;
 - developing assessment procedures so that they link into focused target setting for pupils.
 2. Adopt a more structured and consistent approach to assessment and marking, using this for planning and developing future steps in learning.
 3. Clarify the structure of middle management in the school.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 30th November to 3rd December 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and an assembly. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the sanatorium. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of two Ofsted inspectors over two days.

List of Inspectors

Dr Stephen Grounds	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Susan Nebesnuick	Former Director of Studies, SHMIS school
Sister Paula Thomas	Headmistress, GSA school
Mr Keith Walton	Second Master, HMC school