



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE QUEEN'S SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Queen's School

Full Name of School	The Queen's School		
DfE Number	896/6020		
Registered Charity Number	525935		
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Head	Mrs Sarah Clark		
Chair of Governors	Dr Christine Laine		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	614		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	0-5 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 201
	3-5 (EYFS):	21	11-18: 392
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Felicity Taylor		
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	04 Oct 2011 to 05 Oct 2011 02 Nov 2011 to 04 Nov 2011		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection 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 2005.

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 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, 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 31st 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 of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Queen's School is a selective independent day school for girls aged from four to eighteen years, founded in 1878 and given its current title by command of Queen Victoria in 1882. The school occupies two sites within the city of Chester, about one mile apart, comprising the Senior School for pupils aged eleven to eighteen and the Lower School for younger girls. It currently educates 614 pupils, of whom 392 are in the Senior School, including 95 in the sixth form, and 222 are in the Lower School. Of the latter, 21 are educated in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), comprising the Reception year, which forms an integral part of the Lower School. Oversight is provided by a governing body with a maximum number of 18 members drawn from the city of Chester and associated institutions. The school maintains a Christian ethos but welcomes pupils of any faith or none.
- 1.2 Accommodation is based around Victorian buildings. Since the previous inspection in 2005, the Lower School has opened two portable classrooms and new facilities for learning support. The Senior School has built a new sports pavilion and refurbished the facilities for the sixth form, science, music and drama. Facilities for information and communication technology (ICT) have been updated on both sites, together with the swimming pool, which serves both sections of the school. The chair of governors was appointed in 2011 and the head in 2010.
- 1.3 The school aims to: provide a stimulating environment where girls see learning and acquiring knowledge as an exciting experience and value scholarship for its own sake; help girls to develop a framework of moral, spiritual and cultural values and a secure sense of self-worth; encourage a sense of responsibility and respect for others; promote girls' physical well-being, and foster in each the qualities of independence, self-discipline, creativity and initiative to meet the challenges of the future with confidence.
- 1.4 Pupils are admitted to the Lower School following an assessment interview and into the Senior School through an entrance examination. The analysis of standardised tests shows that the average ability on entry to both sections is above the national average, with a third of pupils being of far above average ability; the ability profile in the sixth form is judged to be similar. Most pupils come from Cheshire, the Wirral and North Wales, mainly from professional households, and represent a variety of ethnicities. There are 55 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), none at a level requiring additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 62 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 19 receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The overall achievement of pupils of all abilities and ages is excellent. They make exceptional progress at all stages of the curriculum, enabled by excellent, frequently stimulating teaching and an equally strong curriculum and programme of activities. Pupils are outstanding learners, working together with others very successfully and frequently taking responsibility for their own learning. Teaching is well planned, particularly with regard to meeting the needs of those with SEND, and it often challenges more able pupils in a way that enables them to achieve rapid progress. Teaching has embraced recent initiatives in teaching styles with much success although new approaches to marking and assessment are not yet consistently embedded in the Senior School.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent from the EYFS upwards. They show high levels of confidence, a willingness to take risks in their learning, and a notable ability to present their views and listen with care to those of others. Their confidence is strengthened by creative and sporting successes. Pupils demonstrate a strong moral awareness which is often, in the Senior School, accompanied by a good interest in current affairs. Their social skills are excellent. They display strong cultural awareness in response to opportunities to experience other cultures, high levels of performance and a natural interest in others. Their personal development is supported by excellent pastoral care and arrangements to ensure their welfare, and health and safety. Those pupils who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about the school.
- 2.3 Excellent governance supports the school's aims and ethos strongly, providing a clear understanding of its present and future needs, and a strong platform for the high educational standards achieved by pupils and of their excellent personal development. Excellent oversight of the governors' legal responsibilities is combined with careful financial management. Strategic planning is strong, informed by regular and thorough self-review, a feature that also characterises the school's management. The school has responded successfully to the recommendations of the previous inspection report and has made significant progress since that time. Leadership is excellent and management is highly effective overall. Changes to management structures have been implemented with great success. Policy making at all levels is clear and concise. It is implemented and monitored well although the monitoring of new initiatives in teaching and learning in the Senior School does not yet ensure wholly consistent application. The school maintains excellent links with parents, who expressed strong satisfaction in pre-inspection questionnaires with the education provided. There were no areas of concern identified by significant numbers of parents. Inspectors support these views.

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 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the current best practice in the implementation and monitoring of recent initiatives in teaching and learning is reflected across all subject areas in the Senior School.
 2. In the EYFS, increase the breadth of information within the parents' handbook.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

Whole School

- 3.1 The pupils' overall achievement is excellent. The school is highly successful in meeting its aim to enable pupils to see learning and acquiring knowledge as an exciting experience.

Lower School

- 3.2 All pupils develop their knowledge, skills and understanding highly effectively. Their secure grounding results in excellent standards across a range of subjects. From an early stage pupils think for themselves, reason well and read fluently. They write interesting accounts for a range of purposes. Older pupils used their research skills to produce interesting biographies on their favourite authors. Pupils are highly articulate and express themselves well when discussing their work. They have excellent numeracy skills and apply these effectively to problem solving. Younger pupils rolling dice were able to explain why some possible outcomes were more likely than others, demonstrating investigative skills far above those to be expected for their age.
- 3.3 Pupils enjoy science and achieve well, making sensible deductions from their investigations and recording their findings accurately. They develop good ICT skills in dedicated lessons and apply these effectively in other subjects. Displays of the pupils' work in art, and in design and technology, show high levels of creativity and these are common also in music and drama.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve high standards in the wide range of extra-curricular activities in which they participate, such as those that develop their thinking skills. Pupils gain significantly high results in speech and drama festivals, and in examinations many achieve distinctions. They achieve well in examinations across a variety of instruments. They use the skills acquired in music and drama to good effect in presenting assemblies, producing and singing their own song in a harvest assembly, and in Christmas productions. In sport pupils demonstrate good physical skills and agility. They enjoy success in swimming, hockey and netball tournaments, including representing their area in regional hockey competitions.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data from the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The school ceased to enter pupils for national tests at the age of 11 after 2009. At that point their results were excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. This attainment, together with the excellent levels observed in the pupils' work and in lessons, indicates that they make exceptional progress when compared with the average for girls of similar ability. The pupils' success in achieving scholarships in senior school entrance examinations is a further indication.
- 3.6 Information from the school's careful monitoring and reviewing of individual performance indicates that pupils with SEND or with EAL make good and often rapid progress, particularly with their numeracy and literacy skills. The more able show skill levels in advance of their ages. Older pupils responded well to more

challenging questions in a lesson on the Tudors by pursuing in-depth research independently.

- 3.7 The pupils' successful achievement is strongly supported by their excellent attitude to their work, by their high standards of behaviour and by the trusting relationships with staff and their peers. They commented positively in pre-inspection questionnaires on their enjoyment of the activities the school offers. Pupils are confident, and discuss their own and others' points of view. They are able to work independently and co-operatively, and show the strongest commitment to their studies.

Senior School

- 3.8 Pupils of all abilities achieve highly at all ages in response to challenging and frequently stimulating teaching based on a curriculum that successfully awakens their curiosity. All pupils, including those with EAL, develop excellent speaking and listening skills, demonstrating the highest levels of articulacy. They read well, and in their writing use extensive vocabulary, often at levels beyond those expected for their age. In discussing characters in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* younger pupils used advanced descriptive language to express their precise feelings, inspired by teaching that included suggestions of new words to explore.
- 3.9 Pupils develop excellent knowledge, skills and understanding. Their mathematical skills are highly developed and applied well in graph work in other subjects, where they often display the strong reasoning skills common to all their work. In science they develop excellent understanding. Sixth formers responded enthusiastically and knowledgeably to probing questions about rates of reaction. In language lessons pupils apply existing understanding of vocabulary to new situations successfully. Pupils use ICT confidently. They demonstrate highly imaginative creative and performing skills. Artwork is characterised by strong intellectual and emotional content, and is technically adept. Musical compositions show strong understanding of harmony and texture. In physical education, pupils demonstrate excellent perseverance and achievement is strong.
- 3.10 Those pupils with SEND produce work that matches the high standards of their peers, reflecting their rapid progress in response to highly focused support. The achievement of more able pupils, and those with particular talents, is often excellent, particularly when teaching identifies additional challenges or suggests further avenues of enquiry. In the sixth form, the school's aim that pupils should value scholarship for its own sake is achieved in many areas, often in response to staff who are inspiring role models. The recent initiation of a lunchtime discussion club, the Holdich Group, for more able sixth formers has resulted in the pupils' growing confidence in articulating broad philosophical ideas that take them beyond the confines of examination requirements.
- 3.11 Pupils perform highly successfully in instrumental, and speech and drama examinations, with distinctions in the highest grades awarded regularly. They win places in national musical ensembles and enjoy success at local and regional level in business competitions. A good number attain gold, and many attain bronze and silver in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. Pupils achieve well in national mathematics competitions and participate in science Olympiads. Teams achieve success regionally in hockey, tennis and rounders. Individuals and teams have won national equestrian competitions and experienced success in European

swimming championships, and members of the school were part of a European cup-winning lacrosse team.

- 3.12 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE and A level have been excellent in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools and above that for girls in maintained selective schools. Results in the International GCSE are higher than worldwide and UK averages. At A level over 80 per cent of girls regularly achieve grades A* to B. These levels of attainment, supported by evidence from pupils' work, indicate that they make exceptional progress in relation to pupils of similar ability at both A level and GCSE.
- 3.13 Around two-thirds of pupils proceed from Year 11 into the sixth form, with leavers proceeding to co-educational sixth forms. All in Year 13 enter higher education, many achieving places to study at universities with demanding entrance requirements, and at art and drama colleges.
- 3.14 Pupils are excellent learners. They show great enjoyment, linked to persistence and exemplary behaviour, and they respond highly effectively to the challenge to take responsibility for their own learning, which occurs often. They take a pride in their work, which is presented with care. They are very successful in working co-operatively, taking full advantage of frequent opportunities to work in groups and pairs, often of mixed abilities, sharing ideas and expertise freely.

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

Whole School

- 3.15 The curriculum provides excellent coverage of all areas of learning so that pupils are able to acquire new knowledge, and to learn and progress according to their abilities and aptitudes. This is complemented by an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities. Curriculum planning is thorough, and the curricular provision strongly supports the school's aim to provide a stimulating environment where pupils see learning and acquiring knowledge as an exciting experience and where they value scholarship for its own sake.

Lower School

- 3.16 The quality of the curriculum is excellent. It is broad and appropriate, providing a good range of experience in the humanities, science, and physical and creative subjects. It has addressed the recommendation of the previous inspection report with regard to provision for English and mathematics; these subjects are now allocated an hour's study daily, with pupils achieving considerable success in these areas as a result. The school is justifiably proud of its curricular provision and the thought that has been put into its development. Since the previous inspection, drama has been introduced from Year 3, and the mathematics curriculum revised to include more problem solving, mental arithmetic and investigative work. Provision for ICT is very good and pupils use these skills in all subjects.
- 3.17 The curriculum meets the needs of all age groups and abilities. The most notable changes since the previous inspection have been in ensuring that it is better suited to the pupils' individual abilities. Assessment of the pupils' prior knowledge and growing levels of understanding is undertaken frequently; the outcomes are used to

adjust curricular provision for all pupils, including, but not exclusively, those with SEND and the more able. The introduction of parallel classes within older year groups has permitted the creation of small teaching groups when needed, to enable pupils to catch up with the prior learning of their peers.

- 3.18 Pupils with SEND benefit from specialist learning support outside the classroom on a one-to-one basis, which is co-ordinated well with the planning of class teaching. The learning of more able pupils and those with particular talents is monitored by a designated member of staff who co-ordinates the planning of additional challenges for them.
- 3.19 A comprehensive programme of personal and social education (PSE) is linked well to aspects of citizenship. It is supported by class assemblies and by work undertaken in curriculum subjects, such as learning about healthy eating in science lessons.
- 3.20 A comprehensive and imaginative programme of extra-curricular activities from bush craft to hockey enhances the pupils' education, allowing them to learn new skills and acquire new interests. These activities are very popular, and are well organised and purposeful. Participation is monitored and discussed at parents' meetings. The programme is kept under constant review to maintain its relevance to pupils' interests. Residential trips are organised to Northumberland, Shropshire and Scotland which allow the pupils to experience more adventurous activities. Other trips to places such as Shakespearean theatres in London and local museums offer further stimulation.
- 3.21 The school has developed good links to the local community; pupils sing in the cathedral, and support charities involving local hospices and hospitals. They also support national charities through fund raising, and show interest in international causes, such as fair trade.

Senior School

- 3.22 The quality of the curriculum in the Senior School is also excellent. All pupils follow a largely common curriculum in Years 7 to 9 in order to provide them with a thorough grounding in all subject areas prior to choices being made for study at GCSE; this includes a modern foreign language. Within this framework, the school aims to develop the pupils' independence as learners and they respond to this well by entering into a positive dialogue with teachers. The pupils are well prepared for sixth-form study. The school provides a wide range of AS- and A-level options, alongside other qualifications suited to the pupils' individual potential, such as in languages.
- 3.23 Since the previous inspection, stronger links with the Lower School have been developed to enable a smooth transition between the two sections of the school. Increased access to ICT has been provided, and pupils benefit from the creation of a virtual learning section on the school intranet. The introduction of a two week timetable has meant that there is a more equitable time allocation for optional GCSE subjects and that pupils benefit from increased time available for the three separate science subjects.
- 3.24 The school makes excellent provision for those pupils with particular learning needs. The introduction in the sixth form of an extended project qualification and the creation of a discussion group, together with setting in some subjects lower down the school, provide strong levels of challenge and extend the thinking of more able

pupils and those with particular talents. The highly effective identification, monitoring of and provision for those with SEND enable them to succeed both inside and out of the classroom.

- 3.25 An effective PSE programme, taught by specialist staff, is a key part of the curriculum, and makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development. In the sixth form this is provided by a life skills course that includes aspects of finance, politics and healthy eating.
- 3.26 Careers education is excellent and each pupil benefits from individually tailored advice about GCSE and A-level options, and higher education courses. The curriculum is enhanced by a comprehensive programme of local visits and theatre trips, work experience, expeditions to countries such as Iceland, and memorable visits of prominent speakers from groups and institutions.
- 3.27 The pupils are given excellent opportunities through an extensive and imaginative range of extra-curricular activities, both in school and off site. These include the Combined Cadet Force and the DofE scheme. Music, drama, sports and the arts are all well represented. The school makes every effort to accommodate as many of the pupils' interests as possible. There is a high level of participation in extra-curricular activities. This is both monitored and reported on to parents.
- 3.28 Pupils are involved in supporting a wide variety of charities and community service opportunities. The Chinese language and culture are promoted through a successful and longstanding programme with strong links to local primary schools. The school actively continues to develop its community links, from work within local communities in Chester to the wider world, through activities such as concerts and exchanges.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.29 The contribution to the pupils' achievement made by teaching is excellent in both sections of the school and enables them to achieve their academic potential, in line with the school's aims. Occasionally, teaching in the Senior School does not consistently provide the additional stimulus needed to challenge pupils of all abilities, particularly the more able, or the range of teaching methods used does not encompass the learning styles of all pupils. The most successful teaching is characterised by enthusiasm and engenders in the pupils a deep love of learning.
- 3.30 Teaching has been enhanced by the skills developed through in-service training, particularly in methods that develop pupils' learning by promoting their awareness of how they are making progress through self- and peer-assessment. The school policy and procedures in this area are exemplary and are used effectively throughout. The changing perception of assessment is linked to a more challenging style of teaching that includes more problem solving and open-ended questioning, enabling pupils to develop independence in their learning. This meets well the recommendation of the previous inspection and, in almost all lessons, ensures that teaching is fully focused on the pupils' needs; they are encouraged to take some responsibility for their own learning, to learn from any errors and to take risks. This has resulted in strong intellectual curiosity in many pupils. Teaching employs the use of group and pair work extensively throughout the school. For example, in GCSE biology, challenging tasks enabled the pupils, working in small groups, to discuss ethical medical issues and extend their understanding.

- 3.31 Teaching demonstrates strong understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND. Teachers and support staff communicate with each other well; frequent, focused professional dialogue supports pupils in all ability ranges. Teaching sets targets that encourage pupils with SEND to become self-motivated, alongside work that is suited to their needs, enabling them to achieve at a level commensurate with their peers.
- 3.32 Teaching demonstrates good management of the time available and very good subject knowledge; particularly high quality examples were observed in some sixth-form lessons. In English, more able pupils were referred to a range of demanding potential additional texts for coursework. Challenging questioning in much teaching throughout frequently leads to stimulating discussions that increase the pupils' understanding.
- 3.33 Resources to support the pupils' learning are good and are used well, including those for ICT. The Lower School is well supplied with books, both fiction and non-fiction, and it is intended that this provision will be enhanced by the new library, which is being developed. Both the Senior School library and careers library are well resourced and well used. Teachers give freely of their time outside lessons to assist individual pupils by way of clinics and offer opportunities to further their interest and understanding.
- 3.34 Marking throughout the school is regular and of good quality, with some that is excellent. Marking policies conform to new assessment procedures in most cases but with varying degrees of detail. Some younger Senior School pupils commented that different code systems between subjects cause them some confusion. Marking is supplemented by helpful comments to support further progress, and the use of written dialogue between the pupil and the teacher in some subjects provides additional help.
- 3.35 Assessment data from standardised tests is used very effectively in teaching to monitor pupils and to track their performance in the longer term. Pupils are made fully aware of their targets both in written work and in verbal feedback and are thus stimulated in their effort and motivation.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent. The school's aims to help them develop a framework of moral, spiritual and cultural values and a secure sense of self-worth, and to encourage a sense of responsibility and respect for others, are met resoundingly well. Self-confidence, a willingness to take risks, and the ability to articulate individual views and to respect those of others are evident in pupils of all ages. These attributes are demonstrated in situations such as planning and presenting assemblies, proposing personal interpretations of characters when studying plays and listening to one another in frequent class discussions. A curiosity to discover and understand faith systems is typified by participation in the Christian Union weekend by pupils of a variety of faiths and none, and the organisation of the event by sixth formers. Performance, whether in a school musical, on the sports field or in house competitions, is recognised at all levels and contributes to healthy levels of self-esteem.
- 4.2 High levels of moral understanding for their age are typical of pupils in both sections of the school. Older pupils in the Lower School visit the Houses of Parliament and develop their understanding of the significance of laws. All, including the youngest, were keen to develop an individual charter for their form group. Younger Senior School pupils showed excellent awareness of the political background to current events, and gave strong personal responses to photographs of urban rioting in an art project that required them to use these images in a montage. Pupils preparing for GCSE held a thorough discussion of moral issues involved in embryo research.
- 4.3 The pupils' excellent social development is demonstrated in high standards of behaviour and a sense of belonging to one community. Older pupils help younger ones, both within the Lower School, through the 'queen bee' scheme, and in the Senior School, where they run clubs for younger pupils and also act as 'buddies'. Pupil 'road safety officers' share their knowledge and experience with their peers. Senior School pupils visit the Lower School to give assemblies, for example about Diwali. Pupils in both sections of the school take seriously opportunities to take part in decision making. They appreciate the chance to participate through the school council, catering committee and other groups, particularly those promoting charitable giving that results in much help for causes at home and overseas, including supporting a village school in Uganda. Sixth formers discuss everyday issues such as uniform and school meals with humour but firm purpose in response to briefings about the sixth-form committee.
- 4.4 Pupils develop strong cultural awareness. Lower School pupils enjoy visiting places of worship in a variety of cultures. Senior School pupils participate in cultural visits to Italy, Iceland, China and Ireland, and language exchanges, and the school has plans to extend international awareness following on from events such as a European day of languages. This complements the many opportunities created by the school's active participation in a scheme to promote learning and understanding of Mandarin, in which pupils participate enthusiastically. Pupils respond well to diverse styles of art, developing their personal viewpoints alongside technical understanding. They demonstrate evident enjoyment in singing in both sections of the school. Older pupils in the Lower School presenting an assembly on fair trade showed excellent understanding of conditions in a variety of countries in the Caribbean and Africa. Groups from both sections of the school often participate in cultural events in the city, whether in the cathedral or in street festivals.

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

- 4.5 The pastoral care of pupils and the quality of arrangements to ensure their welfare, health and safety are excellent. The strong sense of community engendered reflects well the school's aim for all to show respect to others. A highly effective pastoral system, clear lines of communication and carefully kept records strongly support the pupils' personal development and academic achievement.
- 4.6 Relationships between the staff and the pupils are excellent. The pastoral staff and subject teachers know the pupils well, and heads of year and heads of school each provide a further level of support in the Senior School. Staff in both the Lower School and Senior School provide outstanding support and guidance, and the pupils receive highly effective care whether they are in the classroom, out on visits or socialising during break times. The pupils feel safe, valued and contented.
- 4.7 The pupils are respectful of staff and each other. Academic attainment, high levels of effort and contributions to the school are recognised through the awarding of house points and merits, which are greatly prized by all. Sanctions are in place to deal with the extremely rare incidences of more serious misbehaviour and operate fairly. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, pupils confirmed that they feel their voice is heard through the school councils and catering committees, and through an anonymous online questionnaire carried out by the Senior School.
- 4.8 The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent. The school has robust safeguarding measures, and these are implemented thoroughly. Designated staff receive regular, effective training and this is communicated to all staff, ensuring that procedures are clearly understood. The school has excellent measures to guard against bullying and these are well linked to arrangements to promote good behaviour. Pupils expressed confidence that any bullying is rare and that such behaviour would be dealt with swiftly and effectively by the school. Appropriate planning for access for those with physical needs is made and the school takes its responsibility for those with learning needs very seriously. Registration is undertaken with care and any absence is followed up quickly. The school maintains and stores an appropriate admission register. In both sections of the school, good arrangements exist for pupils who feel unwell and these are operated in conjunction with a comprehensive first-aid policy.
- 4.9 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are good. Regular drills are held and equipment checked appropriately. A good policy ensures the pupils' health and safety on educational visits at all ages. This is reflected well in risk assessments.
- 4.10 The school promotes a healthy lifestyle well through the PSE programme and encouragement of pupils to participate in sporting activities. Food is plentiful in quantity and is of good quality.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance provides excellent support for the school's aims, and shows both a clear understanding of its needs and the necessity of maintaining a clear vision for the future. The governing body includes a wide range of experience in finance, business management and the law. It benefits from appropriate expertise in education, although currently, direct experience of primary age education is more limited than other areas. The school's Christian foundation is reflected through church representation on the governing body. A comprehensive system of committees operates effectively to ensure that the full governing body receives regular reports on different aspects of the school's operations, and to provide closely focused oversight when needed. Governors receive and exchange regular information about the school, including meetings with senior management figures and subject leaders in both sections of the school. These arrangements are supplemented by regular attendance at school events.
- 5.2 Governors provide strong support to the school through rigorous financial oversight and planning. They engage in significant strategic planning and communicate their aims openly to parents through the school website. Their planning includes well-focused aims for the development of governance, particularly through more extensive training and the mentoring of new governors. This and other elements of planning are the result of regular and thorough self-review. Governors provide good oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review safeguarding, staff recruitment, and health and safety arrangements regularly to support the pupils' personal development. The school buildings are maintained in good condition. Their use is kept under ongoing review within well-considered plans for new building and the refurbishment of existing buildings, as finances and the restrictions of the Senior School's geographical position allow.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 Excellent leadership, and highly effective management overall, have contributed much to the significant progress made in both sections of the school since the previous inspection, characterised by the consolidation of existing strengths in the Senior School and by the introduction of stimulating changes in teaching and learning styles throughout. Development in the Lower School has been notable for its highly successful innovation. At the same time, stronger links have been developed between the two sections of the school. These developments have contributed much to the successful achievement of the school's existing aims and are complemented by a forward-looking approach to adopting new goals to ensure future progress. A strong, consistent emphasis on the needs of individual pupils ensures their excellent academic progress and personal development.
- 5.4 The many significant developments since the previous inspection include the successful revision of management structures in both sections of the school which has involved shared leadership and responsibility amongst senior figures to good effect. These have been accompanied by highly effective self-review. Resultant initiatives have been successfully implemented and monitored. Their success is assisted by clear and concise policy making. New approaches to teaching and learning in the Senior School are becoming embedded well, although monitoring of

these by middle managers does not yet ensure wholly consistent application across all subject areas. Pastoral structures throughout the school function highly effectively.

- 5.5 Development planning is confident and looks to build upon the historical success of the school with ambition, linked to careful financial management, and the need to ensure that existing resources and buildings are kept in good condition alongside new developments. It includes clearly identified criteria for success and reflects good quality departmental planning. Careful financial planning ensures that pastoral and academic areas of school life receive good resources.
- 5.6 The school appoints highly qualified staff, both teaching and non-teaching, who fully support the school's ethos. A regular system of performance review identifies appropriate areas for professional development, and staff are regularly offered additional optional training that they readily embrace. Arrangements to ensure the pupils' welfare, and for health and safety, are implemented highly effectively, including the training of all staff in safeguarding procedures. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and governors to work with children are robust, and the central register is maintained with great efficiency. The sense of community is strengthened by the efficient work of secretarial, administrative and other non-teaching staff who liaise effectively across the two sections of the school and with parents.

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

- 5.7 The quality of links with parents is excellent and fully supports the school's belief that they play an important part in the education of their children. This close partnership is greatly valued by the school.
- 5.8 Responses to parental questionnaires showed strong satisfaction with all areas of the school's provision. Parents expressed overwhelming support in particular for the pupils' progress, the pastoral care and the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Inspectors agree with these views. No significant concerns were raised.
- 5.9 Parents are kept fully informed about their children's progress through detailed and informative reports sent once a year for all age groups. In addition, a short report is sent at the end of the first term for all years in the Lower School. Grade summary reports are compiled half-termly for every pupil in both the autumn and spring terms in the Senior School. These reports provide constructive advice for improvement. Parents have the opportunity to meet subject teachers at least once a year to discuss their children's progress and attainment, and twice yearly in the Lower School.
- 5.10 Parents of current and prospective pupils receive full information, including that which is required, through the school or from its highly effective website. A protected area permits secure access from home or school for learning and information sources. Regular informative newsletters such as *The Queen's Speech* and the Lower School's *Friday Newsflash* celebrate the pupils' achievements, advise on future plans and events, and highlight dates of interest. The annual magazine *Have Mynde* provides a comprehensive picture of the school year. The questionnaire for parents of pupils in Reception and a biennial questionnaire for parents, with feedback presented at an open meeting, highlight their views of the school.

- 5.11 Parents are involved well in school life. The strong parents' association makes a significant contribution to the school, raising funds for additional equipment to enhance play and learning. Funds for the Lower School have equipped the new outdoor play area, and in the Senior School, recording equipment for modern foreign languages and extra pianos have been greatly appreciated. The association also arranges social events such as balls, the school garden party and golf afternoons. Parents help in the school by giving careers talks, offering expertise in events such as an arts week and helping in the Lower School library.
- 5.12 The school has a clear procedure for the reporting of parental concerns and handles these with due care. The complaints procedure has been used effectively.

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 overall effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding. The setting meets its aims to provide an environment that supports the children's development comprehensively. Children make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and capabilities, and are well supported. Thorough procedures are in place to ensure their welfare. Staff foster highly effective links with parents and strive towards a true partnership in learning. The school's development plan includes realistic targets and demonstrates the setting's capacity for improvement. Since the previous inspection, the provision for ICT and links with local nurseries have improved, together with information on the website.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Robust procedures for safeguarding children, including recruitment checks, are effectively implemented. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken. Staff are well qualified, suitably deployed and supported by good quality policies that ensure an exceptional commitment to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination. Parents are strongly supportive of the school and speak warmly of the high quality care provided. Channels of communication are very good, although information on specific policies and procedures within the EYFS parents' handbook is limited in scope. The setting has very good links with the local authority. The provision and outcomes of the EYFS are monitored regularly for improvement. Findings, including parents' feedback, are built into the school's development plan. Both indoor and outdoor resources are plentiful, of good quality and used skilfully to promote the children's learning.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. Staff are highly dedicated to the children's care and education, and thoroughly understand the EYFS framework. The curriculum is well balanced, and planning for both adult-led and child-initiated activities, both indoors and outside, is of a consistently high standard, ensuring enjoyable and challenging learning opportunities for all children. Thorough observational assessments and profiling ensure that all make rapid progress, which is recorded, with next steps in learning effectively identified. Displays within the classroom include good evidence of children's work. Adults consistently promote the children's personal development highly effectively, for example when the children go to lunch.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for children are outstanding. All make significant progress in their learning, and attain consistently good and often excellent levels of achievement. Children make choices with confidence and are highly enthusiastic, motivated and independent learners. They respond well to adults and contribute eagerly to discussion activities. Their curiosity is nurtured and they enjoy simple problem solving and challenges posed by adults. They feel safe within the setting and understand the need for responsible behaviour. They care for one another, whilst respecting individual differences. Healthy habits and lifestyles are strongly promoted; children bring in healthy snacks and know the importance of physical exercise. They are developing very good skills across the six areas of learning. They can identify initial sounds of words and write independently, recognise and sequence shapes, and describe a repeating pattern. Opportunities for ICT are provided, including use of the specialist teaching suite. Through 'circle time', role play opportunities and interaction with visitors to the setting, the children's cultural understanding and knowledge of the wider world are developing well, equipping them with essential skills for the future.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

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
Mrs Eileen Parris	Assistant Reporting Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Mrs Kate Carey	Deputy Head, GSA junior school
Mrs Susan Gorham	Head, GSA school
Mr David Harris	Head of Junior Department, HMC school
Mrs Gwenda Lilley	Head of Sixth Form, GSA school
Mrs Sharon Pratt	Deputy Head, ISA school
Mrs Sue Bennett	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector