



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BENENDEN SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Benenden School

Full Name of School	Benenden School
DfE Number	886/6002
Registered Charity Number	307854
Address	Cranbrook Road Benenden Kent TN17 4AA
Telephone Number	01580 240592
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Email Address	sjb@benenden.kent.sch.uk
Head	Mrs Claire Oulton
Chair of Governors	Mr Charles Covell
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	545
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Number of Boarders	545
Inspection dates	29 Jan 2013 to 01 Feb 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in April 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with a governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Dr Anthony Dachs	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Ann Aughwane	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Dr Jennette Jefferies	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mrs Deborah Leonard	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Jason Lewis	Team Inspector (Senior Manager, HMC school)
Mr Andrew Matthews	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Miss Phillipa Message	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Susan Meek	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Andrew Lee	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Senior Master, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Benenden School was founded in 1923 to provide a full boarding school education for girls. It occupies the nineteenth-century mansion in the Kent countryside where it began and the extensive parkland about it. The school is a registered charity and a limited company. It is governed by a council of 13 nominated and elected members.
- 1.2 The school aims to give each pupil the chance to develop her potential to the full, within a happy and caring environment. It seeks to foster the values of belief in self and in others, as well as a commitment to learning and service within the community.
- 1.3 The school's buildings, including boarding facilities, are modern and extensive. Boarders occupy ten houses, four of which are for pupils in Years 12 and 13. Since the previous inspection in April 2008, the school has raised a new science centre and quad, developed its humanities centre, refurbished the chapel and improved its social spaces, including a cafe-style extension to the dining-room. It has also upgraded much of its boarding accommodation.
- 1.4 The school currently has 545 pupils, all boarders, of whom 180 are in the sixth form. They come from a variety of backgrounds, with the majority drawn from professional families in England. About one tenth of pupils are foreign passport holders and one tenth are from expatriate families. These international students come mainly from South East Asia, Africa and the European Union.
- 1.5 Nationally standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the senior school is above the national average, with a fifth of pupils being of well above average ability. Few pupils are of average or below average ability. The ability profile of the sixth form is above the national average, although with a wider spread of abilities than in the senior school. Two-thirds of pupils are of at least above average ability, and a quarter have an ability that is in line with the national average.
- 1.6 The school identifies 98 pupils as having a special educational need and/or disability (SEND). Of these 87 receive additional support within the school. None has a statement of special educational need. Twenty-one pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 14 receive additional support within the school.
- 1.7 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Fourth Form	Year 7
Upper Fourth	Year 8
Lower Fifth	Year 9
Fifth Form	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Six One	Year 12
Six Two	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements is excellent. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND or EAL, are keen to learn and respond eagerly to the committed teaching, coaching and support which they receive. The quality of teaching is excellent overall, although some variation of standard does persist so that the school's work to ensure uniform excellence is ongoing. The quality of learning is excellent with pupils making rapid and sustained progress. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate high skills of literacy and numeracy. The quality of pupils' achievement in art, music and drama is outstanding. Achievement in GCSE and A-level examinations is well above the national average for girls in English maintained schools and above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Almost all students proceed to their preferred university or institution of higher education. Pupils' sporting achievement too is high and pupils excel in the Model United Nations programme and in service to communities beyond the school. The curriculum is broad and includes subjects such as Latin and Mandarin, and activities are plentiful. The school's resources and the pupils' use of them are excellent.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils engage eagerly with each of the several layers of pastoral support provided for them and they reach out keenly to welcome visitors to their school. Relationships between staff and pupils are outstanding. Pupils also support each other kindly and they share concerns and successes readily. They exercise responsibility well and provide help wherever it is needed. Excellent standards of welfare, health and safety ensure the well-being and security of every pupil. Instances of bullying are extremely rare, reported at once and dealt with promptly. The quality of boarding is excellent. Pupils are proud of their house, relate extremely well to all other members, respect the staff and establish excellent friendships.
- 2.3 The effectiveness of governance and of leadership and management is excellent. Governors are active in promoting and monitoring the needs of the school. They oversee carefully the welfare, health and safety of all members and ensure that all regulatory requirements are met and all required policies are in place and followed. The school's grounds and facilities are maintained to high standards and a rolling programme to meet the needs of the boarding houses is in place. The school's leaders and managers are highly successful in establishing and sustaining the unique character of the school. They achieve very well the school's aims to ensure a happy and caring environment and to foster among staff and pupils a belief in self and in others. Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. Close contact is secured by all means, including email, regular reports and newsletters, and by meetings and visits. Parents responding to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire showed the highest levels of enthusiasm and appreciation for the school's work across all areas. Inspectors supported these views. The school has met all recommendations made at the time of the previous inspection.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2012.

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2012.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Expand and sustain its commitment to innovative and exciting teaching and supportive assessment in all subjects.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school amply fulfils its aim of developing each pupil's potential as fully as possible. Pupils throughout the school are keen and enthusiastic about their studies, both inside and outside the classroom. They delight in their learning and their achievement is excellent, improving on the standard at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils of all ages and in all subjects demonstrate excellent knowledge, understanding and skills across the curriculum.
- 3.3 Pupils work well independently and in groups, encouraging and praising each other particularly well. They engage keenly in their lessons and they respond well to enthusiastic teaching and challenging questions. They listen attentively to each other's ideas. Pupils appreciate and praise the support they receive inside and outside the classroom. Pupils express their ideas fluently and effectively orally, in their written work and in frequent presentations to others. The application of mathematical and literary skills, as well as logical thought, is highly developed. The pupils are confident learners and they participate successfully in all lessons. Skills range from collaborative learning in science practical classes to individual creativity of the highest standard in art and in drama. Pupils' written work is well-organised and well-presented. Almost all pupils proceed to the university of their first choice, with a number winning places at overseas institutions.
- 3.4 Pupils' achievement in the very wide range of extra-curricular activities and in academic extension sessions and competitions is excellent. Pupils show commitment and enthusiasm in all activities, from music and drama to the Model United Nations programme and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Charity work is equally extensive and successful. Pupils take leading roles, and display significant initiatives, in the school's many clubs and societies. In sport they secure team honours at regional and county levels in lacrosse, netball and hockey, backed by individual success at national level in lacrosse, judo and fencing.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years from 2009 to 2011. These are the three most recent years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The pupils' attainment at GCSE and at A level is excellent, well above the national average for girls in maintained schools and above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. These high levels of attainment were sustained in 2012 with a high percentage of grades at the top levels at both GCSE and A level.
- 3.6 The progress of pupils at all levels is excellent, high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. This is shown in the analyses of nationally standardised measures of examination performance that are available and also from the evidence seen during the inspection, including lesson observation, discussions with pupils and examination of their work. Pupils with SEND and those with EAL progress as well as their peers, assisted carefully and thoroughly by specialist support within the school. The most able are also clearly identified and tackle successfully more challenging tasks, such as subject competitions in mathematics and science and a wide variety of academic extension programmes throughout the school.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The school's provision, both within the classroom and beyond it, is broad, challenging and inspiring for all pupils. The school is ambitious for its pupils and provides both facilities and support in teaching that pursues success at the highest levels. The curriculum is suitable for pupils of all ages, abilities and needs, enabling them to explore and to develop their interests and capabilities in line with the school's aims.
- 3.9 The curriculum covers the requisite areas of learning very well. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 follow a stimulating and wide-ranging academic curriculum which explores different areas of learning and provides a thorough preparation for study at GCSE level. The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 remains broad, with an appropriate core of compulsory study and a wide range of options. Both modern and classical languages are offered, as well as physical education, drama, a programme of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), critical thinking and the Model United Nations. The three sciences are offered according to the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (iGCSE) to stimulate challenge of a high order. Sport is extensive and provides well both for individual pursuits and for team games. Sixth Form subject choice is wide and an academic extension programme includes opportunity for pupils to maintain non-examined language study. Pupils engage keenly in critical thinking programmes and in sport. The curriculum responds flexibly to individual need. It also provides formal extension sessions and a comprehensive seminar and lecture programme to prepare pupils for life after school.
- 3.10 The quality of careers guidance is excellent. Pupils appreciate the support and advice which they receive, both in considering subjects for study at GCSE and A Level and in making career options and university applications.
- 3.11 The school has developed well its provision for information and communication technology (ICT) since the previous inspection so that this is used imaginatively and effectively at all levels, within and outside lessons. The school portal encourages 'any time, any place' learning. The excellent library is a clear support for both independent and collaborative learning and it is used very well. The school engenders among pupils a yearning for life-long learning that accords well with the school's declared aim.
- 3.12 The school provides excellent support for pupils with SEND and EAL at all stages. Individual needs are carefully assessed and key information disseminated to teachers. The curriculum caters well for the gifted and talented, who are identified promptly and receive enrichment and support that challenges them to excel.
- 3.13 The academic curriculum is extended by a comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities in which pupils participate keenly and successfully. They have opportunity also to organise their own activities and thereby to exercise qualities of keen leadership. The 'weekend programme' enhances key academic and non-academic skills.
- 3.14 The range of sports, both individual and team, is extensive. The school's swimming pool and sports centre are excellent. Drama, art, debating and martial arts illustrate the wide range of activities, matched by exchange visits and work experience as far as Cape Town, Australia and Hong Kong. Pupils, through their engagement in

school councils, influence initiatives and ensure a wide offering. Enterprising charitable fund-raising is often organised by the pupils themselves and links with local and international communities are strongly pursued.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.16 Teaching is highly effective in promoting the learning and progress of all pupils. It supports well the aims of the school to foster a commitment to learning and a belief in self.
- 3.17 Teaching is carefully structured to encourage independent thought and judgement. It has pace and attractive variety, keeping all pupils keenly engaged throughout the lesson. Teachers have high expectations and ask probing questions that challenge the pupils further, and they use imaginative and new techniques to arouse interest, such as playing music to inspire thinking in a design and technology lesson. The school's leaders have achieved much in improving the overall quality of teaching since the previous inspection through sharing the best practice within the school, by observing subject lessons, by work scrutiny and by a programme of cross-curricular lesson observation. This is, however, incomplete and awaits consistency across all subject areas and year groups.
- 3.18 Teachers have outstanding subject knowledge and they use it well to provide clear explanations and to nurture enthusiasm among their pupils. Teachers provide many subject clinics and they give generously of their time outside lessons to support learning. Teaching benefits significantly from spacious and well-equipped classrooms, as well as a school study centre. The building of a new science centre since the previous inspection has significantly improved teaching facilities there. Classrooms are well-equipped with ICT resources, which teachers use effectively and in a variety of ways in almost all lessons.
- 3.19 Teachers establish excellent relationships with their pupils who consequently respond well and clearly enjoy their lessons. Support by subject teachers for pupils identified with SEND is very good and communication between subject teachers and learning support staff is excellent and frequent. The further development of the extension and scholarship mentoring programmes since the previous inspection has encouraged initiatives in regular lessons as well as the establishment of awards in science, a project on homelessness and 'inspiration lectures' in mathematics. These all provide successful challenge for more able pupils.
- 3.20 Since the previous inspection, the school has improved its arrangements for assessment, which is now being successfully embedded throughout the school. The pupils' ability to evaluate their own written work is increasingly effective. It reinforces learning well and enables the pupils to raise their own standards. The quality of teachers' marking is often excellent, regular and thorough, but it presently lacks uniformity across all Years. Pupils comment that they find the marking helpful and constructive, pointing out ways for improvement.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. Pupils are courteous and confident. They are self-aware and have a strong self-esteem. They also show significant concern for each other. They very much appreciate the non-material aspects of life and the magnificence of the natural world. They value a thought-provoking programme entitled 'Bread' which prompts spirituality and faith, and they use the chapel well as a place for reflection or shared prayer.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral development is excellent. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and their relationships with each other, and with staff and visitors, show trust and cooperation. They are well-behaved and courteous. Prefects engage in 'pupil support' so that concerns are shared and addressed. Pupils debate ethical issues in lessons and in whole school debates on issues such as homelessness, showing concern and understanding when doing so. Pupils are generous and thoughtful, raising large funds for charities at local, national and international levels.
- 4.4 Pupils are very well-behaved and courteous. Their social development is strong so that they are well prepared for the next stage of their personal growth, including leaving school. They accept responsibility keenly and contribute well, often of their own initiative, to the school society. Leadership roles include those of 'house mother' and 'big sister' to younger pupils. Pupils are included on a number of formerly exclusively staff committees, ensuring that their voices are heard within the school. They work hard together to achieve a tolerant and harmonious community.
- 4.5 The pupils appreciate cultural diversity and they accord dignity and respect to others' values and beliefs. They speak well and with assurance on other cultures and they also listen well. This leads to harmonious relations across the school which emphasise understanding, tolerance and inclusion. Pupils visit many different countries and cultures and they report on issues such as the plight of girls in war-torn parts of Africa and on poverty and unemployment. The Model United Nations is popular with pupils above Year 9 and encourages serious research and discussion of cultural and political issues.

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

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 The excellent quality of pastoral care enables all pupils to feel safe and valued and to engage fully in all aspects of school life. It also allows each to achieve high levels of personal development and responsibility. The pupils are consequently happy, outgoing, supportive of each other and respectful of their teachers and other staff. They grow strongly in personal maturity and responsibility.
- 4.8 Teachers and staff, in differing but complementary roles within the school, provide an excellent programme of pastoral support and guidance, in accord with the aims of the school. The individual tutoring programme is comprehensive and highly effective for the full range of pupils. Regular review meetings and excellent record-keeping ensure that all pupils are considered frequently. Individual welfare plans or informal monitoring is introduced promptly whenever appropriate. The school's arrangements are comprehensive and include, since the previous inspection, special

heads of year at entry points to the school to ensure easy and successful integration. In such ways the school ensures that every pupil is cared for and helped to benefit promptly and fully from her education.

- 4.9 The school has highly effective procedures in place to promote good behaviour. Pupils reported very few instances of inappropriate or unpleasant behaviour and they considered that when these did occur they were dealt with quickly and effectively by the school.
- 4.10 Pupils develop healthy attitudes to eating and to exercise. An impressive selection of well-balanced meals is offered each day and pupils commented enthusiastically on these. Games and activities, both team and individual, are plentiful and facilities for these are excellent. The school monitors pupils' eating and exercise habits carefully. Pupils value the strong PSHCE programme throughout the school, which includes for all pupils a lecture programme by outside speakers and experts.
- 4.11 The school has clear and comprehensive plans to improve educational access for pupils with SEND. This they review regularly and amend as appropriate.
- 4.12 The school's success in seeking pupils' opinions is clearly evident with numerous consultative groups such as the pupil forum, house forums and a food committee. Pupils felt strongly that their views are listened to and their opinions are valued. They responded very positively to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire, showing overwhelming support for all aspects of the school's provision. They recognised that they were making good progress in their studies, they appreciated the range of activities available, including during the evening, and the help given to them by teachers and coaches. They accepted that positions of responsibility were open to them, that their opinions were considered and teachers showed concern for them. They felt safe and knew whom to contact if unhappy or anxious. They also considered the quality and variety of food to be outstanding.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The school is strongly committed and highly successful in its concern for the welfare, health and safety of all its members. It takes careful and comprehensive measures to ensure that all are safe and secure.
- 4.15 Risk assessments are clear for all areas of school life and they are regularly revised. Precautions to prevent the risk of fire are in place, and both drills and inspections are held regularly. Safeguarding policies and monitoring have regard to official guidance and the school reviews its arrangements regularly. Child protection training is strong and extensive, and includes sixth form pupils. It is updated annually. Links between the school and local welfare agencies are excellent.
- 4.16 The school's counselling service is excellent and pupils' access to an independent listener is known and prompt. The school's health centre is outstanding and provides comprehensive medical care. Medicines are carefully stored, clearly labelled and controlled. The school has a large number of staff and pupils trained in first aid. All pupils take regular exercise and additionally enjoy the large parkland surrounding the school.
- 4.17 All admission and attendance registers and records are maintained and preserved appropriately.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.19 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders demonstrate clearly how well the school's boarding provision supports their development. They are open, courteous, confident and mature. They very warmly support each other and benefit from living together and growing together under the care of highly professional and committed boarding staff. Social events, as well as PSHCE and EAL support sessions, foster most effectively tolerance, mutual understanding and the celebration of diversity. All boarders enjoy equal access to a structured progression through junior and sixth form houses, which ensures growing self-reliance, increased responsibility for self and for others and preparation for adulthood. Careful induction of the youngest pupils provides leadership and caring roles for older pupils and fosters a high level of trust. Boarders are treated as individuals and their excellent behaviour reflects this well. Those in positions of authority or care receive appropriate training and guidance. All have opportunities to make their views known and they are confident that their views are heard and acted upon. For example, prep times have been adjusted and refurbishments debated and settled. Boarders are proud of the results of their initiatives.
- 4.20 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders receive excellent pastoral care and guidance. House teams are skilfully managed, information is shared effectively and boarders are prudently monitored by house staff and tutors. Houses have a genuine family feel about them which boarders appreciate, especially the opportunity for 'down time' with members of staff. Boarders keenly seek help from a range of trusted adults and peers. Senior pupils know what to do if they encounter a matter of concern. The medical centre is outstanding and works very well with outside agencies. Medicine and care-plans are thoroughly controlled and administered. Policies and procedures for health and safety and for minimising risks, including from fire, meet requirements. Fresh, and often locally sourced, food in the attractive central dining-hall receives universal acclaim. The new cafe area, built since the previous inspection, is much appreciated and used well. Quality, choice, healthy eating and special dietary requirements are excellent. Boarders can readily obtain a variety of hot and cold drinks at meal times, during break and in the evenings, and have appropriate access to additional food in house kitchens. Boarders' possessions are kept safely and a strong culture of honesty and respect for property pervades.
- 4.21 Boarders have full and safe access at appropriate times to excellent facilities and beautiful grounds. Boarders are helped to manage their time well. Extensive extra-curricular activities are plentiful, including during the evening and over weekends. These are excellent, both in organisation and in resources. At the same time, rest and private time are carefully built into boarders' programmes.
- 4.22 Boarding accommodation is good, with acceptable variations between excellent and recently-refurbished houses and those awaiting upgrading. All are nonetheless good, clean, bright and cheerful. Recent building, especially sixth form houses, is well conceived. Junior dormitory sizes have been reduced since the previous inspection. Boarders are easily able to contact parents at acceptable times by telephone, e-mail or video link. Frequent communication between school and parents is established from before boarders arrive at school and it is maintained throughout their time at the school. Social events are arranged, permissions sought,

newsletters sent and parents involved in all pastoral and disciplinary matters. Reasonably frequent home visits are available.

- 4.23 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. All National Minimum Standards for boarding are met. Safeguarding is well-handled and has regard to official guidance. Policies and procedures for recruiting staff are rigorous and efficient. All appropriate checks are made. The prevailing culture of inclusivity, mutual trust and respect which pervades each boarding house minimises incidents of bullying, but suitable policies and procedures are also in place to ensure good behaviour and tolerance and to prevent harassment. Year groups mix happily in the junior houses and 'big sisters' and 'house mothers' keep care over younger boarders. The school takes positive steps to prevent e-bullying.
- 4.24 Staffing and supervision arrangements are excellent, with a suitable number of experienced boarding staff. All those working with boarders have clear job descriptions and receive appropriate induction and follow-up training. Boarders know who is on duty and how to contact them, whilst staff know where boarders are at all times, along with what to do if a boarder is missing. Boarding staff occupy suitable accommodation and boarders' access is managed properly.
- 4.25 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of boarding is excellent. The school is highly successful in its aims to provide opportunities for boarders to develop their potential within a happy and caring environment, preparing them to meet challenges and to make a positive difference in the school and the wider community. The school has a clear commitment to boarding and houses are well-run by experienced and well-trained teams. Boarding houses are led by teaching staff so that a seamless link is established between boarding and school. All required records are in place.
- 4.26 Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed themselves highly satisfied with all aspects of boarding. The school has built further and well on the outstanding provision noted at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils' questionnaire responses are also highly favourable about the school's boarding arrangements.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governance continues to be a major strength of the school, as described at the time of the previous inspection and all recommendations made then have been implemented. Governors have a clear understanding of the school and its role and they plan confidently for its sustained success, ensuring that provision is appropriate and that they offer clear support and challenge. Since the time of the previous inspection they have established a successful running programme of renewal and improvement to the whole site and its buildings.
- 5.3 The governing body as a whole reviews regularly and thoroughly the school's policies and procedures for child protection and for the welfare, health and safety of all members. They monitor academic performance and they ensure high standards of boarding and of pastoral care. They are clear in their vision for the school and in their plans for its success. They meet all statutory requirements and they review any complaints or concerns and monitor sanctions and any instance of bullying.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent, including links with parents, carers and guardians.
- 5.5 The school's leaders are effective at all levels and they are successful in delivering the school's aims for its pupils across the full range of activities. They have a clear vision for the educational direction of the school, which they share with the governors and staff. Management structures are clear, monitoring and review are strong in all areas and best practice is praised and shared. New mechanisms for involving the heads of academic departments and other staff in whole school development have been welcomed. The introduction of a parents' forum has been equally valued as an important consultation. The school's leaders consult widely and they listen attentively. They are each highly active in ensuring the highest standards in all aspects of school life.
- 5.6 Development planning is thorough and detailed. Departmental plans are closely linked to the whole-school plan. The senior leaders regularly review progress and ensure success. Data analysis is used effectively as a diagnostic tool to support learning. A strong sense of shared engagement and participation pervades.
- 5.7 The school is successful in attracting, retaining and developing a high quality staff. All have appropriate training in child protection, welfare, health and safety and managers carefully ensure that all safeguarding procedures are in place. All required checks on governors, staff and volunteers are carried out and suitable records are maintained.
- 5.8 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent and reflects the school's constructive relationship with them in line with its aims. Parents express strong support for the school's provision for the education of their children, and the quality of communication. The school provides an extensive parents' portal and a

comprehensive weekly e-bulletin of some distinction to ensure up-to-date information. Parents, including those of prospective pupils, are provided with all required information. Formal school reports on each pupil's attainment and progress are provided each term and meetings with parents are regular and frequent. The complaints policy and its procedures are clear and comprehensive. Generally these are no more than modest concerns, which the school addresses promptly and carefully. Parents have good opportunities to be involved with the work and progress of their children, and parents' associations are strong and active.

- 5.9 Parents responding to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire showed the very highest levels of approval for all areas of school activity. They supported strongly the breadth of the curriculum and the range of extra-curricular activities, the care extended to each child and the information they received regularly from the school, including progress reports. They appreciated the progress made by their daughters, and the ease with which they could contact staff. They praised highly the leadership of the school, its prompt response to queries or concerns and that very able pupils received appropriate extension in their studies.

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