

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL  
(ISC)**

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**INSPECTION OF**

**THE KING'S SCHOOL, CHESTER**

**by the**

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE  
(ISI)**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **The King's School, Chester**

Full Name of the School	<b>The King's School, Chester</b>
DCSF Number	<b>896/6019</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>525934</b>
Address	<b>Wrexham Road, Chester CH4 7QL.</b>
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Headmaster	<b>Mr Chris Ramsey</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Keith James</b>
Age Range	<b>7 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009</b>

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

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

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The King's School, Chester is a selective, co-educational day school for pupils aged seven to eighteen. It was founded in 1541 and has enjoyed close links with Chester Cathedral since its foundation. Arnold House, an independent preparatory school was bought in 1911 and formally became The King's Junior School in 1922, taking boys from seven years of age. After the Second World War, the King's School became a direct grant school; when the grant was removed, it became independent. In the 1960s, it re-located from the cathedral precincts to a spacious, open site on the outskirts of town. Girls were admitted into the sixth form in 1998 and into earlier years, including the junior school, in 2003. The school became fully co-educational throughout the age range in September 2008. The last inspection, which resulted in separate reports for the junior and senior schools, took place in 2003.
- 1.2 The school's vision is to inspire young people to embark on life confident of their place in the world and able to become leaders in it. It aims to harness and enrich pupils' academic, creative, spiritual and physical potential in a supportive environment which fosters the 'unpretentious pursuit of excellence' and provides a transformative experience for all. Academic excellence, a strong extracurricular programme and positive relationships throughout the school community are seen as central objectives. The school attaches great importance to its links with the cathedral. Though welcoming pupils of other faiths, it is proud of its Christian heritage.
- 1.3 The total number of pupils on roll is 948, 680 boys and 268 girls. Of these, 223 are in the junior school, 160 boys and 63 girls. Of the 725 pupils in the senior school, 520 are boys and 205 girls. One hundred and ninety-two are in the sixth form, of whom 133 are boys and 59 are girls. The pupils come in the main from Chester and the nearby villages, although buses run to Wales and to other outlying areas. Several pupils travel considerable distances to attend. Some sixty per cent enter the senior school from the junior school, the rest coming in varying proportions from local maintained primary schools and independent schools. The intake is very largely drawn from professional families; there are very few pupils of ethnic origins other than British or for whom English is an additional language.
- 1.4 One pupil in the senior school has a statement of special educational needs and 71 pupils are at present listed as requiring some extra educational provision, 17 in the junior school and 54 in the senior school.
- 1.5 Entrance into the junior and senior schools is via the school's entrance examinations in English and mathematics, an interview and, where appropriate, reports. Admission to the sixth form is conditional upon GCSE results and takes account of reports and performance at interview.
- 1.6 Analysis of nationally standardised data available indicates that the ability profile of pupils entering Year 3 in recent years is above the national average overall, and sometimes well above. The ability profile of pupils entering Year 7 is well above the national average. On the basis of the nationally standardised comparative data available, if pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in GCSE and A-level examinations will be well above the average for all maintained secondary schools and in line with the average for maintained selective secondary schools.

- 1.7 The numbers leaving before the sixth form are usually below ten a year. Of those who stay, almost all proceed to higher education, the great majority to their first choice course. Every year around twenty take a GAP Year and about ten gain places at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge.
- 1.8 Since the last inspection, the school has become fully co-educational and grown in size. The governing body and the senior management teams of both the junior and senior schools have changed radically. A new chairman of governors, a new overall head and a new bursar are in post and a new deputy head and a new director of studies of the junior school have been appointed. A major building programme has provided a new music school, an all-weather pitch, a new junior school hall and new classrooms and laboratories. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) has been improved.
- 1.9 National Curriculum 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 (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

***Junior School***

School	NC name
J1	Year 3
J2	Year 4
J3	Year 5
J4	Year 6

***Senior School***

School	NC name
Remove	Year 7
Shell	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10
Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## 2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The quality of educational experience provided is excellent overall. It is outstanding in the junior school and good, with many outstanding features, in the senior school. The curriculum generally offers an all-embracing, intellectually stimulating education, consistent with the school's aim to offer opportunities for each pupil to achieve his or her full academic and all-round potential. It is enriched by an extensive range of high quality extra-curricular activities which constitute one of the paramount strengths of the school, but some gaps impair otherwise outstanding provision in the senior school. Since the last inspection, pupils' educational experience has been both expanded and enhanced. The very great majority of parents responding to the parental questionnaire approve of the range and quality of both the curriculum and the extra-curricular activities provided.

#### *Junior School*

- 2.2 The school provides pupils with an excellent all-round education. It translates its aims into practice, providing an education that helps children to succeed academically and to develop well personally. Since the last inspection, ICT has been introduced into the curriculum and makes a genuine impact on the learning experience of the children. Modern foreign languages are now taught throughout and a co-ordinator has been appointed to implement initiatives which challenge gifted and talented pupils.
- 2.3 The educational experiences provided contribute effectively to pupils' progress in all areas of learning. Children enjoy a wide range of timetabled subjects and activities which successfully promote their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. They are taught mainly by their class teacher in Years 3 and 4, after which the amount of subject-specialist teaching increases as pupils move up the school. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) complements the school's aims well. Good provision is made for the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
- 2.4 A wide range of extra-curricular activities develop pupils' physical, creative and intellectual talents. Although pupils are not compelled to undertake an activity, levels of involvement are high. Many pupils take up a musical instrument and new ensembles have been developed to give them the opportunity of making music together. An innovative timetabled activities session covers areas such as baking, drama, first aid and golf, fostering teamwork and co-operation.
- 2.5 The curriculum is well planned; thorough policies help staff to achieve a common approach. Boys and girls have equal access to the curriculum. Growing links with the senior school, such as shared use of facilities and senior school teachers teaching some junior classes, ensure that pupils are ready for, and excited by, their transition to the senior school.
- 2.6 The recruitment of a co-ordinator for learning support and a specialist teacher in this area has enriched provision. Those pupils needing booster sessions are quickly identified by staff and most lessons take their needs into account. A cipher club run by sixth-formers is one of several activities catering for the needs of gifted and talented pupils.

### *Senior School*

- 2.7 The broad, challenging and generally well-balanced curriculum offers outstanding intellectual stimulus, opening pupils' eyes and minds and extending their knowledge, understanding and skills to high levels, in line with the school's aims. Since the last inspection, thinking skills have been introduced in Year 7, the coordinated PSHE programme has been extended into Years 10 and 11 and provision for religious studies and modern foreign languages has been extended in Years 7 to 9. Pupils benefit from greater access to computers, resources in classrooms have been significantly improved and an excellent start has been made in the use of virtual learning environments. Library provision, not least for pupils' individual research, remains excellent.
- 2.8 The curriculum contributes extensively and effectively to pupils' strong development in all areas of learning. It enables high standards of literacy and numeracy and helps produce highly articulate pupils. Strong provision is made for science and languages, which are given well above average allocations of curricular time. This outstanding feature causes some curricular imbalance, to the detriment of pupils' creative and technological experience, but this is largely counter-balanced by the improved facilities for ICT and by the extensive range of extra-curricular creative activities provided. Pupils study two modern foreign languages and one classical in Years 7 to 9. Drama is not taught as a discrete subject. ICT is taught discretely in Years 7 and 8. The curriculum is effectively planned and is reviewed annually to ensure it continues to meet pupils' needs. It promotes equality of access and provides opportunities for participation in a very wide range of activities, implementing the strategy outlined in the comprehensive curriculum policy.
- 2.9 The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of high-quality extra-curricular activities. This richness of experience is an outstanding strength of the school. Music and sport are major features, both in the range of activities offered and in the standards achieved. They involve pupils of all abilities and interests and participation is very high. A wide variety of orchestras, bands, choirs and ensembles offer extensive opportunities for cooperative music-making. Over thirty concerts were held in the last year. Large numbers of competitive sports teams take the field each week. Success at regional and national level in a wide range of sports testifies to the quality of provision offered, which is enhanced by specialist coaching from expert practitioners. Rowing is outstandingly well resourced. Musical ensembles and sports teams tour abroad. A number of striking drama productions occur each year, but their direction currently depends significantly upon outside assistance and upon pupils.
- 2.10 The school is rightly proud of its outdoor education programme. All pupils in Years 7 and 9 undertake a residential adventure course, involving activities such as orienteering and abseiling, and, for Year 9 pupils, water sports and an overnight expedition. This excellent provision is complemented by a thriving, voluntary Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and an equally popular Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils' experience is further enhanced by a plethora of foreign trips and exchanges, most subject-based. On the academic side, activities range from code-breaking to philosophy, biodiversity to Christian discussion groups, chess to Young Enterprise. Lectures, often by outside speakers, debating and the Model United Nations offer thought-provoking extensions to pupils' learning.
- 2.11 The provision for PSHE in Years 7 to 11 reflects the school's aims and ethos and urges pupils to reflect upon a wide range of life skills, study skills, social problems and environmental and citizenship issues. Much time is spent in discussion and role-play. Provision for voluntary service is restricted to the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils are encouraged to undertake work experience, but make their own arrangements. Participation is patchy. The school is aware of these gaps in its provision. Appropriate

careers advice is provided in Years 9 to 11. Sixth-form pupils benefit from a well-planned and high quality programme preparing them for entrance to higher education. The lack of PSHE or a formal enrichment programme, including life skills, in Years 12 and 13 weakens otherwise caring provision.

- 2.12 All pupils are screened on entry to Year 7 for learning difficulties and disabilities. A learning development co-ordinator advises staff and posts strategies to meet the needs of those needing learning support on the intranet. Implementation relies upon individual teachers. A learning support register, updated regularly, is circulated to staff. Little time is available for effective monitoring, however, because of the coordinator's other responsibilities. For pupils with learning disabilities, for whom the school policy requires parents to obtain an educational psychologist's report, and for those pupils with special educational needs, the school endeavours to respond in line with the reports or statements. However, the school is aware that the programme for those who need learning support is not cohesive in its implementation. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is not co-ordinated, but setting by ability helps meet their needs.

### ***Whole School***

- 2.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.14 The quality of pupils' learning and achievements is good overall throughout the school, and in a significant minority of lessons, it was outstanding. Pupils' wide-ranging achievements indicate clearly that the school fulfils its aim to foster an environment where all pupils can develop to their full potential, enjoy learning, think independently and pursue high standards. Since the last inspection, improved resources and facilities, particularly in ICT, have enabled a broader curriculum and a wider all-round learning experience to be provided for all pupils. Both very able and less able pupils have benefited from more focused provision, whilst a culture of praise and encouragement has boosted the confidence of all pupils and stimulated high levels of involvement in their learning.

### ***Junior School***

- 2.15 Pupils benefit from a rich, purposeful and varied learning environment and develop very good levels of understanding and skills, which they apply creatively and critically in investigative tasks. In a Year 6 science lesson, their spirit of enquiry was challenged by having to work out how to construct electrical circuits. In Years 4 and 5, pupils' creativity and thinking skills are effectively stimulated by booklets of challenging brain games and by bright ideas boards, sited in each classroom, which propose mathematical, English and general problems to be resolved or ideas to be thought through during registration periods. Pupils' learning is effectively developed by the setting of teacher-led targets, but more able pupils also choose to deepen their knowledge with further independent study. Some produce their own compositions in music. Pupils' attitude to learning is one of the strengths of the school. Levels of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills are high.
- 2.16 Pupils are not entered for externally assessed national tests at the age of eleven. Their achievement, as judged by lesson observations and work scrutiny, is good overall and often excellent. Nearly all pupils are successful in passing the senior school entrance examination. Learning support files are kept in each classroom and their ready availability helps ensure that focused support is provided for the academically less able pupils. Able pupils reach the

national finals of the Primary Mathematics Challenge each year. No significant differences in relative attainment occur between subjects or between boys and girls.

- 2.17 Pupils achieve high standards in a wide range of activities, benefiting from the vibrant and creative school environment. Large numbers of pupils, over a hundred this year, play a musical instrument. Many gain distinctions and merits in music and speech and drama examinations. At the Chester Festival of Performing Arts, pupils won the Avalon Cup for drama at the first attempt for their productions of *Lord of the Flies* (first prize), *To Kill a Mockingbird* (third prize), *Pygmalion* and *Little Women* (both commended). During the last year, three pupils have appeared on stage in professional drama productions. Pupils attracted national and international recognition for their designs for a safe toy; three were chosen for exhibition.
- 2.18 Standards of performance in competitive sport, both for boys and girls, continue to rise. School teams have won the Association of Junior Independent Schools (AJIS) cricket cup for four consecutive years, winning both the cricket and the football cups in the same year. They have also won the AJIS tennis cup. A number of pupils reach county standard in a wide range of sports and in chess. Others have been selected for national show jumping squads.
- 2.19 Pupils are attentive, listen carefully in class and work well collaboratively. They are eager and willing to ask pertinent questions to deepen their understanding. Co-operative learning is fostered by an investigative approach. In many lessons, particularly practical ones, rapid progress in learning is enhanced by the excellent balance struck between individual, group and whole class work.
- 2.20 Pupils sustain concentration, are actively engaged in the pursuit of excellence and contribute confidently and appropriately in lessons, respecting the opinions of others. They take notes well, organise their work effectively and present it neatly and accurately. They are hard-working, happy learners.

### ***Senior School***

- 2.21 Pupils display high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in both academic work and activities. They are extremely articulate. They engage fully with their learning, particularly when actively involved, and display considerable intellectual curiosity. They have the capacity to think critically and creatively, showing an outstanding ability to reason, apply their knowledge and reach their own judgements. Occasionally the style of teaching leads them to be passive, but generally they are prepared to challenge and be challenged in a mutually respectful way. Nationally standardised data covering pupils' progress from Year 7 to GCSE confirm that both boys and girls perform above or well above expectation in most subjects. Almost all go on to university, the great majority to their first choice course.
- 2.22 Pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities. In a significant minority of lessons observed and in work scrutinized, it was excellent. Over the three years 2005 to 2007, the most recent nationally comparative data available, pupils' performance in GCSE was far above the average of all maintained secondary schools and above the national average for maintained selective schools, with seven out of every ten papers being marked at A\* or A grade. At A level over the same period, pupils' performance was also above the average for maintained selective schools, with nearly eight out of every ten papers being awarded an A or B grade, over half at A grade.

- 2.23 Pupils achieve excellent standards in a wide range of activities, showing high levels of personal development. In the academic field, many pupils gain gold awards in mathematics, chemistry and physics challenges at all ages. A small number come amongst the top pupils nationally in the relevant Olympiad. King's were team winners of the 2004 Physics Olympiad and came second in 2007. Outstanding individual achievements in 2008 include winning first and second prizes for chemistry at the national and international science fairs respectively, being awarded an Arkwright Scholarship and winning the first Northern Schools Debating Competition in German. Over a hundred pupils gained awards this year in music examinations, nearly a third at grades six to eight, and a fifth with distinction. Pupils gain representative honours in chess. Achievement in sport is strong, with a high level of representation at regional and national levels in a wide range of sports. Football teams have won the Independent Schools' Football Association cup several times, hockey teams have been crowned national champions and the school features regularly amongst the top rowing schools nationally.
- 2.24 Standards of literacy and numeracy are high. Pupils use mathematical concepts confidently, for example, utilising statistical diagrams and graphs in geography. Their use of ICT is excellent. Year 7 pupils produced an interactive quiz complete with animation, Year 8 religious studies (RS) pupils made short films on ethical topics, whilst Year 11 geographers gave a knowledgeable, electronic presentation on China and its one child policy, following extensive research on the internet.
- 2.25 Pupils work well both on their own and cooperatively. They listen to others' views, as when discussing a seventeenth century play in French in Year 13. Pupils study and organise their work effectively. Occasionally, excessive use of photocopied material restricts individual creativity and engagement with the subject. Pupils settle quickly and apply themselves immediately to the task in hand. They demonstrate clear enjoyment in their learning.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.26 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent overall. It is outstanding in the junior school and good with many outstanding features in the senior school. Consistent with its aims, the school successfully provides a transformative experience for all its pupils. Pupils take full advantage of the extensive opportunities for strong personal development, which have increased since the last inspection, particularly through the expansion of the activities programme and the improvement in provision for PSHE. However, despite the school's original Christian foundation, encouragement for pupils to explore their own beliefs and spirituality is still a little muted in the senior school, as was noted in the last report. The great majority of parents responding to the parental questionnaire approved of the attitudes and values promoted by the school.

#### ***Junior School***

- 2.27 The school's aims to foster pupils' self esteem and to help them build positive relationships by encouraging them to understand the ideas, attitudes and values of others are clearly met. Pupils' feeling of self-worth is greatly stimulated by the caring support which surrounds them and by the atmosphere of praise which permeates the school and is to be seen in the congratulatory assemblies, the good work book and commendations on the school website. A sketchbook is chosen each week to be displayed prominently in each classroom. Pupils demonstrate well-developed spiritual awareness. The school's Christian ethos, which underpins school life, is demonstrated in school assemblies taken by a local minister, and in the termly visits to Chester Cathedral. Assemblies are uplifting experiences and fully adhere to the spiritual values of the school. In one assembly discussing Jesus' crucifixion, pupils

were encouraged to empathise with his suffering on the cross and translate this feeling into their planned musical performance. A caring, thoughtful approach is fostered by the footprint box which includes prayers and by the lighting of candles. Pupils' awareness is widened in RS lessons, when they study aspects of a range of religions, including the Hindu and Aboriginal creation stories.

- 2.28 Moral development and awareness are outstanding. A clear moral code is taught in PSHE lessons and promoted through an appropriate behaviour framework. Pupils understand their rights and duties, and have studied them in relation to home and school environments. They respond well to encouragement to prepare themselves for later life, to set and reach their own goals and to value virtue and success. The PSHE programme includes lessons on citizenship, including a module on the law.
- 2.29 Pupils' social development is outstanding, underpinned by the strong relationship between teachers and pupils. Pupils readily accept positions of responsibility, such as house captain or school councillor, and take their duties very seriously. Their awareness of ways in which change can be effected within a community is being well developed by the new school council. In a Year 4 PSHE lesson on stress, pupils were shown to have respect for others' opinions, working collaboratively in developing awareness and finding solutions. Pupils participated actively in an assembly demonstration that the school is greater than the sum of its parts, using pictures of parts of the body. Pupils' social skills are developed well in the Delamere Forest trip which includes environmental team games.
- 2.30 Pupils are culturally aware. They benefit from numerous opportunities, both within and outside the well-planned PSHE programme, to enhance their cultural awareness, as, for example, in their study of Maori art. They show keen responsibility for others, organising events to raise awareness and funds, for example to donate books for a children's library in Indonesia. Pupils' awareness of the sensitivity required in dealing with cultural and religious matters is greatly enhanced by the staff's excellent example, following good practice promulgated by the head of RS in guidelines concerning world faith issues.

### *Senior School*

- 2.31 Pupils are highly self-aware, confident young people. Work interviews revealed high levels of articulate self-knowledge. Openness and tolerance are gleaned from the way they are taught, from teachers listening and from pertinent discussions, when exposed to the big existential questions in literature or to transcendent values in RS. Their active personal involvement in PSHE lessons, for example in discussions in Year 8 on family relationships or peer group pressure, increases self-awareness. Pupils' self-esteem is fostered by an all-pervasive atmosphere of praise. Pupils readily grasp numerous opportunities to belong to a group, be it a musical ensemble, a sports team or a back-stage crew, and by achieving things together, develop strong feelings of self-worth. Awe and wonder are inspired in pupils by study of the natural environment in geography or by views of the universe, as witnessed in a symposium lecture. Year 10 pupils were thoughtfully challenged by an inspirational spiritual assembly, in which a teacher shared her Christian faith. Many pupils eagerly participate in academic debate on, for example, varying beliefs about abortion, but they do not often extend their engagement into an exploration of their own religious beliefs. They appreciate their links to the cathedral, but this sometimes appears to be at one remove from development of their own faith.
- 2.32 Pupils have an outstanding level of moral awareness, which is promoted by work throughout the curriculum and through the strong pastoral system. They profit from the mutual trust and easy relationships between staff and pupils which foster debate and discussion. In a Year 7

history lesson, discussion inspired by the Thomas à Becket story covered anger management, selfishness and selflessness. Pupils show highly developed abilities to reason, to debate and to make moral judgments, as seen, for example, in a lesson on fair trade, in which they were able to discuss with sensitivity such complex topics as new colonialism and their personal response to fair trade issues. Pupils feel comfortable expressing deeply-held personal views, as was seen in the depth, sensitivity and maturity of a Year 10 group's discussion of euthanasia. Pupils put their moral code into practice, using their very clear ideas on conduct, rules and fairness to develop, through discussion in PSHE, their own rules for behaviour in class.

- 2.33 Pupils have a high level of social awareness and a strong sense of social responsibility, both to themselves and to others, although instances of inconsiderate behaviour were observed in the corridors. In Year 10 biology, they showed an excellent awareness of the importance of taking responsibility for their own diet and exercise. Trust, responsibility for others and co-operative working were illustrated superbly in a Year 9 gymnastics lesson, in which girls were working on triple balances, creating some interesting shapes by supporting each other. Older pupils work closely with younger ones as prefects and in musical, sporting and outdoor activities. They seize opportunities to exercise leadership as captains, coaches and referees, and develop a strong sense of responsibility in the outstanding opportunities offered in the CCF and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils help each other across age groups. The mentoring scheme offers an excellent example of social responsibility. Commitment to the community saw Year 10 pupils take over a lower school drama group that was without a leader to run it for the benefit of the younger pupils. Many Year 13 pupils are heavily involved in the day to day running of the school and in creating a variety of promotional materials. Pupils take an enthusiastic part in the year group committees, bringing ideas forward for debate. The comprehensive PSHE programme includes work on public institutions and services in England.
- 2.34 Pupils' level of cultural awareness is good overall. They have an outstanding awareness of their own culture and develop a similar level of understanding of other western cultures from the numerous trips provided to continental Europe, be it to experience Italian art in Florence or the horrors of Auschwitz in Poland. Immersion in family life on exchanges to France, Germany and Spain strongly enhances this understanding. Exposure to the music and art of different cultures, and to ancient cultures in classics lessons, widens their horizons. Pupils who have participated in the visits to India, to Iceland and to Ecuador have gained excellent insight into distant cultures from first-hand experience, but most pupils' awareness of these is largely theoretical, although very well taught in subjects such as English, geography and RS. Pupils co-exist well in an atmosphere of tolerance and harmony, although they have little direct exposure to widely different cultures, religions and ways of life. It is intended that the project to help finance the building of a school in Madagascar will provide opportunities for further development in this area.

### ***Whole School***

- 2.35 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

## **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.36 The quality of teaching throughout the school is good overall, and in a significant proportion of lessons seen it was outstanding. It is a major factor in fostering the school's fulfilment of its challenging academic aims. Since the last inspection, improved accommodation and facilities, particularly in ICT, have enabled more imaginative and creative teaching. Parents responding to the parental questionnaire were almost unanimous in their praise for the overall quality of the teaching, although some disquiet was expressed at the way a small amount of senior school teaching is less effective. The inspectors endorse both of these parental views.

### ***Junior School***

- 2.37 The school's aim of providing a stimulating and dynamic curriculum for all its pupils is well supported by its teaching. Teachers are aware of the relative abilities of the pupils in their class and prepare lessons appropriately. Much of the English scheme of work has three ability levels built into the planning. A Year 6 science lesson had seven different levels of circuit for pupils to create. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, higher and lower achieving pupils were given different tasks when measuring pursuit curves.
- 2.38 Pupils are treated maturely and with respect by the teachers and this in turn promotes an atmosphere in which pupils develop both independent and co-operative learning skills alongside a determination to apply themselves effectively at all times. Pupils are encouraged to think that they can perform as well as any other pupil in the class irrespective of their own ability. Intellectual curiosity is encouraged in pupils. A Year 6 lesson on a section of *Macbeth* inspired pupils to want to read on to discover for themselves what happened next.
- 2.39 Lessons in the majority of subjects are innovatively and interestingly planned, with the pupils' enjoyment in mind. Most lessons are well paced and include a variety of activities and a good range of resources. All these elements help to sustain the pupils' interest in the subject. A Year 5 English lesson included opportunities for watching, listening, discussing and writing, as well as for kinaesthetic work. Declaration of clear success criteria paves the way to good progress in English lessons in Year 3.
- 2.40 Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge in lessons. All science and mathematics teaching is founded on the confident application of the teacher's knowledge. For example, a Year 6 mathematics lesson displayed teaching at a level well beyond the syllabus, encouraging pupils to verbalise multiple operations and understanding the value of visualisation as a higher order skill in developing the understanding of the sequencing of number patterns. Most curriculum co-ordinators are recognised as experts in their fields and capable of passing on good practice to their colleagues.
- 2.41 With the exception of science, which does not have its own base, most teaching is well supported by suitable accommodation. Interactive white boards are available in all classrooms in Years 3 to 5 and the school has already planned to extend these to Year 6 next year. Resources for the teaching of sport, which, for the most part, are shared with the senior school, are exceptional and include an indoor pool, an enclosed artificial multi-sport surface and large areas for both field- and court-based games. An innovative first aid programme is well taught and well resourced. Pupils can practise their resuscitation techniques on four Resusci Annies.
- 2.42 Assessment is good. Nearly all work is marked regularly and best practice includes constructive advice on further progression. Some such advice was observed forming the basis of a dialogue between teacher and pupil. A school policy exists on marking and on the

correction of spelling errors, but it is not consistently followed. Pupils take internally marked national tests annually, allowing them to be assessed against each other and against different year groups.

- 2.43 Pupils and teachers enjoy strong relationships based on mutual respect. The atmosphere around the school and in classrooms is calm, allowing teachers to teach and pupils to learn. Pupils' behaviour was universally sensible and courteous in lessons.

### *Senior School*

- 2.44 The high quality of most teaching brings out the best in the pupils, often in imaginative, innovative ways, but this outstanding practice is not yet widely shared.
- 2.45 The school is aware that monitoring is not undertaken regularly enough and is promoting the sharing of good practice with the introduction of both formal and informal lesson observations within departments and across curriculum areas. Teaching and learning is a standing item on all department agendas. Teaching methods were discussed at the most recent meeting of the modern languages department, but some departments have not yet approached the topic. Time constraints can prevent constructive discussion. There is willingness amongst many staff, but not all, to innovate and extend the range of teaching methods, as demonstrated by an informal teaching and learning group run by staff on a voluntary basis in order to discuss and share good teaching practice and explore creative ways to respond to varying learning styles.
- 2.46 Many well-planned and effective teaching methods are incorporated into lessons. Excellent practice was observed in a Year 7 history lesson, which challenged an able group with a range of questioning strategies including group activities, pupil presentations, discussion and extension activities. An outstanding business studies lesson employed a brisk pace and lively style, as well as humour, to stimulate high levels of learning and understanding. Grammar was taught to enthusiastic Year 8 pupils in Spanish by guitar with conspicuous success, whilst Year 11 pupils downloaded their oral preparation onto data sticks to facilitate both practice at home and individual attention from the teacher. Such good practice is not universal.
- 2.47 Teachers know their pupils well and provide a high level of individual support both within and outside lessons. More able pupils are extended academically, for instance in mathematics, where pupils complete the iGCSE and AS mathematics courses in Year 11. Teaching often goes beyond the curriculum. Ancient Greek and classics stimulate pupils' analytical skills. In French, Year 10 pupils have been watching *Les Misérables* and are currently researching different aspects of Victor Hugo's life and work. In German, Year 8 pupils used authentic German recipes in doing their Christmas cooking. Year 13 literature pupils use ICT in lessons to record minutes, which are then shared and discussed outside the lesson. Caring teacher support enables less able pupils to perform well. However, work in lessons is not always matched to the needs of pupils with learning difficulties, although they are clearly identified in lesson planning.
- 2.48 Teachers have a secure and frequently deep understanding of their subject matter, which elicits an appreciative, enthusiastic response from pupils; for example, several modern foreign language teachers are native speakers. Pupils are prepared thoroughly for public examinations and, at its best, teaching encourages flexibility of approach and extension beyond the examination specifications. In sport, very well-qualified specialist coaches deliver a high degree of expertise and enhance the learning experiences of the pupils.

- 2.49 Teaching is well supported by a range of excellent facilities and resources. All departments are amply resourced with books and ICT facilities. In most departments, teachers make good use of ICT in the classroom to enhance their teaching. The weather station in the geography department, the digital language laboratory, new science laboratories, the new music school and extensive sports facilities all provide a positive teaching environment.
- 2.50 Marking of pupils' work is variable with inconsistencies between departments and between teachers within departments. Despite some helpful protocols stuck into the front of their exercise books to help them, pupils do not always understand the criteria on which marks are based. The best marking is full and constructive, giving targets for improvement. It unquestionably assists pupils in their learning, as in, for example, geography and classics. This good practice is, however, not always shared.
- 2.51 Pupils are very cooperative and well behaved. They collaborate well in establishing a quiet and purposeful atmosphere. The best lessons reveal directed excitement, the product of stimulating intellectual challenge, as demonstrated in a Year 13 English lesson on Gerard Manley Hopkins.
- 2.52 A range of nationally standardised tests is used to evaluate pupils' progress to GCSE and A level. A system of five-weekly interim grades for attainment and effort has been introduced, which is leading to improved checking of pupils' progress and greater involvement of heads of year, heads of department and tutors in monitoring such progress and mentoring those pupils giving concern. However, this is not yet common practice amongst all staff.

***Whole School***

- 2.53 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1]

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care and the provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety are good throughout the school, with several outstanding features. They are consistent with school aims in helping pupils to develop in self-confidence and self-esteem, build positive relationships and grow into reliable, positive citizens. Since the last inspection, provision has been maintained and extended by the introduction of a behaviour code and pastoral files in the junior school and by the appointment of heads of year in the senior school. The great majority of parents responding to the parental questionnaire were happy or very happy with the help and guidance offered to their children.

##### ***Junior School***

- 3.2 Staff provide effective support and guidance for all pupils, showing high levels of concern in their dealings with pupils, in line with the school aims to foster pupils' confidence and self-awareness. Pupils responding to the pupils' questionnaire were unanimous in concluding that teachers care if they are happy.
- 3.3 Strong pastoral arrangements underpin the quality of provision. A behaviour code specifies each child's rights and responsibilities. These measures promote good discipline and behaviour, and include procedures to guard against harassment and bullying. They are effective and staff deal constructively with unacceptable behaviour if it should occur. A detailed system of commendation and sanctions reinforces the rules and routines. The pupils' questionnaire showed unanimous support for these systems. Staff concerns about pupils are aired at year group meetings and at staff meetings, so that all responsible adults are aware of any issues and can respond appropriately.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils is outstanding. In a circle time session, pupils felt confident enough to raise personal problems such as friendship issues. Sensitive guidance of discussion by the class teacher helped resolve areas of concern. The introduction of a class pastoral file for staff to use to establish the learning needs or health issues pertaining to a particular pupil has greatly improved procedures to ensure pupils' welfare.

##### ***Senior School***

- 3.5 Staff provide effective support and guidance for all pupils. Responsibility for pupils' welfare is borne by tutors. In addition to daily registration sessions and twice-weekly tutor periods, tutors now interview their pupils each half-term, using the new grading system to evaluate their academic progress and set appropriate targets. Transition for new pupils into Year 7 is greatly eased by the comprehensive induction programme, which begins late in Year 6, when pupils and parents are invited in to school. The off-site residential adventure element plays an important role in creating friendships and allowing pupils and staff to get to know each other.
- 3.6 Effective pastoral arrangements help tutors care for their pupils. The introduction of heads of year in Years 7 to 11 has greatly increased the support tutors receive and promoted higher standards and greater consistency in the delivery of pastoral care. They meet regularly with the group heads of the lower and middle schools and of the sixth form to generate new ideas and initiatives. They have taken an increasing role in counselling pupils, and have been

accorded the time to lead initiatives in areas including charity work and the activities' programme.

- 3.7 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is outstanding. As one pupil commented: "The teachers make the school". Members of staff are approachable, welcoming and always willing to give of their time. Mentoring between age groups is a positive initiative, which further strengthens pupil relationships. As yet, it only involves small numbers.
- 3.8 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour, including appropriate procedures guarding against harassment and bullying, are generally effective, with staff dealing constructively with unacceptable behaviour. A comprehensive anti-bullying policy is in place. Most pupils feel that bullying is rare and that incidents are dealt with sensitively. However, a significant minority of pupils completing the pupils' questionnaire questioned the school's dealing with the issue, feeling insufficiently supported. Inspectors could find no evidence to support their concerns, judging pupils to be remarkably caring in their relationships. The life skills programme running from Years 7 to 11 promotes good behaviour and is highly regarded by staff and pupils.

### ***Whole School***

- 3.9 Effective child protection measures are in place. The excellent child protection policy and procedures are available on the school website and are published in the staff handbook. They are reviewed annually by governors, one of whom has designated responsibility for child protection issues. The child protection officer, who is also the school nurse, is well trained. She regularly updates her training. Child protection procedures form part of in-service training (INSET) for all staff at regular intervals and new staff are made aware of them. Senior school heads of year have updated training which is cascaded to tutors. Admission and attendance registers are efficiently completed and maintained. Medical care of all pupils is in the hands of a qualified school nurse. The first-aid room is well staffed and equipped. Medicine is stored safely and correctly labelled. Pupils with medical issues are dealt with caringly and thoroughly.
- 3.10 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. An excellent fire safety policy exists, the fire risk assessment is reviewed regularly and procedures are comprehensive. All related documentation is kept up to date. The competent person is fully trained in fire safety.
- 3.11 Arrangements ensuring health and safety are effective. The school has due regard for health and safety requirements. Risk assessments cover all areas of the school; job descriptions include health and safety responsibilities. The health and safety committee meets at least once per term, chaired by the designated governor. Its powers, functions and list of members are published in the staff handbook. Both schools are represented on the committee. A recently updated accessibility plan covers issues ranging from access to the whole site, written information and the curriculum. In the senior school, policy, risk assessments and procedures covering educational visits are outstanding. In the junior school, risk assessments for trips offsite are undertaken and are satisfactory, but not as thorough as those in the senior school. Effective implementation of health and safety procedures was regularly observed during the inspection, for example, in a Year 5 design and technology lesson, when pupils were reminded about safety when using tools and the need to wear goggles when using certain pieces of equipment.

- 3.12 Pupils are encouraged to lead a healthy lifestyle and to take advantage of the variety of exercise options readily available. In the junior school, a healthy diet is promoted by specifying fruit snacks at break and allowing water in the classroom. Healthy options are available at lunchtime, but few children take advantage of them and little staff guidance is available. In the senior school, Year 7 PSHE classes and Year 9 biology pupils study healthy diets. A salad bar is provided at lunchtime, but the quality of other food is variable. Quantity and choice at lunch are limited for late arrivals. The inspectors endorse pupils' concerns over aspects of hygiene at lunchtimes. Arrangements for entry and for tidying up on leaving are not conducive to promoting a healthy respect for either hygiene or food.
- 3.13 All recommendations and action points from the last reports concerning pupils' welfare, health and safety have been followed up.
- 3.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.15 The quality of links with parents and the community is uneven. It is good in the junior school and satisfactory in the senior school. Provision is in line with the school's aims and philosophy. Since the last inspection, the school has improved communication with parents by establishing a new website with a dedicated parents' area providing password-protected access to all key documentation. The junior school has developed strong links with the community, but less progress has been made by the senior school in developing such links.

#### ***Junior School***

- 3.16 Over two-thirds of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They were almost unanimous in expressing great satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children in all areas. They also expressed satisfaction with the information given, with the opportunities provided to discuss their child's progress and with the school's handling of any concerns.
- 3.17 Parents provide valuable support for school events and activities. They visit to talk about their professions, for example, dentistry, surgery and the judiciary, and to enrich pupils' cultural awareness and experience, for example by demonstrating Indian dance. An active parents' association supports and enhances the work of the whole school, providing items of equipment, serving refreshments at school events and organising social events.
- 3.18 Parents are well informed about school life. An important source of information is the school's excellent website. This makes available for parents key documentation such as the school calendar of events and all school policies and also includes a weekly message from the junior school's headmaster. New parents receive a comprehensive information booklet, which includes details of the staff, curriculum, timings of the school day, reporting procedures, routines, and the commendations and sanctions policy. The school complaints procedure is available on the website and is distributed to all new parents. Parents' concerns are handled with due care.
- 3.19 Parents are kept in touch with their children's progress on a day-to-day basis through the homework diary, which tutors and parents are required to sign, and through informal contact with tutors and senior staff. Full reports, which emphasise pupils' progress and set curriculum targets in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, are issued twice a year. Parents of new pupils also receive a 'settling-in' report early in the academic year.

Parents have the opportunity to discuss their child's progress at twice-yearly parents' evenings. Additional progress meetings are scheduled for parents of under-performing pupils in Years 5 and 6. Parents have access to the headmaster by telephone, meeting or e-mail.

- 3.20 The junior school has established strong links with the wider community. Pupils have recently enabled a local school to equip its resource centre and have raised funds for a children's hospice. They are involved in the whole-school project to build a school in Madagascar. Links are maintained with a local basketball team and with the local fire service. A puzzle challenge day includes local primary schools. Pupils collect produce for distribution during harvest festival. They have paid visits to the Countess of Chester Hospital and taken part in its first-aid training scheme. Two pupils are representatives on Cheshire County Council's environmental and road safety scheme. Association with the cathedral has been strengthened through participation in pilgrim days, production of Advent and Christmas banners for the nave, regular visits and involvement in the cathedral's spiritual life. A small number of pupils are also choristers.

### ***Senior School***

- 3.21 Over two-fifths of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and the very large majority expressed satisfaction with all aspects of the education and support provided for their children. A significant minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the school's communication of information, response to concerns and feedback on pupils' progress and a small minority had concerns regarding the standards of behaviour. Measures are being taken to address issues of communication, and the inspectors found relationships between pupils to be very supportive, leading to good behaviour in general.
- 3.22 A number of parents are involved in providing careers' guidance to Year 11 pupils and parents have recently been invited to participate in one of the Year 7 philosophy lessons. Strong support for the work of the school is offered by the parents' association.
- 3.23 The school keeps parents well informed. It makes excellent use of its website to make all key documentation, such as school policies, the complaints procedure, the calendar of events and examination timetables, available to parents. It also includes pupils' timetables and homework timetables. The headmaster disseminates news and writes thought-provoking articles on his weekly 'blog'. New parents receive a comprehensive information booklet, which includes details of school routine and information about how to contact tutors. All parents are sent the attractive school newsletter, *The Herald*, on a regular basis. They also receive the annual review of the school's achievements on the academic and extra-curricular fronts each December. This year the school has begun to contact Year 7 parents routinely by email. The school complaints procedure is available on the website and is distributed to all new parents. The school deals sensitively with parental complaints. It is taking measures to improve the consistency in its response to parental concerns. No formal complaints have been recorded in the last year.
- 3.24 Parents are kept in touch with their children's progress through twice-yearly reports (thrice-yearly for parents of Year 7 pupils) and annual parents' evenings. The school is currently trialling a system of grade reports, complementing the full written reports. Heads of year are already using these to schedule meetings with parents of pupils who are not achieving at the appropriate level. The quality of the full written reports is uneven. The school is aware of this and is taking measures to improve the reports' assessment of pupils' strengths and weaknesses as well as the quality of formative advice. Present arrangements for parents' evenings do not always allow parents sufficient time or opportunity to discuss adequately their child's progress. The school is reviewing this aspect of provision.

- 3.25 The senior school has nurtured some links with the wider community. A chess club for autistic children from local schools has been established, and local deaf residents run a six-week signing course in the Year 10 life skills programme. Pupils' art and design work is on display in the radiology department of the local hospital. The school has initiated an ambitious project to raise funds for a new school in Madagascar and pupils have undertaken projects as part of expeditions abroad. However, the school has not established links in the local community which would allow it to offer formal programmes of voluntary service and work experience.

***Whole School***

- 3.26 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The quality of governance is outstanding. Since the last inspection, the successful move to full co-education has vindicated the governors' challenging strategic vision for the school and enabled the school to achieve even greater fulfilment of its educational aims.
- 4.2 Governors' close monitoring of the process of change has been instrumental in the effective implementation of their vision. In addition to building up an active, fruitful and mutually trusting partnership with the headmaster and senior management, they have consulted wisely and widely, with staff, parents and pupils, to determine how well their vision and strategy are being promulgated. This has provided them with the information they need to provide clear direction for the school. Through initiatives such as the 'education day', which they spent in school shadowing pupils throughout the day to understand at first hand a pupil's experience of school life, they have gained a comprehensive insight into the running of the school. Reports from the headmaster and from the headmaster of the junior school are presented and discussed at each board meeting. Heads of department also make presentations.
- 4.3 Governors have developed a management structure and range of committees which enable effective oversight of the school. They keep their committee structure under review to ensure it remains consistent with their strategic goals. The strategy committee has spent an away day with a representative group of staff to discuss their objectives, whilst the education committee pursues a very productive dialogue with management on educational issues. Each of these committees is chaired by a professional in the field.
- 4.4 Careful financial planning is integral to governance procedures. All recommendations from the various sub-committees must first be presented to the finance committee, before coming before the board. Effective controls and a helpful space audit have enabled governors to sanction the building of further high quality facilities to cater for the increased numbers of pupils.
- 4.5 Governors take their responsibilities seriously. They provide effective oversight of child protection and health and safety policies and procedures through nominated governors, who report to each meeting of the board. The school's health and safety committee is chaired by the nominated governor. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.6 The quality of leadership and management is strong overall. Since the last inspection, the management of change has been exceptional. However, some failings in academic management in the senior school have not yet been addressed. In close collaboration with governors, the headmasters and their senior management teams have led colleagues, pupils and parents successfully through the introduction of co-education into the very culture and fabric of the school. Hearts and minds have been won and facilities appropriately developed to cope with the increased numbers of pupils. During the inspection not a single voice was raised to question the move to co-education – a clear indicator of effective management. Senior management is now turning its attention to the task of consolidation. Forward-looking leadership and management remain the order of the day, as initiatives are promulgated to raise standards, particularly in teaching and learning, throughout both schools, in 'the unpretentious pursuit of excellence' which is proclaimed as the school's primary aim. Such clear, focused thinking has convinced most staff in both schools to accept the need to

question their practice and to embrace new ideas, but some uncertainty prevails amongst senior school heads of department, with the result that systematic sharing of good practice and monitoring of teachers' performance are still not universally accepted as an integral part of departmental culture and management.

### ***Junior School***

- 4.7 The headmaster and his senior management team have a clear vision for the school and give a firm lead. Decisions are effectively and efficiently communicated to staff, parents and pupils. Good links with senior school management ensure that whole school initiatives are promulgated as required.
- 4.8 Recent innovations such as a rigorous annual staff appraisal system, initiatives to promote thinking skills and the creation of a school council are proving effective in raising standards of teaching and learning. Subject coordinators in the junior school are enthusiastically espousing new initiatives. Increased monitoring and helpful liaison with the senior school are enabling areas of outstanding practice to be shared more widely and consistently within and across departments. The management team is aware of the significant task it now faces to ensure that the new practices become embedded in the culture of the school.
- 4.9 The ability to recruit and retain good quality staff is proving highly beneficial in the recent expansion of management roles in the school. Continuing professional development has strong all-round support. Excellent induction procedures are in place.
- 4.10 Departments are well resourced. Teaching assistants and support staff are used effectively. Accommodation is generally good and for some activities, such as sport, outstanding. Facilities for ICT have been improved. However, the ability of science teachers to improve still further the quality of their teaching is restricted by the lack of a bespoke laboratory.

### ***Senior School***

- 4.11 The headmaster shares with the governors a clear vision for the strategic direction of the school. He communicates this energetically, and is ably supported by a hard-working and highly dedicated senior management team. Energetic fulfilment of school aims is the driving force behind their thinking and planning, the clarity of which is to be seen in the superbly detailed and focused strategic and school development plans, as well as in the comprehensive set of policies and procedures which has been drawn up and implemented. Since the last inspection, the educational provision, both curricular and extra-curricular, has been extensively strengthened and expanded, the standards of music provision have been transformed into one of the strengths of the school, and the adverse effects of the deliberate curricular imbalance in favour of science and languages have been greatly reduced. However, recommendations in the last report concerning the management of academic matters and the improvement in provision for learning support have not yet been fully addressed.
- 4.12 Following recent expansion, the school's strategic aims now focus on developing standards of teaching and learning, without detriment to the outstanding extra-curricular programme. Senior management has introduced an annually reviewed appraisal scheme, which encourages staff to observe colleagues teaching and to share ideas. At the same time, procedures have been put in place to improve the monitoring and reporting of pupils' academic progress. Staff who are eager to diversify their teaching have been inspired to meet and research more deeply innovative ways of responding to pupils' differing learning styles, but not all teachers, including some heads of department, have full confidence in recent

initiatives. Departmental handbooks contain all required policies, but the implementation of these policies, including marking, is insufficiently rigorous. Senior management is aware that academic leadership is not rigorous enough, communications do not have enough clarity and consultation in academic matters is not thorough enough. A new senior management post of deputy head (academic) in the senior school has been created to take things forward. The appointment of heads of year and the improved monitoring of pupils' progress have brought improvements to the already high standards of pastoral care.

- 4.13 Senior managers are well supported by highly dedicated governors, who are eager to pursue and monitor the implementation of agreed strategic objectives. These form the basis and dictate the form of the school's ambitious development plan. Summary departmental plans feed into its academic objective, although these sometimes lack focus. Whilst responses to the development plan were invited, staff do not always feel enfranchised. A joint staff consultative committee has been created to improve consultation.
- 4.14 The school has succeeded in employing and retaining high calibre teaching and support staff. Thorough and appropriate recruitment and safeguarding procedures are in place. Induction policies and procedures for both newly qualified teachers and new staff are robust and effective. Continuing professional development is well supported. Whole staff INSET sessions focus on school and staff priorities.
- 4.15 Financial resources are well managed and support the school's educational aims. The academic areas of the school are well resourced. The bursar works hard to enable realistic strategic and business planning. Facilities are excellent in most areas, with ample ICT provision, a spacious library, an outstanding music school and comprehensive, well-maintained sports facilities. The boathouse and the school's conspicuous investment in rowing are exceptional. The routine administration of the school is efficient, and is enhanced by the increasing use of ICT.

#### ***Whole School***

- 4.16 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.17 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Exemplary governance, clear direction and leadership and a committed, well-qualified staff have together created a civilised, empowering community, consistent with the school's aims. Pivotal to this success are the excellent relationships between pupils and between staff and pupils, which engender an atmosphere of trust and security, in which pupils' personal development is nurtured, in many cases to outstanding levels. Standards of pastoral care are high. Pupils perform well in public examinations. Many examples of inspiring teaching enhance pupils' educational experience, but such good practice is insufficiently widespread. Despite the limited opportunities provided for voluntary service and work experience, the outstanding strength of the school lies in the remarkably extensive range of high quality activities which enrich the curriculum, providing pupils with exciting opportunities to develop their intellectual, creative and physical talents. Provision in sport, music, trips and outdoor activities is outstanding in range, quality and take-up. Strategic planning is both challenging and realistic. However, systematic monitoring of teaching and learning and formal sharing of ideas within and between departments are not yet fully embedded in the culture of the school.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, full co-education has been implemented and extensive improvements in facilities have greatly enhanced the quality of educational provision for all pupils. Music is now one of the school's strengths. Procedures for ensuring pupils' health and safety are good overall, although junior school risk assessments for off-site trips are not extensively detailed. The provision for learning support remains insufficiently consistent in the senior school. Liaison between the senior and junior schools is much improved.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. To improve still further the quality of its educational provision, it should take the following action:
1. disseminate the expertise to be found in the many examples of inspiring and intellectually challenging teaching in both schools to enhance the educational experience of all pupils;

#### *Junior School*

2. improve the writing, organisation and management of risk assessments for trips off-site;

#### *Senior School*

3. implement the proposed change in senior management structure to ensure that monitoring of teaching and learning is more effective;
  4. review provision for both voluntary service and work experience;
  5. develop a high standard of learning support and monitor procedures for implementing it.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr John Sugden	Reporting Inspector
Mr Garry Binks	Head of Physics, HMC school
Mrs Jane Coles	Senior Teacher, IAPS school
Mr Chris Davies	Head, IAPS school
Mr Robert Lilley	Head, IAPS school
Miss Margaret Pepper	Former Head, ISA school
Dr Millan Sachania	Deputy Head, SHMIS school
Mrs Sue Sowden	Former Head, GSA school
Mr Andrew Waddington	Head of English, HMC school
Mr John Watson	Head, HMC school