



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

COBHAM HALL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Cobham Hall

Full Name of School	Cobham Hall		
DfE Number	886/6044		
Registered Charity Number	313650		
Address	Cobham Hall Cobham Gravesend Kent DA12 3BL		
Telephone Number	01474 823371		
Fax Number	01474 825902		
Email Address	enquiries@cobhamhall.com		
Head	Mr Paul Mitchell		
Chair of Governors	Mr Martin Pennell		
Age Range	11 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	159		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	11-18	159	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	68	
Number of Boarders	Total:	91	
	Full:	84	Weekly: 7
Inspection Dates	10 Feb 2015 to 13 Feb 2015		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2012.

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

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', '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 chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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Mrs Caroline Jordan

Ms Alison Horton

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Former Senior Manager, SoH school)

Team Inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Cobham Hall is an international boarding school for girls aged between eleven and eighteen. It is overseen by a board of governors. The school is a member of the Round Square world-wide association of schools and its ethos reflects their principles of internationalism, democracy, environment, adventure, leadership and service. The school aims to fully develop each pupil's potential: intellectual, physical, social, moral and spiritual. The academic programme aims to offer a wide range of subjects and to achieve strong results in examinations including GCSE, IGCSE and the International Baccalaureate (IB). The school's philosophy encourages personal development through adventure and challenge, summed up by the school's motto 'There is more in you than you think'.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1962 and is situated in North Kent in an historic country house with extensive parkland. It lies between Gravesend and Rochester, within 30 miles of London. A purpose-built teaching block, sixth-form boarding houses and sports facilities are adjacent to the main buildings. Pupils mainly come from business or professional families and from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. Day pupils are drawn from the north Kent and Medway areas and boarders come from many different countries.
- 1.3 The school currently educates 159 girls between the ages of 11 and 18 and is organised into three sections: the lower school (Years 7 and 8), the middle school (Years 9 to 11) and the sixth form (Years 12 and 13). Pupils belong to mixed-age tutor groups within one of four houses. There are three boarding houses: Main Hall for Years 7 to 11, and Bligh House and Brooke House for the sixth form. More than half of pupils board and day pupils are able to stay for meals and overnight. There are 63 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.4 In the lower and middle schools most pupils have abilities that are above or in line with the national average for girls in maintained schools. In the sixth form the ability profile is slightly below the national average. At all levels there is a fairly wide spread of abilities and this varies between cohorts. Pupils with specific learning difficulties are supported and the school is recognised by the Council for the Registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexic Students (CReSTeD). There are 17 pupils who receive learning support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) such as dyslexia. No pupil has an education and health care plan.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection, the school has introduced a full IB programme in the sixth form and some IGCSEs are offered in Year 11. The Saturday programme has been changed to include a variety of activities and trips to complement the academic programme and offer pupils challenging and adventurous opportunities. A new chair of governors has been appointed.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

Senior School

School	NC name
Year 7	7
Year 8	8
Year 9	9
Year 10	10
Year 11	11
Year 12	12
Year 13	13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school successfully achieves its aim to enable pupils to develop their intellectual potential. The pupils' overall achievement is excellent. In public examinations the attainment of all pupils, including those with SEND and EAL is good. The pupils' progress at all ages is good and those with SEND and EAL make progress that is at least as good as their peers. Achievement in extra-curricular activities is excellent. Pupils excel in team and individual sports and in creative and aesthetic activities. The school offers an excellent curriculum with a wide choice of options at GCSE and IGCSE. The sixth-form curriculum ensures that pupils have a balanced programme of study and the opportunity to do independent research. Teaching is excellent and makes careful individual provision for all pupils including those with SEND and EAL. The most successful teaching offers challenge to more able pupils but this is not consistent in all teaching. Excellent relationships with teachers enable pupils to make rapid progress.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, promoted by the international nature of the school and its Round Square ethos. Pupils value the opportunity to meet and become friends with pupils from all over the world. Pastoral care is excellent and the contribution of welfare, health and safety is good. The school accords a high priority to the arrangements for safeguarding its pupils and these now reflect official guidance. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire the overwhelming majority of parents said their child is happy and safe at school. The quality of boarding education is good. Boarders are well cared for. The standard of accommodation is variable; a programme of refurbishment is successfully underway. Arrangements for safeguarding are good and well understood by staff but some policies and procedures, such as the procedure for signing in and out of houses, have not been effectively evaluated or monitored in the past.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is good and investments in the fabric and staffing of the school have resulted in improvements for pupils. Governors have ensured that the recommendations from the previous inspections have all been addressed. Governors fulfil their responsibility for safeguarding and safer recruitment with care but not all have had training in this area. Oversight of policies and procedures is adequate but limited in scope. The quality of leadership and management is good. A small leadership team provides strong educational direction to an effective middle management tier. The re-structuring of boarding staffing has enabled house staff to develop their roles for the benefit of the pupils. Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent and parents have many opportunities to be involved. They receive regular reports on their child's progress and tutors contact parents with concerns or to celebrate achievements. Overseas parents receive boarding newsletters and individual emails.

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 2013

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve governor training in their responsibilities for ensuring rigorous regulatory compliance, especially in safeguarding.
2. Regularly evaluate policies and procedures relating to boarding and ensure their rigorous implementation.

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' academic and other achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils are educated to a high standard and excel in extra-curricular activities fulfilling the school's aim to develop each pupil's potential in and out of the classroom.
- 3.3 Pupils of all ages have good knowledge and all, including those with SEND and EAL, demonstrate high levels of literacy. They speak clearly and fluently in assemblies and in class, including in modern foreign languages. Written work is of a high standard; pupils write accurately using a rich vocabulary. They reason logically, for example, in a lower school mathematics lesson, pupils successfully worked in pairs finding data sets to fit given conditions. These skills are applied effectively in national mathematics competitions and in other subjects. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently.
- 3.4 Pupils are highly creative, for example when working together in drama and music and they enjoy success in events such as local music festivals. In art and photography, the pupils' work is excellent, demonstrated in examples on the school website of works submitted for a national competition. Pupils achieve success in instrumental examinations and a tenth of the pupils take speech and drama examinations, with some attaining the higher grades. Pupils with EAL achieve success in English language qualifications.
- 3.5 Pupils excel in sports such as hockey, netball, biathlon, swimming and trampolining. Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme (DofE) is high with many pupils achieving bronze and some continuing to silver award. The school participates in a national organisation which encourages schools to improve their 'green' credentials; staff and pupils have worked together to achieve bronze and silver awards.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The pupils' attainment in public examinations is good. The small number of pupils within each cohort makes detailed comparisons difficult. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and over four-fifths of grades achieved were at A* to C. Those in IGCSE have been higher than worldwide averages in most subjects. Results in IB have been similar to worldwide averages, and have shown improvement from 2011 onwards. Results from 2014 confirm this improvement. Comparisons against worldwide norms indicate that the pupils' progress is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Sixth-form leavers are successful in gaining places on courses at their first choice of university. These levels of attainment, supported by evidence from lessons, work scrutiny and pupil interviews, show that pupils at all ages make progress that is good in relation to pupils of similar ability.
- 3.7 Pupils with SEND make progress that is at least in line with their peers and often better. They benefit from the inclusive policies pursued by senior leaders and highly effective interventions by specialist staff. Pupils with EAL make equally good progress, supported by specific language programmes, and curriculum and examination adaptations. The international nature of the school encourages them to become fluent in English and so to make rapid progress. The school's emphasis on

independent learning and the demands of the sixth-form curriculum enable more able pupils to make progress appropriate to their abilities.

- 3.8 The pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They settle to work quickly and are keen to excel. They work equally well whether they are in groups or pairs or working independently; they co-operate well with their teachers. They are thoughtful and accurate and have high expectations of themselves, resulting in a highly productive working environment in the classroom. The pupils' willingness to work independently shows that the recommendation from the previous full inspection has been met.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The IB has been successfully introduced and its philosophy is a natural match for the school's Round Square ethos. The curriculum successfully reflects the shared themes that learning should be wider than academic achievement, and include elements of service and an international perspective.
- 3.11 Corridor displays and projects in the grounds show the school's successful education of pupils to take responsibility for the environment. This links well with the curriculum, for example the efficiency of the school's solar panels is directly monitored in science.
- 3.12 Pupils in the middle school are offered an excellent choice of options including dual award or separate sciences; a wide range of languages and classics are available. Art is a particular strength and the excellent outcomes are visible throughout the school. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is provided very effectively and reinforced in tutor groups and curriculum lessons; for example, the theme of healthy eating in Year 9 biology is linked to an introduction to the food wheel in Year 7 PSHE. A well-established careers programme throughout the school is implemented in PSHE. Pupils comment that careers education opens up their options.
- 3.13 The nature of the school community and its ethos lends itself naturally to the promotion of fundamental British values. There is much discussion of democracy, rule of law and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. This is enriched by the pupils' experiences from their own countries. The sixth-form curriculum is tailored to the requirements of the individual learner with a small number of students accessing the IB certificate programme instead of the full diploma. The provision for pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent as the curriculum is adapted to suit their individual learning needs. More able pupils benefit from opportunities to engage in independent work and to develop research skills. This equips them well for the extended essay requirement of the IB. An introductory course to English education is offered to EAL overseas pupils in the sixth form.
- 3.14 The programme of extra-curricular activities is excellent. There are opportunities for pupils to develop creatively and physically through art and drama clubs, choirs and extensive sporting opportunities. A high proportion of pupils take part in major school productions, for example all who auditioned for the school musical were given a part. Day and boarding pupils benefit equally from these activities, which take place immediately after lessons and on Saturday mornings. Pupils in Year 9 undertake DofE as part of the timetable and the extensive grounds are used well for activities such as gardening club, or simply for climbing trees.

- 3.15 Community service is a well-established component of the sixth-form curriculum and the school has extended this to middle school pupils. A training course improves their awareness of communication, collaboration and planning and suitable placements are arranged within the local community, such as helping in a community shop or working to protect historic parkland.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.17 Teaching is highly effective in promoting the pupils' progress and supports the aims of the school to fully develop each pupil's intellectual potential. The most successful teaching has clear objectives and uses open-ended and focused questions to assess the pupils' understanding and progress. An example was seen in physics practical where highly effective questioning enabled pupils to reason from previous knowledge to understand Boyle's Law. Throughout the school teaching is well planned, briskly paced and fosters the interest and the enjoyment of pupils. It shows very good time management, is based on an understanding of the pupils' needs and is effective in promoting their progress. Marking and assessment are constructive and enable good progress in learning. The most successful gives pupils well-considered guidance and suitable targets.
- 3.18 The rapport between teachers and their pupils is extremely positive, enabling the teaching to be purposeful, effective and enjoyable. In interviews and in their questionnaire responses, pupils stated that they recognise the contribution that teaching makes to their progress, that teachers help them to learn and give them individual support when they need it.
- 3.19 Teaching displays excellent subject knowledge and uses a variety of effective methods which enable the pupils to make a significant contribution to their own learning. For example, younger pupils studying the Second World War used role play effectively to imagine themselves as ministers in the cabinet rooms, coming up with reasons for appeasement. Appropriate and imaginative resources are used to support the pupils' learning. Effective use of ICT includes the use by sixth-form pupils in mathematics of graphical calculators to explore statistical data. In art, software for manipulating images is used to encourage creativity.
- 3.20 There has been progress in the development of independent learning across many subjects since the previous inspection. Pupils in GCSE drama chose to research the women of Cobham Hall for a devised drama assessment and gained an understanding and appreciation of the historic nature of their surroundings. The development and staffing of an independent learning centre has enabled pupils to research more independently. More able pupils are challenged in several areas, including art and chemistry, and in the Saturday programme, where they are able to explore Ancient Babylonian language. This level of challenge for the more able is not consistent across all subject areas. Highly successful teaching in a music lesson required younger pupils to engage with the interpretation of a classical piece; this led them to develop their own group performances independently, with the most able being given more complex musical scores.
- 3.21 Additional support is readily available to all pupils where required and teaching provides opportunities for pupils with SEND to develop their skills. Pupils say that they receive high quality support for dyslexia in essay structure, spelling, vocabulary

and organisational skills. EAL pupils are well supported in lessons and helped with specialist subject vocabulary.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school fully meets its aim to develop each pupil's potential in physical, social moral and spiritual areas.
- 4.3 The spiritual development of the pupils is excellent. They are confident, self-aware and emotionally mature for their ages. Some pupils said that this was the major benefit from their period of study at the school. The advances made in the pupils' spiritual development meet the recommendation of the previous full inspection. Pupils appreciate the non-material aspects of life, whether religious or philosophical. Some said they experienced awe and wonder in a GCSE physics lesson about space. Pupils practise their various faiths by attending places of worship and in small group activities. They attend inter-faith discussions and assemblies and some religious festivals. The PSHE programme includes religion in every year with developing complexity. The pupils respond positively to the historic environment in which they work.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is excellent. They have a clear sense of right and wrong as seen in their behaviour and in discussions. In a theory of knowledge lesson, pupils considered how intuition affects moral thinking with great success. In PSHE pupils consider the moral issues involved in topics such as bullying and the use of drugs. They embrace the Round Square ideals of internationalism and democracy; tolerance of those with different ideals and beliefs is celebrated. Pupils show exceptional awareness of, and responsibility for, the environment and are proud of their greenhouse constructed of recycled plastic bottles, built as part of the Round Square conference hosted by the school. Pupils are aware of those less fortunate than themselves and every year choose charities which they support through fund-raising events.
- 4.5 Pupils display excellent social development in their relationships with each other and with teachers and other adults. This was seen in a rehearsal for the school musical where there were friendly, respectful relationships between teachers and pupils and amongst pupils themselves. Pupils are happy to accept responsibility whether in formal posts such as guardians (head girl and deputy head girl) and house captains, by starting or running an activity, or by looking after new or younger pupils. British values are enshrined in many aspects of school life and tolerance of the views of others is emphasised. The criminal justice system is part of the Year 9 PSHE curriculum. Pupils described democracy in action in the process of the election of the school guardians.
- 4.6 The cultural development of pupils is excellent. Pupils benefit from the rich mix of cultures represented in the school which are celebrated in events such as culture week. Class discussions frequently lead to comparisons between the pupils' different cultures and pupils say they value this aspect of school life. In economics, pupils compared the different penal and judicial systems that occur in their home countries. Pupils have an excellent appreciation of British culture, evident in their ready participation in drama and music.
- 4.7 The pupils' personal development has been fostered by the introduction of the school's own programme for creativity, action and service where pupils record their

reflections on such issues as self-awareness, charity and the environment in their journals. Overall, students have an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave the school.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of the arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The school's aim to promote emotional and physical well-being is implemented with great success. Staff encourage pupils to achieve their best and to develop the necessary skills to become successful members of the school, and any future community. Pupils and parents comment positively on the quality of care given, in their responses to questionnaires.
- 4.10 The pastoral structure ensures that tutors build strong relationships with pupils and parents. This ensures excellent individual care. Lower school pupils enjoy a weekly 'family lunch' and older pupils can train as 'peer mentors'. High quality relationships between staff and pupils are evident at all times. Pupils commented on the approachability of staff and their willingness to offer extra support. Relationships between pupils are extremely good.
- 4.11 The school has effective procedures to promote good behaviour and to guard against bullying. Close relationships with pupils enable staff to notice emerging concerns and to address them before they become more serious. Pupils are encouraged to report any incidence of bullying and these are thoroughly logged, investigated and monitored for signs of peer abuse. In the questionnaire a few parents did not agree that the school deals well with bullying. The school's log shows that bullying incidents are dealt with in an effective and timely manner. In the pupil questionnaires a minority of those who responded said that teachers do not give sanctions fairly. Almost all pupils questioned said that the system is fair and appropriate. Records of sanctions show that they are used appropriately.
- 4.12 A majority of pupils, in response to questionnaires, said that the school does not ask for their opinions. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The refurbished common room and bathrooms in a boarding house reflect designs and colour schemes chosen by pupils. When asked whether they were listened to by the school, pupils were unanimous in saying that the school offers many opportunities, such as the bursar's forum and the food committee, for them to express their views, and gave examples of changes achieved as a result of consultation. Pupils commented on the willingness of staff to listen to them informally.
- 4.13 Healthy eating is promoted by the school in PSHE and biology lessons. Year 11 pupils enjoy practical cookery sessions to reinforce the message. The programme of physical activities provided in and outside the curriculum encourages pupils to take exercise in an enjoyable and challenging way. Pupils greatly appreciate the school; sixth-form pupils can use the exercise equipment in the evenings and at weekends, and swimming sessions are available at certain times.
- 4.14 The school has a suitable plan to improve accessibility within the constraints of its historic buildings.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.

- 4.16 The arrangements for the safeguarding of pupils of all ages are accorded a high priority by the school and now fully reflect statutory guidance. Governors with specific responsibilities have received appropriate training from the local authority enabling effective monitoring of the school's procedures and practice. Governors review the safeguarding policy and practice annually. A second member of staff has been trained as a designated senior figure for safeguarding, which meets the recommendation from the previous boarding inspection. Those with specific responsibilities have established links with external agencies. Staff are trained at induction and at regular intervals; they understand their responsibilities towards pupils in need and those at risk. The school makes every effort to educate pupils about staying safe on line through their PSHE programme and outside speakers. The digital communications policy gives clear guidelines for computer use; access to the internet is filtered suitably.
- 4.17 Health and safety procedures and practices are rigorous and records are carefully kept to ensure pupils are kept safe in school and on trips and activities. A policy for the assessment of risk is implemented effectively. Annual fire risk assessments generate action lists and their completion is checked and recorded. Alarm systems are serviced regularly and checked weekly; fire-fighting equipment is carefully checked and maintained. Records of kitchen checks are meticulously kept and practices for identifying pupils with food allergies are robust. There are secure systems for electrical testing and the storage of laboratory chemicals.
- 4.18 There is a very clear first aid policy, which is implemented well; many staff are qualified in first aid. The medical room has adequate facilities for ill or injured pupils.
- 4.19 Admission and attendance registers are efficiently maintained and archived for three years. Absences are meticulously and promptly followed up to ensure pupil safety.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.20 The quality of boarding education is good.
- 4.21 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders are tolerant and considerate. They relate to each other and to adults with easy confidence and politeness. Boarders express their views candidly but maturely and listen well. They are extremely positive about their multi-cultural community. Their awareness of the wider world is further enhanced by the provision of newspapers, internet connection and a varied programme of outings and trips. Boarders display affection for their houses and contribute to their smooth-running through well-mannered behaviour and an understanding of the need for rules. They take roles of responsibility such as head of house seriously and enjoy acting as 'big sisters' to new students.
- 4.22 Boarders value their friendships highly. Most of the boarders who responded to the pupil questionnaire agreed that they enjoy boarding and that boarders get on well together. Boarders comment that a highlight of boarding is the opportunity to make friends for life from all over the world. House staff, including those who care for boarders domestically, have an excellent rapport with the boarders, know them as individuals and consider them to be friendly and polite. The boarding experience ensures that pupils are extremely well prepared for life after school. Boarders consider that staff help them to see their own potential and increase their self-belief.
- 4.23 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. New boarders receive a helpful 'survival guide' and are paired with an experienced boarder for the first few days. Boarders speak highly of the approachability of boarding and academic staff if they

have concerns, and are aware that they can contact independent listeners if they wish. The care of boarders when they are unwell is managed by house staff, who administer and record medication in strict accordance with an appropriate protocol. If too ill to attend school, boarders are accommodated in their house in the care of their housemistresses. A medical consulting room, staffed by the school nurse, securely houses confidential health records. A general practitioner holds a surgery here but the room itself is sparsely furnished and the decoration is not welcoming. Details of boarders with chronic conditions are distributed to staff; other medical information is shared on a need-to-know basis and with the boarders' consent. Boarders feel safe, and are confident that their possessions are secure: inspectors agree. There is a weekly laundry service, and boarders can launder their own clothes in Year 10 and above.

- 4.24 Boarders in Years 7 to Year 11 take all their meals in the dining hall. Special dietary needs are met. A large minority of boarders who responded to the pupil questionnaire, disagreed that the food is good and commented that the provision of snacks is insufficient. Inspectors observed and sampled the food and found it to be plentiful and nutritious. The six-weekly menu cycle ensures variety. Catering staff listen to boarders at food council meetings and are quick to respond if possible, for example in the provision of natural yogurt and grapefruit for breakfast. The provision of snacks to the houses is varied and plentiful. Sixth-form boarders have the option to eat breakfast and cook supper in their houses. Boarders receive training in food hygiene, their foods are stored appropriately and staff oversee hygiene.
- 4.25 Boarders enjoy the range of clubs, trips and activities on offer after school and at weekends. They are encouraged to try a range of activities and some discover new interests as a result. Boarders are encouraged to start their own clubs and interest groups. They appreciate their weekly visits to a supermarket.
- 4.26 Appropriate boarding accommodation provides good-sized communal areas and bedrooms, with space to study and relax. There is suitable personal privacy. The standard of accommodation is variable, the most recently refurbished areas being of a high standard. A rolling refurbishment programme is in place for other areas and the boarders' views inform colour and style choices. The recommendation of the previous boarding inspection report to improve the lighting of some outdoor areas and some boarders' accommodation has begun to be addressed effectively. Boarders can contact their families easily, and staff maintain regular links with parents.
- 4.27 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is good. All boarding and domestic staff understand their responsibilities for keeping children safe and have been properly trained in safeguarding. The school implements effective anti-bullying, safeguarding and other relevant policies in boarding. Appropriate checks are made on newly-appointed staff, and on other adults who reside in boarding accommodation, who receive clear guidance regarding interaction with the boarders. Boarders benefit from having staff on duty so that they can use house facilities during the day. Most record keeping is thorough. Written signing in and out procedures for boarders have now been implemented, a policy for searching pupils is now incorporated into the safeguarding policy and staff are conversant with the policy and its procedures. Equipment checks are carried out, and fire drills take place at least termly in boarding time and are properly logged.
- 4.28 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. Some policies and procedures had not been carefully evaluated and lacked

rigour at the start of the inspection. This has now been remedied. Recent changes in the leadership and management of boarding have improved outcomes for boarders. The combination of boarding and pastoral responsibilities at senior leadership level has led to a review of the roles of house staff giving them more autonomy and responsibility for their professional development. The links between house and school staff have been strengthened bringing boarding and academic aspects of school together. Regular meetings between tutors and house staff ensure more consistent care for pupils. Housemistresses develop their skills through a substantial programme of in-service training. They feel energised by these initiatives and appreciate the greater responsibility they have for the running of the houses.

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 governors provide a good mix of professional expertise and many have close personal links with the school. They effectively support the aims of the school and discharge effectively their responsibilities for financial planning and investment in staff, resources, and accommodation. Governors' sub-committees carry out annual and rolling reviews of all educational and pastoral policies and carry out on-site inspections of educational and boarding provision. These result in improved facilities for pupils such as the ongoing refurbishment of the boarding houses.
- 5.3 Sub-committees such as those for education, staff and welfare, and finance, together with designated governors for safeguarding and learning support, ensure that governors offer knowledgeable targeted support and challenge to the school. The annual governors' day enables governors to experience aspects of school life first hand. Individual governors attend school events, observe lessons and meet staff during the school year.
- 5.4 There have been several changes in personnel on the governing body within the last year. Some governors have had training in safeguarding requirements, but not all. The governing body reviews safeguarding procedures annually. Oversight of safer recruitment procedures is adequate but limited in scope.
- 5.5 The chair of governors has regular meetings with senior managers and reviews files of complaints, incidents, suspensions and exclusions. There is a well-established procedure for the appraisal of the head and bursar with objectives set and annual review.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management including links with parents, carers and guardians is good.
- 5.7 At all levels of responsibility leadership and management is well focused on the school's aim to enable pupils to develop their potential, intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual. All leaders are committed to the Round Square ethos, working together to offer pupils every opportunity to excel in their studies and extra-curricular activities.
- 5.8 Since the previous inspection, the school leadership team has been restructured. The smaller senior team successfully provides strong educational direction for a highly effective group of faculty heads who ensure the educational progress of pupils by supporting and monitoring teaching, and sharing good practice. This meets the recommendation of the previous full inspection. Senior leaders develop effective policies in most areas but these are not always adequately cross-referenced. They carefully evaluate pupil progress through tracking systems and rigorous analysis of attainment and progress data.

- 5.9 Leadership in pastoral care is good. Section heads in the lower and middle schools are responsible for teams of tutors and report to a member of senior management responsible for pastoral care and boarding. Leadership in boarding has been restructured, enabling staff at all levels to contribute more effectively to the welfare of pupils. Communication at and between all levels and between academic, pastoral and boarding leaders is effective but record keeping is not always sufficiently thorough.
- 5.10 The school follows safer recruitment procedures and all checks are completed but the single central register of statutory checks has been insufficiently detailed in the past. The school now has a rigorous procedure to maintain the register. Safeguarding policies have been amended to be in line with current guidelines and job descriptions for designated figures for safeguarding now reflect the school's good practice. Staff induction includes appropriate training in safeguarding and regular update training. Staff updates ensure that all have a secure understanding of their role in keeping children safe, including training for their roles in welfare, health and safety.
- 5.11 The school seeks to attract and retain high quality staff and is fully committed to their support and development. The programme of staff appraisal is well embedded and targets are linked to in-service training. The school has a clearly articulated development plan which is informed by discussions with academic and boarding staff, resulting in initiatives such as a recent one for literacy. Progress towards the plan's aims is reviewed and evaluated regularly.
- 5.12 Links between the school and parents are excellent. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that parents are overwhelmingly pleased with the education and support provided by the school. Parents feel strongly that pupils are well looked after, are happy and feel safe. Almost all are pleased with the progress that their daughters make.
- 5.13 Parents have excellent opportunities to be involved in the school. Many take up this offer and there is an active Parents and Teachers Association whose interest and enthusiasm is welcomed by the leadership. Parents can be involved in a variety of ways, from social and fundraising events to direct involvement by contributing their business expertise for the benefit of the school. A recent fundraising initiative has resulted in the school being able to lease three minibuses that provide valuable routes into school for day pupils and transport pupils into the local community.
- 5.14 Parents receive two full written reports a year with full details of their daughter's progress and targets. An annual parents' evening and half-termly grades ensure that parents are kept well informed about their daughter's progress. Overseas parents and guardians are kept in touch through boarding newsletters. Pupils' successes are celebrated in individual emails from housemistresses. Parents are invited to tea at the beginning of an exeat. All the required policies are provided to parents of current and prospective pupils.
- 5.15 A suitable complaints policy is available to parents. There have been no formal complaints received during the last 12 months. A few parents, in response to questionnaires, did not feel that the school had handled their concerns well but records of complaints show that the school handles concerns appropriately. Staff are encouraged to make direct personal contact with parents to answer their concerns, rather than relying on electronic communication. Senior managers develop excellent relationships with parents.

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