



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**SLINDON COLLEGE**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Slindon College

Full Name of School	<b>Slindon College</b>
DfE Number	<b>938/6094</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1028125</b>
Address	<b>Slindon College Top Road Slindon Arundel West Sussex BN18 0RH</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01243 814320</b>
Fax Number	<b>01243 814702</b>
Email Address	<b>headmasterspa@slindoncollege.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr David Quick</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Michael Withers</b>
Age Range	<b>10 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>76</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Boys</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>50</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>26</b>
	Full: <b>9</b> Weekly: <b>17</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>29 September 2015 to 2 October 2015</b>

## PREFACE

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI boarding intermediate inspection was in October 2013 and the previous ISI full, second cycle inspection was in December 2009.

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

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

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for 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 and with the chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding accommodation 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 Rodney Fox	Reporting Inspector
Mr Stuart Nicholson	Team Inspector (Principal, ISA school)
Dr Stephanie Thomas	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mrs Anne Longton	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Slindon College is an independent day and boarding school providing specialist learning support for boys aged between 10 and 18. It is an educational charity governed by its trustees. It caters for pupils with a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), those who are vulnerable and those who hitherto have had a negative school experience. The school's aim is to provide a learning environment for each boy that is personalised, inclusive, safe, enjoyable and challenging so that, with appropriate support and guidance, boys may develop their various talents and reach their full potential, equipped with suitable skills for life. This aim is encapsulated in the school motto: 'Believe, Inspire, Succeed'.
- 1.2 Founded in 1946 as Lindfield School, Slindon College moved to its present site, near Arundel in West Sussex, in 1956 and adopted its current name in 1972. The main school building dates from the 16th century and is set in a parkland and beech wood site, once home to medieval Archbishops of Canterbury. Boarders are housed on the upper floors of the main building.
- 1.3 Both the headmaster and the chairman of governors took up their posts in September 2014. Since the previous inspection, the school has ceased to provide education for pupils below Year 7 and has extended its provision for Years 12 and 13.
- 1.4 Of the 76 boys on roll, 26 are either full or weekly boarders, although day boys may stay overnight on a flexible basis if they wish to do so. Seventeen pupils are in Years 12 or 13, following tailor-made programmes of study, with a mix of A-level and BTEC courses available. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, mostly from white British families living in south east England. They are often supported by local authorities, seeking appropriate specialist teaching and a flexible curriculum.
- 1.5 Boys come to the school having already been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); 53 have an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs, of whom 50 receive additional specialist help. Standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of pupils entering the school is well below the national average. The wide range of SEND, which include dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome, means that many boys entering the school initially suffer with low self-esteem. Three pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL) and receive additional specialist tuition in English.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The school is largely successful in meeting its aim of enabling boys with SEND to develop their various talents and to reach their full potential, equipped with suitable skills for life. At every stage of the school, pupils, who have often struggled at previous schools, are well supported and enabled to make good progress. They achieve examination results that are good relative to their needs and abilities, aided by good teaching, excellent learning support and a curriculum exceedingly well matched to their needs, although insufficient use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) and the library to enhance learning. Some pupils achieve well in extra-curricular activities, for instance those involved with the building of a low-energy electric car, but for the most part activities do not offer sufficient challenge or the opportunity to engage in collaborative enterprises.
- 2.2 The school is particularly successful at developing self-belief in pupils, who exhibit strong personal development. This is greatly promoted by the excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and the high quality of the pastoral care that is provided by staff, who know the pupils and their needs well. British values of tolerance, respect for one another, democracy, the rule of law and individual liberty are actively fostered in the daily life of the school. The quality of boarding is good and promotes the progress and development of the pupils. Arrangements for securing the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are excellent.
- 2.3 Good governance, leadership and management have enabled the school to make rapid progress in many areas during the past year because of the clear direction and sense of purpose engendered by the leadership team. Those with key roles in planning and delivering support for pupils' needs have too little assistance in managing a crucial function of the school. Although the school is still in transition following the change in leadership, very large majorities of both the parents and pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaires were positive about the school's provision. The boarding welfare inspection in 2013 found that the school did not meet the regulatory requirements concerning the keeping of records of complaints. Appropriate records are now kept. At both the 2013 boarding inspection and the previous full inspection in 2009, a number of recommendations were made for improving the school. Progress has been made in all the recommended areas although there remains further work to undertaken in some.

**2.(b) Action points****(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

**(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Provide more assistance for those with key roles in planning and delivering support for pupils' needs.
  2. Extend the extra-curricular activities programme to include more opportunity for pupils to engage in collective endeavour and develop team-working skills.
  3. Make greater use of ICT to enhance teaching and learning.
  4. Improve the quality and use of the library as a learning resource.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in line with the school's aims to enable each to develop his talents and reach his full potential, equipped with suitable skills for life. They acquire, within the limitations imposed by their particular needs, suitable levels of knowledge and skills in their work and activities. Although many have suffered serious loss of self-esteem before joining the school, they rapidly regain confidence and start to develop their abilities in speaking, listening, reading and writing, enabling some, for example, to perform successfully in a school play. The construction of a low-energy electric car illustrates emerging skills in logical thinking and technology, whilst the art on display shows creativity, independent thought and, often, the application of numeracy and ICT skills. By choice, the school does not engage in competitive sport, but individual pupils enjoy a range of sports. Both bronze and silver levels of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) are achieved each year. Pupils have successfully completed first-aid and life-saving courses. Over £1000 was raised in 2014 for a local children's hospice and pupils have been involved in helping with conservation and local village projects.
- 3.3 In lessons and in written work, pupils at all stages of the school mostly demonstrate good levels of attainment. In practical subjects such as art or design technology, they exhibit good and sometimes high levels of creativity and independence that are less evident in classroom lessons. Most acquire competent levels of literacy and numeracy, although a significant number require assistance with written examinations. Many are articulate and outgoing although some are more withdrawn, owing to their particular conditions.
- 3.4 The analysis which follows uses national data for the years 2012 to 2014, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The GCSE results have been below the national average for boys in maintained schools. A-level results achieved in 2015 were similar to the national average for boys in maintained schools in earlier years. Inspection evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of work and discussions show that, relative to their starting points, abilities and needs, pupils throughout the school make good progress. This is confirmed by statistical analysis and by the pupils' improved concentration, study and communication skills, and increased ability to work together. Progress in these skills is a key element of the school's aims.
- 3.5 Pupils who are more able achieve results commensurate with their ability, as do the very few with EAL, who benefit from the small class sizes and individual attention. Pupils with a wide range of SEND are being successfully enabled to progress and achieve well relative to their abilities. After GCSE, the majority of pupils progress to a sixth form of their choice, or embark on vocational training. Of those who choose to continue with their studies at the school, a significant minority proceed to university, others to apprenticeships or to vocational training.
- 3.6 Pupils are willing learners who generally co-operate well with their teachers and want to succeed. Although some find concentration hard to sustain, most undertake the tasks that they are given with considerable care. Generally, they respond readily to questions in class and have a good relationship with their teachers. They are less skilled learners and rely on the teacher to provide a well-structured explanation.

Independent learning does occur but restricted access to the internet and the quality of the school library hamper independent working. The high number of learning support assistants (LSAs) is a significant and positive factor in helping pupils to maintain focus and so learn effectively.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.8 The academic curriculum is excellent and particularly well suited to the needs of the pupils, placing a strong focus on literacy and numeracy while offering a wide range of creative and practical subjects. Reading is regarded as a key life skill and time is appropriately allocated to this activity at the start of every day. An excellent procedure ensures a more in-depth approach to reading: when pupils finish a book they take an online test to assess their level of recall and reading comprehension, and results are recorded and monitored. The curriculum covers the required elements and provides ample opportunity for the acquisition of skills in computation, reading, writing, speaking and listening. Motor mechanics, cookery, drama, photography, textiles, graphic design, horticulture and land-based studies are offered, alongside the more traditional subjects of English, mathematics, science, humanities, physical education, ICT and design technology. French studies replaces a conventional modern foreign language. Courses leading to BTEC awards are an alternative to GCSEs, providing well for pupils better suited to coursework than examinations. Due consideration has been given to selecting examination boards and courses that best suit pupils' needs. Pupils in the sixth form can follow A-level, BTEC or other courses in a carefully chosen selection of subjects. The school makes considerable efforts to match courses to pupils' specific needs and interests, for example astronomy. Due attention is paid to supporting school leavers in the next stage of their development by providing an excellent Life Skills programme that seeks to prepare young adults for the world outside. The course includes topics such as opening a bank account and accessing information about public transport. British values are actively promoted across the curriculum. Tolerance was highlighted as a fundamental British value in a Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme discussion about emotions, where the centrality of the rule of law and the importance of freedom of speech were also discussed. Careers provision is carefully considered, often involving apprenticeships or placements that particularly suit the school's leavers.
- 3.9 The curriculum for pupils with SEND is one of the strengths of the school. It offers specialist teaching, occupational therapy, speech and language therapy and the SEAL programme. Taken together, these elements constitute comprehensive, multi-disciplinary provision that satisfies the often inter-related needs of the pupils. The Additional Needs Hub is the base for this holistic approach, which aims to help pupils to progress and become more aware of how best they learn and relate to others within their community. Pupils' EHC plans and statements are closely monitored to ensure that the needs identified are being met.
- 3.10 The contribution of the extra-curricular provision is sound. Pupils may take advantage of a range of activities that include sport, creative and mechanical clubs, the DofE, drama and astronomy. Sporting activities are largely non-competitive, focusing instead on the principle of participants improving on their personal best. Most activities offered to pupils involve small groups pursuing an interest rather than collective enterprise.

3.11 The school forges some worthwhile links with the community. Pupils with particular expertise provide ICT support for nearby residents, a local church is used for a weekly service and pupils plant trees as part of a National Trust project. Many visits take pupils out of the school; trips to a nearby priory and overnight camping as part of the DofE programme took place during the inspection. Boarders make good use of the extra-curricular programme and levels of participation are good.

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

3.12 The contribution of teaching is good.

3.13 Members of staff are well trained and qualified to provide effective teaching for all ages and abilities. They are particularly knowledgeable about pupils' individual needs and demonstrate a high level of awareness of teaching methods to promote their progress. Consequently, they are well able to match tasks to pupils' needs so that lessons are accessible for pupils with a range of SEND. Classes are small and allow generous attention to individual learning. Lessons are carefully planned to maximise a multi-sensory approach and high visual content. In an occupational therapy session, for example, a pupil who had difficulty learning the letter 'k' remembered it well after writing it using ketchup. The most successful lessons are based on a series of short, stimulating tasks, are highly structured, and contain a high level of visual content and repetition. A small minority of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire did not agree that homework helps their progress. Inspection found value in reinforcing learning with repetition through homework.

3.14 Work is marked regularly. Teachers' comments are invariably supportive, but are insufficiently analytical, which means that pupils may not understand exactly how they can improve their work. Since the previous inspection a rigorous system of tracking pupils' progress has been introduced, enabling management to monitor an individual pupil's progress effectively. Target setting, a previous inspection recommendation, is inconsistent, so that pupils sometimes lack a clear sense of personal direction in their studies.

3.15 Teaching is very well supported by a generous number of LSAs, who keep their pupils focused and assist them with their understanding. The contribution of the LSAs is well regarded by classroom teachers, who view them as essential aides in lessons. Pupils too, in interviews, spoke highly of the help they receive from LSAs. The LSAs mostly use their own initiative in lessons, and opportunities for feedback and sharing good practice are not formalised. They are, however, invited to attend all teacher training events, thereby meeting a previous inspection recommendation. All LSAs complete online training, for example, in understanding and managing autism, and some elect to follow personal interest courses such as mentoring. Newly appointed assistants undertake a SEND induction in addition to the school's induction procedure.

3.16 The pace of learning is sometimes slow in lessons and some pupils find it difficult to sustain focus. Most teaching manages such behaviour well and ensures good productivity in lessons. Good quality resources are plentiful and well suited to the pupils' needs but there is little evidence of pupils being encouraged to use ICT and other technology to support the quality of written work or to motivate them and engage their attention. Similarly, the library's limited range of books provides insufficient support for learning. In a small number of lessons observed, expectations were low and pupils were not sufficiently challenged to rise to their

potential. In a minority of lessons, over-reliance on the teacher to provide direction stifled opportunity to foster independent learning.

- 3.17 Teaching strongly supports pupils with SEND or EAL, who benefit from an holistic approach. It takes good account of the variation of SEND and how they affect learning. The school's in-service training programme enhances, updates and extends teachers' specialist knowledge. The Additional Needs Hub and its specialist teachers are a further source of reference. There is, for example, good expertise in autism, including from speech and language therapists and significant recent improvements in the school's ability to support pupils on the autistic spectrum, while the SEAL programme is highly effective and deploys high quality teaching.
- 3.18 Responsibility for the large number of pupils, staff and activities associated with the hub is a demanding undertaking. At present, opportunity for specialist teachers to work in or observe class lessons is restricted, thereby limiting the spread of good practice, a previous inspection recommendation. Provision for pupils with EHC plans or a statement of special educational needs is excellent. The special educational needs co-ordinator works closely with local authorities and parents in drawing up provision maps and the school accepts only those pupils for whom it is confident about fulfilling the provision requirements. Pupils with EHC plans and statements are closely monitored and their statutory annual reviews are undertaken conscientiously, with parents having appropriate opportunity to contribute.
- 3.19 Pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were strongly appreciative of the help and support that they receive from their teachers.

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

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' personal development, promoted actively by the school, is strong and fulfils the school's aims, including its particular goals of distinguishing between right and wrong and respecting shared British values. Pupils are at ease with themselves and tolerant of one another. Whilst some arrive at the school with low self-esteem, the unflinching support and positive ethos, consistent with the school's desire to believe in the ability of its pupils, help to develop their self-confidence and enable them to understand their potential for success. In particular, participation in the SEAL programme effectively promotes pupils' personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils acquire a well-developed spiritual awareness and an understanding and appreciation of various faith traditions, with visits to a local mosque, synagogue and priory. They respond positively to the weekly church service, participating well in the collective nature of the singing and prayers. A sense of awe and wonder is evident in their view of science, for example Year 9 pupils describing the chemistry of everyday life as amazing, and in the responses of Year 11 pupils to the insights of genetics and to the brilliance of the constellations.
- 4.4 Pupils show excellent moral awareness at all levels. They distinguish clearly between right and wrong, support the school's rules and recognise that people should be held to account for their actions. They understand the importance of respect for, and have a clear knowledge of, the role of the law of England and how they might keep themselves safe in society. Their work in this area is supported by a local police officer. The tolerance and courtesy displayed by pupils are a hallmark of the school.
- 4.5 The social development of pupils is excellent. They mostly get on well together and show a keen sense of supporting one another's well-being. They look after visitors with politeness and good manners, and they take care of new or visiting pupils on taster visits. There are few opportunities for group activities but pupils co-operate well in class and in larger gatherings, such as in the dining hall, at registrations or in assemblies, where a sense of order and calm prevails. Pupils expressed their gratitude for what the school does for them; they were wholehearted in their appreciation of the decision their parents had made for them.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural development is strong. They have a clear respect for different cultures, consistent with their tolerant response to difference and individuality of all kinds. Pupils' political and economic awareness was raised during the General Election when members of staff represented political parties in a school mock election. Manifestos were supplemented with visual presentations to help explain any complexities, and the pupils' own returning officer announced the results and dealt with procedure. Many pupils are very aware of the public institutions involved in their own annual review process, which brings them into contact directly with local authorities, social services and health services.
- 4.7 By the time they leave the school the pupils' personal development is excellent. There is a wide range of ability and need amongst pupils and all are well prepared for the move to life beyond school, with the potential to lead fulfilling lives and to be part of and to contribute to wider society.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The pastoral care provided strongly supports the school motto for pupils to believe in themselves, be inspired and so succeed. A network of staff supports each pupil, including form tutors, house staff and senior leaders, and the headmaster, who has an 'open door' policy. Pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were confident that there is always someone to whom they could turn for support.
- 4.10 Relationships between pupils and staff are excellent. Pupils reported in their questionnaire responses that their teachers are concerned for them as people, help them to learn and provide individual help when needed. The school's behaviour policy reflects requirements. A clear code of conduct guides staff in their dealings with pupils. Relationships amongst pupils can sometimes be challenging, given the nature of their SEND, and they may find it hard to maintain relationships, but they are tolerant towards each other. The SEAL programme is an effective intervention to promote pupil relationships and emotional health. In their questionnaire responses, a small minority of pupils said that teachers are inconsistent in their use of sanctions. Inspectors found that teachers are generally reluctant to use sanctions, relying instead on the strong relationships that they build with the pupils to enable them to manage behaviour. The use of sanctions is carefully monitored and inspectors found no evidence of unfairness, whilst recognising that the SEND of some pupils make it difficult to manage their behaviour at times.
- 4.11 Meals provided by the school are nutritious, and the range of extra-curricular activities, physical education lessons and opportunities to participate in sport encourage the pupils to benefit from regular exercise, including use of an open-air swimming pool in the summer months.
- 4.12 The school guards against the risks of cyber-bullying or online radicalisation by regularly promoting safe use of the internet, monitoring its use and filtering the information that pupils may access. All pupils are made aware of the school's acceptable use policy.
- 4.13 The school has developed an approach to minimise the risk of bullying which includes a no physical contact rule and encouragement to tell a teacher about any concerns. A small minority of the pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were dissatisfied with the school's handling of bullying. In interviews, pupils reported that if a bullying issue arose the pastoral and teaching staff would act swiftly to resolve the situation. Careful scrutiny of the school's records and extensive discussions with pupils and staff indicated that this dissatisfaction reflected the situation as it used to be. Pupils strongly appreciate the steps taken through the no touching policy to ensure that physical bullying is now infrequent and, if it occurs, is promptly dealt with.
- 4.14 A small minority of pupils said in questionnaire responses that the school does not seek or respond to their views. Inspectors found that pupils have a variety of ways in which they may make their views known, including through a school council. Due to their open relationships with staff, pupils are confident that if they are unhappy about anything they can turn for help to any member of staff.
- 4.15 The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.16 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.17 The school has a comprehensive safeguarding policy that is regularly reviewed and is in full accordance with official guidance. It was amended at the start of the school year to include measures to protect children from being radicalised. Members of staff have been trained to be aware of the signs of radicalisation and how to take appropriate action if they are worried. The school's designated safeguarding lead (DSL) maintains thorough records of any safeguarding concerns and liaises promptly with statutory agencies over any concerns that arise. Both the DSL and the headmaster have received safeguarding training within the last year. Recruitment procedures, including pre-appointment checks, are in line with statutory guidance and are rigorously implemented for all teaching and non-teaching staff. The single central register is accurately maintained.
- 4.18 A suitable set of policies and procedures has been designed to minimise risk from fire. Fire evacuation practices are conducted regularly and suitably recorded. Good liaison is established with the local fire brigade, who have made familiarisation visits to the school.
- 4.19 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are thorough and are regularly reviewed. Risk is appropriately assessed and minimised. Pupils who are ill or injured receive excellent care in the medical centre. The needs of those with SEND are given high importance by managers, including the need to prepare, when necessary, personal evacuation and emergency plans.
- 4.20 The admission and attendance registers are appropriately kept and stored for the required period. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicate that parents and pupils believe that the pupils are safe in the school.

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

- 4.21 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.22 The outcomes for boarders are good. The school provides a caring and supportive environment in which the boarders flourish individually, and their confidence, integrity and tolerance are able to develop at a natural pace. The boarders report that they feel part of the community and have good opportunities to contribute their views through the boarding council or informally to the boarding staff. Those with SEND are comfortable in the boarding environment, although developing relationships with staff and other boarders is challenging for some. Boarders learn independence and realise that staff are keen to prepare them for adult life. The opportunity to undertake prefect duties in Years 10 and 11 encourages boarders to develop a sense of responsibility for themselves and others.
- 4.23 The quality of the boarding provision and care is good. The boarding staff are committed to looking after boarders' needs. The pastoral, boarding and teaching staff liaise effectively to promote the health and well-being of boarders. All boarders have an informal induction programme and a 'buddy' is appointed to assist their transition to life as a boarder. A suitable and varied extra-curricular programme is available for boarders, which encourages a healthy approach to their daily life.
- 4.24 The medical centre is conveniently placed in the boarding house, allowing prompt attention to be given to unwell boarders and those needing daily care or medication.

A matron with first-aid training runs the medical centre during the daytime, but overnight care can be provided in the centre if necessary, overseen by resident house staff. Appropriate policies now in place, together with the efficient procedures established, help to ensure effective healthcare for boarders. In the event of a pupil requiring a doctor, this is available through a local practice. All staff have an appropriate awareness of confidentiality.

- 4.25 Fire safety checks and drills are regular and timely. In their questionnaire returns a small minority of pupils were not satisfied with the food and the availability of snacks and drinks in the houses. Boarders take their meals in the nearby dining room, where inspectors found the food to be nutritious and well balanced, and where there is always a choice. Inspectors found that the catering manager liaises with parents as necessary and is able to provide for any special dietary requirements. Drinking water is readily available throughout the school and boarders are able to have snacks in the house during the evening. A tuck shop operates in the boarding house on a daily basis and staff monitor how much boarders purchase.
- 4.26 The boarding accommodation is spacious, and contains suitable areas for boarders of all ages to relax in, including games and television rooms. A rolling refurbishment programme is in progress, as recommended at the previous boarding inspection, although some areas of the boarding house remain in need of redecoration. Boarders in Years 12 and 13 benefit from individual study bedrooms. A programme of outings, which includes recreational visits, such as to a theme park, paintballing or the cinema, is offered most weekends. The school's supervised outdoor pool is a popular activity in the warmer months. Suitable free time is available in the evening following supervised prep sessions. Weekly trips are organised to the nearby supermarket to allow boarders to purchase essentials, or they can choose from a limited choice available in the school shop. Sixth-form pupils are allowed to visit nearby facilities or shopping areas independently. In questionnaire responses a small minority of boarders were concerned about the safety of their possessions. Inspectors found that all boarders are provided with a personal lockable space in their room, the doors to which can also be locked. Boarders are encouraged to contact their families on a regular basis using their personal mobile telephones, video conferencing or email. In response to the questionnaire a small minority of boarders commented that it is not always easy to contact home. Inspectors found that the mobile telephone signal is sometimes weak, as is internet connectivity, and although a landline telephone is available to use, immediate contact cannot always be achieved.
- 4.27 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is good. Safeguarding policies and procedures are implemented appropriately, and all staff with responsibilities towards the boarders are suitably trained and demonstrate an understanding of safeguarding issues. Safe recruitment procedures are followed. Any cases of bullying which may arise are addressed promptly, and staff and pupils report that currently there is very little evidence of bullying. An 'open door' policy in the boarding house allows boarders to discuss any difficulties informally and spontaneously. The boarders are aware that, if they need to, they can contact a range of outside support agencies, whose contact details are published on house notice boards. These include an independent listener, who visits the boarding house regularly and is contacted by boarders, often during the examination period. The boarding house staff rota allows for generous staff cover for morning and evening routines, and regular roll calls ensure that staff know the whereabouts of boarders.

- 4.28 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. The boarding team is well led and managed, staff are experienced and appropriately trained, and effective links are maintained between the academic and boarding staff. A clear statement of boarding principles and practice is understood by all the staff. Boarders' personal development is a priority and is carefully monitored. Records are efficiently kept and information shared appropriately with other staff. A new appraisal system is currently being implemented to encourage more regular review of staff development and to identify personal objectives. A current three-year development plan for the boarding provision has been drawn up in collaboration with senior staff, which meets a previous inspection recommendation for boarding house staff to review their practice with a senior member of staff.
- 4.29 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents of boarders strongly supported the view that boarding helps their children to progress and develop. They were satisfied that the school keeps their children safe and treats them as individuals. A minority would like to be better informed about their children's progress, and the school has already recognised a need to provide clearer information in reports to parents. A very large majority of both parents and pupils responding to the questionnaires were positive about the school and its boarding provision.
- 4.30 The school has responded appropriately to all the requirements and recommendations concerning boarding from previous inspections.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The school benefits from having active governors who have wide-ranging expertise, and are well informed about its life and work. Governors are frequently seen at the school and most are well known to members of staff. In addition to the full board, the finance and premises committees keep close oversight of key aspects of school life. Individual governors take particular interests in safeguarding, health and safety, boarding and the curriculum. Consequently, governors have a wealth of detailed knowledge and understanding of the life of the school. They are generally well equipped to discharge their responsibilities for monitoring educational standards, financial planning and the suitable deployment of resources, although they do not have particular expertise or training in meeting the needs of pupils with SEND.
- 5.3 Prior to governance meetings, governors spend a morning in the school, visiting lessons and talking with staff and pupils. Governors, especially the chairman, are in regular contact with the headmaster and the bursar, and fully involved in the development of vision and planning for the future. They are well able to provide strong support, challenge, and stimulus for growth and improvement.
- 5.4 Governors are meticulous in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met in a timely manner. This includes fulfilling their duties with regard to conducting an annual review of the safeguarding policy and the effectiveness of its implementation. The single central register is checked for accuracy and signed by the chairman. Minutes from the health and safety committee are reported to the governors each term, providing the opportunity for regular discussion of health and safety at governors' meetings. Accident records are sent to the chairman for analysis of patterns.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 The leadership and management of the school are very effective in securing its aims and in the discharge of their responsibilities. They have a strong and consistent vision about how the school should develop. Clear direction is provided and the school is making rapid progress through the introduction of new policies and systems, although these sometimes have yet to embed fully; some are still under development. Systems for ensuring compliance with regulations are effective and up to date, with training in the recently introduced 'Prevent' strategy, the Government's approach to combating extremism, having already taken place. The small size of the school enables close and frequent contact amongst staff throughout, and this is used effectively to supplement formal systems. Policies relating to safeguarding and regulatory compliance are consistently implemented and effectively overseen.
- 5.7 The good quality of pupils' education and the excellent standard of their personal development reflect effective leadership and management. Systems for caring for

pupils are strong and create a climate that is empathetic, supportive and optimistic. This results in a community that pupils find inclusive and in which they are happy. Personal development is strong and fosters pupils' patience with themselves and with one another, so that they progress academically and grow in confidence.

- 5.8 In the short period since his appointment, the headmaster and leadership team have been effective in evaluating the work of the school and setting priorities for development. The whole-school improvement plan is clear and well documented. It is a comprehensive, detailed plan covering all aspects of school life. Key elements of the plan are distilled for discussion with all staff and progress is monitored by the leadership team. Not all changes have yet been fully implemented: for example, the change to the marking policy, whilst identified as an area of whole-school focus for the previous spring term, has not yet been firmly embedded into practice. A previous inspection recommendation was for the school to adopt a more structured and consistent approach to assessment and marking, using this for planning and developing future steps in learning. Inspection evidence revealed that some progress has been made, for example in the structured reading scheme, where assessment is thorough and which carefully guides pupils into appropriate next steps, but further work is needed to address this recommendation fully.
- 5.9 Members of the leadership team conduct formal lesson observations and work scrutiny. The school has responded to previous inspection recommendations to clarify the structure of middle management and to strengthen teaching through increased sharing of best practice by gathering teaching departments together under faculty leaders. The impact of this and its relation to other layers of management have yet to be clarified. Some areas of middle management are now very clear, for example in boarding, and a further recommendation that boarding staff should have opportunity for formal review of their practice with a senior member of staff has been met. The work undertaken to support pupils with SEND within the school is key but the managerial resource presently available to support this fully is insufficient, although the school recognises this as a consequence of rapid growth in its highly successful learning support.
- 5.10 Management at all levels is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff, and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles. The school is supportive of the development of LSAs in becoming qualified teachers: almost one third of the current teachers began as LSAs. Effective management ensures that staff and systems meet the needs of pupils in safeguarding and welfare, health and safety. The training structure includes after-school and full day provision for all classroom-based staff, with clear focus aligned to whole-school priorities. A new professional development framework is clear in its structure, although just beginning its implementation.
- 5.11 Parents feel encouraged to be involved in the work of the school and in events it organises. The Parent Teacher Association focuses mainly on fund raising for the school. Plans are well advanced to add a Parents' Forum to act as a more formal consultation body. The informal structures for parents' interaction with the school are significant. At the beginning and end of the school day parents are welcome to meet staff, and a more structured opportunity is on offer every Friday afternoon, with an afternoon tea at the end of lessons.
- 5.12 Parents' pre-inspection questionnaire responses indicated that when concerns are raised the school handles these well. Scrutiny of school records confirms that parents' concerns are dealt with promptly, with diligence and in accordance with the

published procedures. A website portal enables the school to communicate frequently with parents on matters of general relevance, such as the school newsletter, or over issues of individual concern, and also provides an effective mechanism for parents to contact staff and to share in the progress of their children.

- 5.13 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school. Admission processes for prospective pupils are thorough and enable detailed understanding of the suitability of the school for each individual for both parents and the school. Planning for the appropriate level of learning support is interwoven into enquiry and enrolment procedures to ensure that effective support is provided from the outset of every pupil's time at the school.
- 5.14 A very large majority of the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied with the school. They reported that their children are happy and feel safe at school, that boarding helps their children to develop and progress, and that members of staff treat their children as individuals. A minority of those responding did not feel satisfied with the information that they receive about their children's progress, and a small minority did not agree that the school achieves high standards of behaviour. Inspectors found that the school's reports to parents are encouraging but insufficiently informative about how pupils might improve. This is an area where the school management has demonstrated successful evaluation of current practice. It has already published new and very clear report-writing guidelines that set out a framework for much more useful report feedback to parents on both academic and pastoral matters; implementation is still at an introductory phase. Inspectors found the pupils they encountered to be well behaved, and that procedures and policies introduced recently contribute to good behaviour and respectful consideration for others.

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