



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**DURHAM HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

**FINAL VISIT**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Durham High School for Girls

Full Name of School	<b>Durham High School for Girls</b>		
DCSF Number	<b>840/6004</b>		
EYFS Number	<b>EY356847</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>1119995</b>		
Address	<b>Durham High School for Girls Farewell Hall South Road Durham DH1 3TB</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>0191 384 3226</b>		
Fax Number	<b>0191 386 7381</b>		
Email Address	<b>headmistress@dhsfg.org.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs Ann Templeman</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr William Hurworth</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>590</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>148</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>45</b>	11-18: <b>397</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>590</b>		
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Gill Settle</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Girls</b>		
Inspection date/EYFS	<b>01 Feb 2010 to 02 Feb 2010</b>		
Final (team) visit	<b>01 Mar 2010 to 03 Mar 2010</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD ISI schedule. It consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in September 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31<sup>st</sup> August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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.

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(a) Main findings</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(b) Action points</b>	<b>3</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommended action	3
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	7
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>8</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	9
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>10</b>
(a) The quality of governance	10
(b) The quality of leadership and management	10
(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians	11
<b>6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	<b>12</b>
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	13
<b>INSPECTION EVIDENCE</b>	<b>14</b>

## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Durham High School for Girls is an independent day school for girls aged from three to eighteen. There are currently 590 pupils enrolled, of whom twenty, all in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are part-time. It was opened in 1884 in the centre of the city. It was founded as a Church of England school and remains so, providing education to pupils of all faiths or none. The school moved to its present site on the outskirts of Durham in 1964, occupying purpose-built premises which accommodate the senior house, for pupils aged eleven to eighteen, and the junior house, which includes the EYFS. The nursery is registered for 25 children aged three to five years, who may attend full or part-time. The reception class has 30 full-time places for children aged four to five years. At present 36 children receive early years funding.
- 1.2 The governing body has oversight of all sections of the school and includes representatives of the Bishops of Durham and Jarrow, the Dean of Durham, and of Durham University. The school aims to: create a friendly, caring community based on Christian principles where every individual is valued; develop the potential of every girl in all areas of her life; encourage academic excellence and a life-long love of learning.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection in September 2004, a new building has been opened, which incorporates a performing arts studio, music rooms and a suite of classrooms for mathematics, geography and history. The school's charitable foundation became incorporated in 2007.
- 1.4 The average ability of pupils in Years 1 to 6 is just above the national average. In Years 7 to 13 the pupils' ability is above the average for all schools nationally. Pupils are entered for GCSE and A-level examinations. Nearly all pupils continue into the sixth form. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, from Durham and a broad area surrounding the city. There are 43 who have English as an additional language (EAL). No pupil has a statement of special educational need. There are 38 pupils, including three in EYFS, who have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS**

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

- 2.1 Pupils of all ages achieve high standards. They are highly effective learners. Curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent. Many pupils achieve excellent standards in activities. The school provides effective, often excellent, teaching, with only a few inconsistencies in some subjects. Pupils make good progress overall. More able pupils and those with LDD or EAL achieve well. Pupils work highly effectively together and their learning is enhanced by the excellent relationships they have with their teachers.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent with strong spiritual awareness at its core. Their behaviour is exemplary. Pupils undertake responsibility willingly and fulfil it highly successfully. They develop a strong moral code and high levels of self-confidence. Pupils support an extensive range of charities with enthusiasm, particularly in relation to a link school in Lesotho. They show strong cultural awareness, participating enthusiastically in a wide range of activities related to their own and other cultures. In their development, pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care within a friendly, caring community. Older pupils develop excellent relationships with younger pupils in both sections of the school. Good arrangements to ensure the pupils' welfare and health and safety contribute effectively to their care. The pupils' responses to pre-inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the school.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent, and supports the school's aims highly effectively, together with the Christian principles which inform them. Effective oversight and excellent planning are combined with realistic financial consideration. Together with senior management, governors identify the school's needs well through highly-effective self-evaluation. Leadership and management are strong. Good, often excellent policies are introduced at all levels, and implemented and monitored successfully. The school has responded successfully to the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Since then significant progress has been made in the curriculum in the junior house, and in governance, leadership and management. The school maintains excellent links with parents, who expressed satisfaction, often strongly, with the education provided by the school, in pre-inspection questionnaires.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.
- 2.5 The school's registered provision for childcare met the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and the Childcare Act 2006 and no action was required.

Since the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is inspected under a different system of regulation, within a two-day limit, the report cannot mention any regulatory deficiencies which are remedied by the end of the standard inspection.

### **(ii) Recommended action**

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements:
1. ensure existing good practice in marking, and in the use of varied and stimulating styles in teaching, is consistently offered across all subject areas;
  2. continue to establish reliable systems for recording outdoor provision in EYFS so that plans reflect fully the range of activities provided.

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

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

##### ***Junior House***

- 3.1 Pupils achieve good standards, which reflect the school's aims. Their literacy skills are strong, and they develop good creative skills. Younger pupils in English produce handwriting which is excellent for their age. The pupils' numeracy skills are good. More able pupils and those with particular talents achieve well. For example, the more able younger pupils can calculate number bonds to one hundred in mental mathematics both quickly and accurately. Those with LDD or EAL also reach good standards. All pupils develop good knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects. Pupils are highly articulate, and confident in their use of language. Older pupils in French accurately apply their knowledge of pronouns in learning new vocabulary. Their reasoning skills are well developed. Older pupils think independently to good effect when interpreting the meaning of song lyrics, identifying subtle inflections of language. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) efficiently as part of their learning.
- 3.2 The pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent and they enjoy their lessons immensely. They work independently in class to good effect in some lessons and more able pupils work particularly effectively on their own initiative in homework tasks. They work together well, listening to each other's views effectively. Pupils have excellent relationships with staff. Their concentration is good, and they show good application in lessons and in activities. In a few lessons, pupils make slower progress when engaged in tasks which they do not find stimulating. Older pupils make rapid progress in understanding the properties of sound in science when asked to plan experiments in groups.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve well in activities outside the classroom. Some pupils reach excellent standards for their age in instrumental examinations and achieve success in regional performing competitions. Pupils gain national success in gymnastics and tumbling, and at county level in tennis. Teams enjoy success in local netball and swimming competitions.

##### ***Senior House***

- 3.4 Standards are high overall, and reflect the aims of the school. Results at GCSE and A level over the last three years for which comparative data are available have been high in comparison with the national average for all maintained schools. Pupils achieve well in all subjects and often achieve excellent standards in class.
- 3.5 Pupils make good progress over time in relation to their ability, which is above the national average. Those with EAL or LDD progress well, as do the more able. Sixth form pupils complete modules of university courses in English and science successfully. Pupils develop good knowledge, skills and understanding. They develop strong creative skills, particularly in art, drama and music. Pupils are highly articulate. Their reasoning skills are well developed and often their reasoning is excellent. For example, pupils studying for GCSE develop their understanding of Shakespeare sonnets rapidly through highly effective analysis of imagery and personification for their age and ability. The pupils' mathematical skills are good, and used well in other subjects. Younger pupils in physics use graphs to express

data to excellent effect. Pupils use ICT to extend learning with confidence in many areas. For example, younger pupils created imaginative posters in history to illustrate reaction to Tsar Nicholas and Rasputin, and older pupils manipulate images in graphics with software to excellent effect.

- 3.6 Pupils are highly effective learners and show great enthusiasm for their learning. They have excellent listening skills. They research well independently. Sixth form pupils give effective presentations on significant role models for women based on their own research. Relationships with staff are excellent. Pupils work hard and show excellent focus in lessons and in activities except in a very few cases. They work together with great success frequently, especially in sports, music and staged productions, and often help each other to achieve clearer understanding in class.
- 3.7 Pupils achieve excellent standards in activities beyond the classroom. They gain excellent results in instrumental examinations, including at the highest grades, and good results in speaking competitions, with excellent achievement in Latin and Greek speaking. They reach high standards in mathematics and business competitions. Standards of singing are high. Pupils appear in professional stage productions. They achieve consistently well in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), including a good proportion at gold level. In sport, pupils achieve success at national level in many sports, including gymnastics, tennis, swimming, skiing, bobsleigh and yachting. Teams achieve success at county and regional level in netball, tennis and athletics.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)**

#### ***Junior House***

- 3.8 The school provides an excellent curriculum which meets the needs of all pupils. It offers a wide variety of opportunities for the pupils' creative, physical and linguistic development alongside core skills in line with the school's aims. There are good opportunities to develop ICT skills. Close links between different subjects in curricular planning is a strength, giving pupils frequent opportunities to enhance their understanding and reinforce their learning. Personal, social, and health education (PSHE) is strong overall, and well planned, although limited time is given to the understanding of public institutions. Good quality schemes of work are devised and implemented well.
- 3.9 Setting by ability in mathematics, and some aspects of literacy from Year 2 onwards, provides good opportunities for pupils, particularly more able pupils and those with particular talents, to be given appropriate levels of challenge. These are complemented by extra-curricular clubs related to individual subjects. Pupils with particular talents can attend activities in the senior house, such as orchestra. Arrangements to oversee the pupils' transition from one stage of their education to the next are good. Transition to the senior house is aided by close links in many areas, including specialist teaching by staff from the senior house.

- 3.10 An excellent extra-curricular programme is offered to pupils and attendance is good. Participation is monitored and recorded, and forms part of pupils' records of achievement. Each year group participates in at least one visit per year and older pupils benefit from residential trips. Pupils are involved in many community-based projects, many of them linked to music. The school has its own Brownie pack which also welcomes girls from the wider community. There are good international links with a school in Lesotho, and pupils are involved in many other charitable events, particularly in response to natural disasters.

### ***Senior House***

- 3.11 An excellent curriculum provides highly effectively for the pupils' needs. There is a strong core curriculum, enhanced by great breadth of opportunity to develop particular interests. Distinctive features include excellent opportunities to study classics, including Greek at A level, and the study of separate sciences from Year 7. At GCSE and A level, pupils are given a wide range of subjects to choose from and they appreciate the flexibility of choice which the school offers. Opportunities to develop ICT skills are good, both as a research tool and in presenting text, graphics and data, across many subjects.
- 3.12 An excellent, comprehensive PSHE programme focuses highly effectively on the development of pupils as individuals, including good provision for citizenship, financial awareness and decision making. It also encompasses much of the school's careers programme, which is of high quality. Pupils receive advice from Year 7 onwards. Sixth form pupils identify subject specific advice as particularly helpful and feel well prepared for university application and other career paths. All Year 11 pupils undertake work experience, as do many pupils in Year 12.
- 3.13 High quality information is given to staff regarding pupils' individual needs and potential. The recent introduction of standardised tests in the sixth form has strengthened this provision. Pupils with LDD and EAL are identified well, and support is highly effective. Pupils with LDD are given suitable educational plans and these are regularly reviewed and communicated to staff. Some follow a personalised curriculum and others receive help outside lessons. More able pupils are given excellent opportunities through setting in many subjects. Other options include taking university modules or an extended project in the sixth form, and participation in subject-based clubs.
- 3.14 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities is available both after school and at lunchtimes. Pupils appreciate the wide range available to them and participation is widespread. Their achievement is monitored and reported on well. Excellent provision for sport, music and drama, and the opportunity to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE), is supplemented by clubs such as textiles, cookery and animation. Older pupils lead activities for younger pupils in both sections of the school, such as debating and 'Science Sparks', a science club for Year 6 pupils from local primary schools and Durham High School.
- 3.15 Many pupils experience links with the community through charitable activities such as providing a Christmas party for the elderly and working with local primary school pupils. They are involved with subject-related activities at the university and a group visits Lesotho annually.

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

- 3.16 Teaching in both senior and junior houses is good and often excellent. The recommendations of the previous inspection report have been tackled successfully. Teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of pupils and understand their needs and aptitudes well. They encourage pupils so that they enjoy their work, and pupils settle to tasks set with enthusiasm. These are well designed to suit the needs of pupils of differing abilities. Provision for pupils with EAL or LDD makes excellent, sensitive use of the information provided about their needs. Pupils with EAL receive good help in the classroom, supplemented by effective communication with parents. Classroom assistants are used well to provide additional support for younger pupils. More able pupils and those with particular talents are often given excellent levels of challenge through additional tasks and more demanding activities. Most teaching fosters the pupils' interest and encourages them to think for themselves. However, occasional over-use of work sheets in some subjects in the senior school hinders independent learning. In the junior house, reference in science lessons to previous work on Ancient Egypt in history enables pupils to make good connections between different areas of their learning. Planning is excellent, although in a few lessons, the learning objectives are not made clear.
- 3.17 Teaching throughout the school uses a wide variety of methods and uses time well. Expectations of pupils in most lessons are high, enabling them to make rapid progress. For example, in biology, sixth form pupils made rapid progress in understanding meiosis and mitosis when given challenging tasks to complete within a defined time. In a few lessons, slow-paced teaching limits opportunities for pupils to make sufficient progress. Discussion between pupils is used to excellent effect across all areas of the curriculum, its use often enabling pupils to become aware of spiritual, moral, social or cultural dimensions to their work. The teachers' subject knowledge is excellent, and a notable strength of sixth form teaching. Much teaching benefits from ideas disseminated by an active discussion group set up to share good practice in teaching and learning.
- 3.18 Teaching is supported by an excellent range of resources and good, purpose-built accommodation. Provision for ICT is excellent, and it is well used throughout the curriculum as an aid to learning. For example, pupils gain an extra dimension to learning from a dedicated area on the school website, which provides enrichment and extension tasks, and guidance for individual research. The library in the senior house is welcoming and includes a good range of fiction and non-fiction books. It is in constant use by pupils. There is now effective library provision in the junior house, meeting the recommendation of the previous inspection report.
- 3.19 Assessment is good overall. Standardised tests, some recently introduced, and both formal and informal assessments are used well to identify the pupils' needs, and to monitor and record pupils' progress. Systems to monitor the progress of pupils with particular talents are in place and these are operated well overall. Marking is regular and follows individual departmental policies in nearly all cases. Overall, it is of good quality, although in a small number of subjects in Years 7 to 9 it is limited in scope. Overall, however, pupils say they understand the marking criteria. They benefit greatly from marking each other's work and from self-assessment, using explicit assessment objectives. Junior house pupils frequently appraise each other's ideas, enhancing their understanding. The setting of agreed individual targets with pupils in individual subjects, and in their overall learning, is a frequent good feature of teaching. Often, pupils set their own targets.

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

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

- 4.1 The pupils' personal development is excellent. They develop high levels of self-esteem in response to the school's emphasis on the value of the individual. In line with the school's aims and Christian ethos, pupils reach notably high levels of spiritual awareness. These are demonstrated in preparations for pupil-led assemblies and services. Younger pupils in the senior house gave presentations in celebration of St Cuthbert which contained much insight into modern-day application of the saint's teaching. In junior house assemblies, pupils celebrate each other's successes weekly, and perform drama at a high level to demonstrate the value of individuals. Pupils enjoy the many opportunities they are given to join in sporting and aesthetic performance at all ability levels, and develop high levels of confidence through their participation. They develop a good appreciation of other faith systems, celebrating notable occasions in a variety of religions represented within the school.
- 4.2 Pupils develop strong moral awareness. The pupils have an excellent sense of right and wrong. For example, a group campaigns actively for the rights of prisoners. Younger pupils in the senior school regularly debate topical issues, such as compensation for earthquake victims, and older pupils discuss the moral aspects of stories about theft and race with insight. Environmental considerations are strong throughout the school. Pupils from Year 1 onwards learn the value of simple actions, such as switching off taps at washbasins, and recycling representatives in all year groups take their responsibilities seriously.
- 4.3 The pupils' social development is excellent. Behaviour at all ages is outstanding. Senior house pupils make highly effective use of the opportunities given to them to act as members of committees, such as the school council. The council in the junior house does not currently meet, limiting such opportunities for younger pupils. Older pupils share their skills with younger pupils in both senior and junior houses, acting as mentors, as 'buddies' in helping with academic work, or helping with reading as part of the DofE Award scheme. Younger pupils in the senior house develop an appropriate understanding of public institutions, but that of junior house pupils is limited. Sixth form pupils develop good understanding through well-planned events such as a visit by a member of parliament. Charitable work is a strong feature of all pupils' school lives. The school's link with Lesotho is supported by regular fund-raising activities by junior house pupils. Those in the senior house support the project through general fund-raising and events to support an annual visit by pupils. Large-scale concert performances in which senior house pupils participate effectively with other local pupils raise significant sums.
- 4.4 Pupils develop strong cultural awareness. All Year 7 pupils participate in a choral event each year and pupils enjoy greatly their participation in an annual staged production at a local theatre. Ensembles and choirs are well supported in both sections of the school. Year 5 pupils participate in an annual production with other primary school pupils, to which GCSE drama pupils from the senior house contribute their expertise. Pupils produce imaginative art work, particularly in graphics, which is displayed around the school, and contribute to school publications, such as programmes, cards and posters. Pupils visit European countries to enhance their linguistic and cultural understanding, particularly of classics. They benefit from cultural enrichment in connection with the Lesotho link, including through visits by African drummers and singers.

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

- 4.5 The school provides excellent pastoral care for pupils, meeting fully its aim of creating a friendly and caring community where all are valued. All staff provide careful support and guidance. The school's ethos ensures that each pupil is listened to, and personally known, including through an imaginative 'big sister' scheme whereby older pupils listen to younger. Where appropriate, access to a professional counsellor is arranged. The care of pupils is sensitive and regularly reviewed. Since the previous inspection, the school has strengthened its pastoral system through the appointment of heads of year. These support the work of form tutors, and lines of responsibility are clearly understood. Highly effective arrangements exist for the care of sixth form pupils. Frequent, informal communication between the junior house and senior house enhances the sense of a unified community. A successful feature of care in both sections of the school is the monitoring of the pupils' academic and pastoral development side by side. All pupils feel that their concerns are addressed appropriately and promptly, and that teachers show genuine care for their well-being.
- 4.6 Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are open, respectful and mutually supportive. This generates a strong sense of loyalty to and pride in the school in pupils of all ages. There is a good system of rewards. The school's code of conduct is clear, accessible and understood by pupils. Appropriate sanctions exist to deal with unacceptable conduct and these are felt to be fair, effective and proportionate by pupils. There are various channels through which the pupils' views may be heard. The school council in the senior house provides an active forum for discussion and development, and pupils feel that feasible suggestions are acted upon. Junior house pupils discuss their concerns with form tutors. A strong anti-bullying policy is in place and pupils are confident that any such issues are dealt with promptly and firmly.
- 4.7 Safeguarding arrangements are good. Appropriate training is given to all staff, governors are well involved and provide good oversight, and sixth form pupils taking part in the 'big sister' scheme also receive careful guidance. Access for those with physical or learning needs is well planned. Registration is conducted diligently and absence is quickly followed up. The school maintains an appropriate admissions register. Suitable arrangements exist for pupils who feel unwell and the school operates a comprehensive first aid policy. Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are good, as are arrangements for health and safety on educational visits.
- 4.8 Healthy eating is given a high priority in the PSHE programme and is carefully monitored, especially in the junior house. Pupils have the opportunity, through a dedicated committee, to address concerns regarding catering arrangements and their suggestions are acted upon. Food is of good quality and there is variety and choice. Pupils are given extensive opportunities and encouragement to engage in physical exercise, an aspect of the school's provision which they greatly appreciate.

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

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

- 5.1 Excellent governance supports the school's aims in a highly effective way. The governing body includes a good range of experience in finance and the law, and in both primary and secondary education. It also benefits from the presence of figures from both the diocese and the university. All governors give strong support to the school's Christian ethos. The governing body's effectiveness is underpinned by a clear committee structure. It plans with confidence and enterprise to support the vision for the school and this is informed by realistic financial consideration. The school buildings are maintained well. Governors exercise strong oversight of areas where they have legal responsibilities, with designated figures giving informed advice as well as oversight in areas including child protection, health and safety, and provision for pupils with LDD. Governors receive high quality information and visit regularly, including being actively involved in staff training when appropriate.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.2 Leadership and management are strong at all levels. The aims of the school are met well. Pastoral management is excellent, characterised by regular communication and excellent policy making, which is followed up well. Academic management is highly effective overall. At senior management level, it identifies the school's needs well and creates policies to meet them which are forward-looking and comprehensive. Heads of department and co-ordinators put these into practice successfully, although there are occasional inconsistencies in implementation and monitoring. There are strong links between the junior and senior houses. Management at all levels has been strengthened since the previous inspection by the revision of structures and a clear definition of responsibilities. The senior management team provides a clear vision for the school. It meets regularly, overseeing excellent co-ordination of all areas of the school's activity, including financial matters. The school's self-evaluation is highly effective, being both analytical and reflective. Development planning at whole school level is strategic and thorough, and links well to departmental planning. Careful financial management ensures that these plans can be delivered, and as a result both pastoral and academic areas of school life receive excellent resources. This promotes the good progress seen in the school.
- 5.3 The school secures well-qualified and dedicated staff who contribute much to the development of a caring community central to the school's ethos. A good system of staff review aids communication between staff and effective identification of areas for development. This leads to regular training of staff which is well-designed to address the school's needs academically, and in the areas of safeguarding, the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are robust, and the central register is maintained effectively. The school's sense of community is strengthened by the effective work of secretarial, administrative and other non-teaching staff who share concern for the pupils' well-being and contribute much to the smooth running of the school.

### **5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.4 The school has an excellent partnership with parents. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires parents showed satisfaction, often at a high level, with the education and support that their children receive. They show particular satisfaction with the attitudes promoted by the school, the high levels of care offered to pupils and the high standards of behaviour expected. They also appreciate greatly the progress made by the pupils, and the extensive range of educational opportunities that the school provides.
- 5.5 Parents are provided with reports twice a year in the junior house. In the senior house, termly reports are issued, except when a full parents' meeting is scheduled. Reports are of excellent quality, offering constructive guidance for the pupils' development, and they show a clear knowledge of the pupil as an individual. Parents are given the opportunity to comment on reports. The school ensures that any concerns identified in this process are handled carefully and promptly, creating an excellent partnership between home and school. At key points of transition, the school offers further consultation, ensuring that each pupil, including those about to join the school, is offered extensive support.
- 5.6 Parents give much support to the school. They help with reading, school trips, the careers programme, and fund-raising events, including charitable activities. The school actively encourages parents to be involved in its work. They are invited to sports fixtures, concerts and plays, and to a Sunday service at certain points in the school year. The school also arranges occasions where parents may socialise. The association for parents and friends of the school provides a focus for all associated with the school community. Parent representatives for each form in the school provide a valuable additional link.
- 5.7 The school provides weekly news bulletins, newsletters and a variety of information booklets of excellent quality. It regularly seeks the views of parents when changes are to be made which affect pupils. The school's website is of high quality, giving access to all required information for parents of pupils and prospective pupils. The school has in place a suitable complaints policy, although this has not needed to be invoked recently. Parents feel that the school deals well with any concerns that may arise.

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

## **6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **6.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.1 The effectiveness of the EYFS is excellent. All aspects of provision are outstanding in most respects. The excellent partnerships with a range of providers, together with high quality teaching, ensure all children make at least good and mostly outstanding progress and that their needs are met exceptionally well. Children are safe, secure and fully integrated into the wider school community. Effective evaluation has enabled the school to significantly improve upon the good provision identified at the previous inspection. The recommendations to improve information for parents and to monitor activities, made at that time, have been met.

### **6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. The high aspirations, clear vision and continual striving for success demonstrated by leaders motivate a strong team to achieve. The efficient implementation of school policies together with regular risk assessments ensure children are secure and safeguarded well. Suitably qualified staff attend training regularly. The imaginative use of resources has a positive impact upon high quality outcomes. Through regular and robust self-evaluation, to which parents and children contribute, areas for expansion are identified and included in a detailed development plan. The strong commitment to equality and diversity is reflected in high-quality inclusive practices that ensure all children, irrespective of background, ability or need, achieve. Outstanding relationships with parents and external agencies are managed effectively and contribute to understanding children's development and maintaining high standards.

### **6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.3 Provision is outstanding overall. Exciting environments stimulate the children's desire for knowledge, and reflect their interests. Highly successful teaching supports children well. Planning is excellent overall, incorporating imaginative, purposeful play and challenging tasks that cultivate inquisitive, independent minds and support high standards. However, the recording of outdoor provision does not always reflect fully the activities undertaken by the pupils. There is an effective balance between teacher-led activities and those chosen by children. The efficient use of assessment information contributes to the children's rapid progress and continually improving standards. Parents receive extensive information about their children's achievements. Their widespread involvement in children's "learning journeys" solidifies home-school relationships. The quality of care is outstanding. Adults promote successful health and safety routines and establish clear patterns for children to follow. Key people, who have excellent relationships with children, support and guide them extremely well.

### **6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 6.4 Children make outstanding progress in relation to their starting points and abilities. They are happy, confident, curious learners who are eager to achieve and whose behaviour is exemplary. Reception children have advanced literacy skills and articulate nursery children express themselves well. Their enjoyment of ICT, numeracy and problem solving tasks contribute to a strong foundation for future learning. They demonstrate high levels of independence and concentration when directed by adults and when working alone. All children participate enthusiastically in high-quality outdoor provision, and show in many aspects of the setting that they make a positive contribution to learning. Involving children in reviewing their learning contributes significantly to their rapid progress. Children understand safety and good health. They explain how to stay out of danger; they wash their hands before eating, describe the benefits of choosing healthy foods at snack and meal times and enjoy physical activity.

#### **Complaints since the previous inspection**

- 6.5 Since the previous inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements

**What the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## 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 governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting inspector
Mr Robert Lilley	Junior Team Inspector (Head of School (Prep), HMC)
Mrs Victoria Hall	Junior Team Inspector (Head of School (Prep), GSA)
Mrs Louise Robinson	Senior Team Inspector (Principal, GSA)
Dr Ruth Weeks	Senior Team Inspector (Head, GSA)
Mr Andrew McNeil	Senior Team Inspector (Head of Year, HMC)
Mrs Jean Smith	Senior Team Inspector (Director of Studies, GSA)
Mrs Sandra Gordon	Early Years Lead Inspector