



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

TONBRIDGE SCHOOL STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Tonbridge School

Full Name of School	Tonbridge School		
DfE Number	886/6020		
Registered Charity Number	1097977		
Address	Tonbridge School High Street Tonbridge Kent TN9 1JP		
Telephone Number	01732 365555		
Fax Number	01732 363424		
Email Address	hmsec@tonbridge-school.org		
Headmaster	Mr Tim Haynes		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Jonathan Cohen QC		
Age Range	13 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	784		
Gender of Pupils	Boys		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	337	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 0
Number of Boarders	Total:	447	
	Full:	447	Weekly: 0
Inspection dates	9 Nov 2010 to 10 Nov 2010 6 Dec 2010 to 8 Dec 2010		

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 November 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 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.

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain 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 and development in general. The full Ofsted Inspection report refers to an inspection in March 2008 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendation(s) for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(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	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	7
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	7
(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	8
(c) The quality of boarding education	9
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	10
(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
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	13

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Tonbridge School was founded in 1553 by Sir Andrew Judde. The governing body comprises nominative and co-opted trustees, and nominees of the Worshipful Company of Skinners are always in the majority. The school occupies a largely self-contained site of about 150 acres on the northern edge of Tonbridge. The school aims to provide an academic and co-curricular education of outstanding quality to ensure that each boy fulfils his potential and is able to make a significant contribution both at school and in his future life. It seeks to create a structured environment of care, support and encouragement, promoting both personal development and a strong sense of individual and collective responsibility. It aims to promote the highest standards in all aspects of spiritual, moral, intellectual, cultural, athletic and social life. It also endeavours to achieve close co-operation with parents, alumni and the wider community. Since the last inspection, a new headmaster has been appointed, the house refurbishment programme has been completed, information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructures have been significantly developed, and a sports and media centre has been built.
- 1.2 The numbers on roll total 784 boys, of whom 447 are boarders in 7 boarding houses and 337 are day boys in 5 day houses. The sixth form comprises 325 pupils. Entry to the school is by selective examination at the ages of thirteen, fourteen and sixteen. Standardised national tests taken in Year 9 indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the national average with a significant proportion of pupils demonstrating far above average ability. No pupils have statements of special educational needs. Of those pupils who have been identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), 37 receive specialist help. Of those pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), 32 benefit from special support.
- 1.3 Boarders are mainly from London and the south east but also come from other parts of Britain and overseas. Pupils rarely leave after completing GCSE examinations. Around twenty pupils each year enter at sixth-form level. Virtually all sixth-form pupils proceed to higher education.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalents are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
1 st Year/Novi	Year 9
2 nd Year	Year 10
3 rd Year	Year 11
Lower V1 Form	Year 12
Upper V1 Form	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school fully meets its aims of providing an academic and co-curricular education of outstanding quality, ensuring that each pupil has the opportunity to fulfil his potential and is capable of making a significant contribution both at school and in his future life. Pupils across the ability range are highly successful in their learning and personal development. A wide-ranging, flexible and well-balanced curriculum is matched by an excellent co-curriculum. Pupils achieve outstanding academic standards across the subject range, and excel in co-curricular activities, especially in creative writing, art, drama, music and sport. At GCSE and A level, they attain results that are high when compared with the national average for maintained selective schools. Their progress is outstanding in relation to their above average ability. The library and ICT facilities are used effectively for independent learning and self-motivated study. The overall success of pupils is promoted by excellent teaching and their own positive attitudes.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal qualities are outstanding, and are promoted by the strong Christian ethos and the particularly friendly and supportive atmosphere that pervades the school. Acceptance of responsibility is widespread, and is exemplified through pupils serving as school and house prefects, games captains, pastoral and academic mentors to junior boys, and as members of school and house councils. Additional duties in boarding and day houses further foster leadership skills, self-reliance and community living. Many co-curricular activities promote initiative and social responsibility, notably in community work. Large sums have been raised for local, national and international charities. The high quality of pastoral care, detailed safeguarding arrangements and excellent example set by the staff guarantee that pupils experience a happy and purposeful day and boarding education.
- 2.3 The school's aims are realised through outstanding governance and senior leadership. The excellent direction provided by senior management has empowered middle managers, and has encouraged staff to share the overall vision. The process of teaching and learning, the provision of pastoral care and the quality of learning have all improved, as a consequence of more focused overall management. Regulatory compliance is fully effective, strategic and shorter-term development planning is strong. The school has fully addressed risk assessment issues, standardised the recording of attendance, promoted more independent learning and is effectively developing the use of assessment data to help improve academic performance, as recommended at the previous inspection.
- 2.4 Links with parents are excellent, especially through the Parents' Arts Society, and a strong family atmosphere exists. Parents' replies to the pre-inspection questionnaires showed high levels of support for all aspects of school life, and particularly strong communications between school and parents.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.5 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. In report writing and marking, build on existing good practice by providing all pupils with clear guidance about how to improve their work.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils are particularly well educated, in accordance with the school's wide educational aims. The excellent quality of their achievements stems from their enthusiasm for learning and intellectual curiosity, stimulated by much inspiring teaching. Pupils develop excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skills. They are highly articulate, listen carefully in lessons and formulate convincing responses when challenged. Pupils work extremely well both individually and co-operatively, and concentration levels are high. The pupils are particularly successful in their learning, demonstrating thorough understanding and making notable progress, often through independent thinking. Their articulacy and social maturity enable them to write well both factually and in creative contexts. They have a firm appreciation of mathematics and readily devise fair experimental tests in science, having an analytical approach to problems and explanations. They work effectively with one another in small groups and as individuals. The presentation of their work is always of good quality, demonstrating concentration and significant effort. High levels of creativity and of ICT skills are seen in both pupils' art and their design and technology work. Pupils with LDD and those with EAL are well supported and achieve similarly high academic results to those of other pupils within the school.
- 3.2 Results at GCSE in 2007 to 2009, the last three years for which data is available, have been excellent when compared with the national average for pupils in all maintained schools and high in comparison with the average for pupils in maintained selective schools. Pupils have taken International GCSE (IGCSE) examinations in English literature, mathematics and science, achieving high levels compared with the national average. At A level, performance over the same three year period was high, when compared with the national average for pupils in both maintained and maintained selective schools. In 2009 it was excellent, far above the average for pupils in all maintained schools and well above the maintained selective schools' average. This higher level of performance was replicated in 2010. In 2009, over nine out of every ten pupils' papers were awarded an A or B grade, with over three-quarters achieving an A grade. In 2010 pupils did even better, and over four-fifths of grades awarded were either at A* or A. Standardised national measures of progress and inspection evidence indicate that pupils make excellent progress over time in relation to their ability.
- 3.3 Co-curricular achievements are outstanding, including excellent results in poetry, mathematics, economics, design technology and science competitions at national level, and in music grades and drama examinations. Pupils do particularly well in the latter two areas, including individual selection for the National Youth Theatre, the National Youth Orchestra and the National Youth Music Theatre. In a wide range of sports, including cricket, rugby, hockey and football, standards are exceptionally high. All-round academic and co-curricular achievements owe much to pupils' positive attitudes, the opportunities provided by the whole curriculum and the quality of the staff's expertise, commitment and support. Pupils are particularly well motivated, and have an enthusiastic love of learning and unselfconscious intellectual curiosity. Their behaviour and work ethic are exemplary and they enjoy extremely good relationships with teachers, with other staff and with each other.

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

- 3.4 The excellent, broad and enriching curriculum and co-curriculum, flexibly adapted to enable pupils to achieve their full potential, make an outstanding contribution to pupils' achievement and learning, and are instrumental in the school's fulfilment of its aims. A full range of subjects in Year 9 includes the core subjects, two modern foreign languages, Latin, and Greek for some, and a course in ICT that continues in the following two years, culminating in a certificated qualification. Expressive subjects are well represented and a suitable range of topics are covered in personal, social and health education (PSHE). A Mindfulness programme is provided as part of PSHE in Year 10, and critical thinking is available in Years 11 and 12. At GCSE, extensive subject choices are available; decisions about separate or dual award sciences are postponed until the end of Year 10. IGCSE is now taught in English, geography, history, mathematics, modern foreign languages and the sciences. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of option subjects at A level, including Mandarin and three other modern foreign languages, and physical education.
- 3.5 Careers education is exceptionally well organised from Year 9 upwards, and pupils are carefully prepared to make examination subject choices and for life beyond school. Pupils requiring support in EAL are provided with specialist classes. A small number of those with LDD have individual educational programmes and receive one-to-one assistance. Gifted and talented pupils are catered for effectively by setting in core subjects, early GCSE availability in mathematics, French and Latin, extension tasks in class and homework, encouragement to take part in many scholastic clubs in a variety of subjects, and participation in regional and national academic competitions. A specialist programme of cultural enrichment is provided for scholars. Outstanding facilities in the new sports and media centre have inspired many pupils to master the state-of-the-art media facilities, and to enjoy and develop skills in many games and fitness activities.
- 3.6 The curriculum is enriched by a wide variety of co-curricular activities and links with the community which constitute a particular strength of the school. The new Tonbridge 'passport' scheme monitors pupils' experiences and effectively promotes involvement in relevant co-curricular activities. Sport, choral and instrumental music, creative writing and drama have especially high profiles. An excellent organ recital was attended during the inspection. Eighteen sports are played, and expertly coached, several to very high standards, and over 30 clubs and societies, such as aero-modelling, art, design and technology, Mah-Jong, Model United Nations, several languages, and poetry and creative writing, are greatly enjoyed, as is participation in video and film making. Trips are arranged to local and metropolitan areas of historical, geographical and artistic interest which broaden pupils' academic and aesthetic development. International pupil exchanges to Australia, New Zealand, India and China promote cultural understanding, as do school trips to the USA, South America and East Asia. Pupils benefit from expanding links with the local community, and from undertaking local conservation work. Charity activities have raised large sums in the last three years, and pupils have helped out in a summer school for young children in Kosovo. In houses, pupils compete against each other in games, music, art and drama. Leadership and team-building skills are promoted through participation in outdoor pursuits, the Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.7 Overall, the quality of the teaching at Tonbridge is excellent. High quality, thoughtful and often inspiring lessons are a major factor in helping pupils to develop their full academic potential in line with the school's aims. Since the last inspection, teachers' skills have been enhanced by increased in-service training and mutual observation of lessons, and pupils' learning has improved as a result.
- 3.8 Teachers' subject knowledge is outstanding, and they make good use of time and resources. Praise and encouragement are deployed to good effect, and this adds to pupils' enjoyment of their work. Many lessons are innovative, generating intellectual curiosity and an excitement in learning. They capture the pupils' imagination and regularly stimulate discussions of an extremely high standard. Pupils were prompted with high skill and humour to apply previous knowledge in a Year 12 Spanish lesson, and were particularly challenged in their thinking in a Year 13 physics lesson on magnetic fields. Year 10 pupils demonstrated a high level of knowledge and practical skill in a chemistry laboratory lesson on halogens. Since the last inspection, pupils have been given greater responsibility for their own learning, and more opportunities have been made available for pupils to think and reason for themselves. The setting of projects and the use of presentations by pupils are widespread. ICT staffing and resourcing have recently been enhanced to help promote pupils' technological skills and independent study capacities. Individualised learning and research are also much encouraged in the expertly staffed, well-stocked and attractive main library, and several departmental libraries.
- 3.9 Teaching methods include effective questioning techniques, and small group and pair work, and enable pupils to make rapid progress. Teachers know their charges well; tasks are challenging and well matched to pupils' abilities. Teachers give freely of their time out of class to assist individuals who experience difficulties in meeting the standard of work required. They are kept well informed by EAL and learning support staff, and plan individual help for particular pupils in their lessons.
- 3.10 Marking is generally good. Suggestions for improvement are not routinely offered across all disciplines. However, pupils say that they are often given verbal feedback in lessons when, for example they are provided with detailed solutions to mathematical problems on the whiteboard, so that they know what they have to do to make progress. Since the last inspection, much time and effort have been put into the accumulation of assessment data that is used systematically to check on pupils' progress. Tracking and target setting stimulate pupils' effort and motivation. The classrooms are well equipped, many having data projectors and related technology, and these resources are used effectively by teachers to produce stimulating lessons that maintain pupils' interests and promote their progress.

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 pupils' personal development is outstanding, promoted by the excellent relationships that exist within the close-knit school community and the dedicated care shown to pupils by a totally committed staff. The school fully achieves its aim of producing friendly, confident, responsible and well-balanced young men who appreciate the many privileges and opportunities they have, and are keen to make a contribution within the school and within the wider community.
- 4.2 Pupils display high levels of self-awareness, derived from a secure learning environment that enables them to develop a strong sense of self-worth. All individuals are valued for being themselves, in an atmosphere of mutual support where care and consideration predominate. The Christian ethos is strongly apparent through the regular opportunities for reflection and meditation in chapel, which is at the heart of school life. Pupils are given many opportunities to develop a sense of wonder, both within and beyond the curriculum. In a Year 12 art lesson involving advanced screen printing and etching techniques, pupils were observed totally immersed in a creative process. A sense of spirituality is strengthened by many of the topics covered in the divinity programme for younger pupils, such as work in Year 9 on 'What makes a person?' Philosophical discussions are commonplace.
- 4.3 Pupils are reflective and independent minded. They are respectful of the values and views of others. Their tolerance is nurtured by the well-developed PSHE programme. Many pupils make a commitment to regular service in the community. Conservation activity has heightened awareness of 'green' issues. Pupils are well aware of the difference their support can make to the lives of those who are less fortunate. Each year, boys and staff combine together for a day of work on various local charitable projects. In addition, students at an academy sponsored by the school are helped in their 'e-learning' by Tonbridge pupils. School rules, aimed at promoting good order and respect for others, are widely accepted. All pupils appreciate the reward systems. Sanctions are clear and are well understood, but do not have to be used extensively.
- 4.4 Pupils are extremely well developed socially and enjoy responsibility. The character and the exemplary behaviour of senior pupils are a great force for good within the school. Responsibilities are spread widely. Younger pupils also derive great benefit from the small responsibilities with which they are entrusted at house level.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural awareness is strongly developed. Pupils from different backgrounds are made very welcome in the boarding and day houses, as are visitors to the school from other cultures and faiths. Pupils have an understanding of their cultural heritage through literature, art and music, and they learn about other cultures in subjects such as PSHE, geography, history and music. Pupils achieve a good appreciation of cultural diversity in divinity lessons that examine alternative faiths and traditions. The ethnic mixture of pupils, particularly in the boarding houses, encourages them to live in co-operation, tolerance and harmony with one another.

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

- 4.6 The pastoral care throughout the school is outstanding, and fulfils the school's aim of creating a structured environment of support and encouragement that promotes both personal development and a strong sense of individual and collective responsibility. Day and boarding housemasters and their extended pastoral teams, which now include assistant housemasters, provide excellent support for their pupils. Such an approach is apparent in the attitudes of the whole teaching staff and in the senior pastoral staff with oversight duties. Pupils' self-confidence over a wide range of activities is fostered by much praise and encouragement. New pupils said that the induction and mentoring system greatly helped them to settle in when they first arrived at the school.
- 4.7 The pupils are polite, helpful and well mannered, and adults provide them with excellent role models. Pupils work and socialise happily together and behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary; rules are on display and pupils treat each other with respect. Meetings of housemasters take place on a regular basis, and a special welfare group, led by the second master, carefully monitors individual pupils' pastoral issues. Pupils say that the anti-bullying committee, in which they are closely involved, works well, and that bullying is rare, and agree that staff deal with any difficulties constructively. Day and boarding house sporting and cultural competitions have a special impact in reinforcing a sense of identity and community, and friendly rivalry. Sanctions are rarely used but, when necessary, breaches of the rules are addressed appropriately. Pre-inspection questionnaire responses revealed that some pupils feel the application of sanctions is not always fair, but inspectors found no evidence to substantiate those claims.
- 4.8 The safeguarding of pupils is a priority. The safeguarding policy is compliant and is implemented fully by designated child protection staff. Their training for inter-agency working is up-to-date, and they have trained all others working in the school. The policy is shared with senior pupils and is suitably publicised. Safe recruitment procedures are followed, and procedures ensure that checks on all staff and governors are completed before their appointments are confirmed. Fire precautions receive due attention and fire practices are held each term, including night-time evacuations for boarders. Health and safety matters are well supervised by the health and safety committee. An accessibility plan has been appropriately updated, and is designed to improve the educational provision for those pupils with disabilities, in line with relevant legislation. The quality of food in the houses, and centrally, is healthy and varied. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the emphasis on physical exercise and having a good diet. The medical centre provides excellent facilities and constant support, its staff are well qualified and appropriate records are kept. The admission and attendance registers, the latter of which was not completely compliant at the last inspection, are now maintained correctly and suitably stored for three years.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.9 A boarding inspection was conducted by Ofsted in March 2008. The ISI inspection has considered boarding in the whole-school context. The boarding experience is excellent and is a strong factor in promoting the overall personal development of the pupils in accordance with the aims of the school. The boarders gain in self-confidence and self-reliance, and all take their turn in carrying out duties around the house for the collective good. Older boys act as house prefects, accept responsibility for supervising others, help to organise house activities and significantly contribute to the pastoral link between house staff and pupils. The school has fully implemented the recommendations of the Ofsted inspection, relating to a written protocol on the availability of homely remedies, staff training on dispensing and recording the administering of medication, updating procedures for making complaints, provision of information about adults' morning presence in houses, and regarding contact personnel in the event of an emergency.
- 4.10 Boarders' relationships are friendly, and pupils state that close friendships with their peers in the houses make a major contribution to their enjoyment of boarding. A genuine family atmosphere exists in all the houses, and boarders say how much they appreciate the warm and close support they receive from their housemasters and other pastoral staff, including the matrons and support staff. Boarders from both the United Kingdom and abroad receive an induction programme of high quality, and a recently established overseas committee addresses particular issues, helping to ensure that all boarders integrate fully. Care is taken to ensure that those sharing rooms are compatible and, over time, the allocation of the rooms is changed to widen each boarder's circle of friends.
- 4.11 Various activities are available to boarders out of school. During the evenings and at weekends, several school facilities, including the main library and the sports and media centre, are available and are much appreciated. Responses to the pupils' questionnaires revealed that there is always plenty for boarders to do but minor concerns were expressed about the irregularity of organised trips at weekends. Investigation of this claim by inspectors found that there was little to support this concern. Outside visits take place at weekends, and chapel services, which feature excellent choral singing, are a special feature on Sunday evenings. House staff, who are totally committed to providing a caring boarding experience, are active in organising a full range of house activities.
- 4.12 The quality of accommodation and the standard of decoration in the houses are excellent. Groups of two to six boys share rooms and as they move up, group sizes become smaller, and in the sixth form boys have their own rooms. Since the last inspection, a major upgrade has taken place in one house, and some refurbishment has taken place in the others. Some common rooms have been enhanced, and each house has computer terminals for email communication and controlled internet access.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent, and the outstanding standards of pupils' achievements and personal development testify to the governors' clear vision and strong strategic thinking, which enable the school to meet its wide-ranging aims.
- 5.2 Governors' oversight of the school is thorough and highly effective. The chairman has significant school governance experience and the governing body as a whole offers appropriate levels of expertise. Governors are particularly effective in overseeing welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding. They keep themselves well informed about the school through the work of their various sub-committees, which meet regularly to deliberate in such specialist areas as finance, wide-ranging pastoral issues, including boarding, and possible future governor nominations. The governors take a close interest in strategic and shorter-term forward planning, and oversee important developments relating to premises, accommodation and the curriculum. Governors with financial expertise work closely with the bursar and are involved in highly effective financial management, always ensuring that high quality resourcing and staffing are maintained.
- 5.3 The governing body has a committed and diligent approach to its role. A well-organised induction programme exists for new governors, and governor training is ongoing. Governors visit the school and the houses frequently, know the staff well, observe lessons, periodically shadow pupils throughout the school day and consult pupils' and parental opinion through questionnaires. They receive regular reports from the headmaster which give them clear insights into the way the school is being run.
- 5.4 The governing body is fully aware of its responsibilities and is committed to the welfare of the pupils. In line with the recommendations of the last inspection report, the governors and senior managers have remedied minor regulatory shortcomings in the recording of attendance and have drawn up a fully comprehensive set of risk assessments. Governors are keen to ensure that close touch with parents is maintained and send out regular newsletters to them.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.5 Leadership and management are excellent at all levels in furthering the aims of the school, and provide clear educational direction to ensure that pupils fulfil their all-round potential. The headmaster and senior management team (SMT) are most approachable, highly caring and particularly capable. Since the last inspection, the SMT has revised and extended the timetable, put greater emphasis on teaching and learning, established clear strategic objectives and the means to effect them, introduced tighter overall monitoring of the work of the houses and academic departments, and extended the evaluation of their performance. An increased emphasis on systematic financial planning has also taken place under the new bursar. Fund raising efforts have been significantly increased. Admissions procedures have been fully revised, and marketing strategies have become more thorough and comprehensive.
- 5.6 The success of the leadership and management is reflected in the increased all-round achievements of the pupils and their level of personal development.

Development planning, linked closely to the school's aims, is well defined, and is based on a number of measurable objectives identified as a result of widespread consultation. The delegating of authority is a great strength of the school, and middle managers in all areas respond enthusiastically and effectively. Communications throughout the school are outstanding. The systematic appraisal of all staff operates on a regular cycle, and staff are involved in self-evaluation. Senior management regularly assesses its own performance in effecting changes designed to benefit pupils' overall development.

- 5.7 Strong emphasis is placed on the appointment of high quality staff, and their carefully organised induction programme enables new staff to settle quickly into the life of the school. Professional development is fostered and draws on external expertise for whole-staff training and the introduction of new initiatives. Lesson observation is being developed, both formally by senior staff and informally by arrangement between colleagues teaching contrasting and related subjects. Non-teaching staff are hard working and dedicated, and make an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal, academic and co-curricular education through their support roles within the school community. The recruitment and selection of staff, including volunteers, supply staff and governors, receive close attention and all those working with children are suitably checked. The central register of appointments is fully robust. Senior staff are suitably trained in their roles of safeguarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

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

- 5.8 Links between the school and parents and guardians are excellent. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that parents believe the school fulfils its aims to an exceptionally high degree. A remarkable level of unanimity was expressed by the parents over the way the school is operating. Whilst a little concern was raised over the extent of provision for those pupils with specific learning needs, inspectors found that such support is good in all aspects.
- 5.9 Parents are welcomed into school on a regular basis, and attendance at sporting events, concerts and drama productions, in particular, is high. Some families attend Sunday chapel services regularly. Parents and alumni, who are also highly supportive in many ways, help with careers guidance and work experience placements. The Parents' Arts Society is strongly involved in supporting the school, and helps to generate interest in, and support for, the wide range of cultural and aesthetic events that take place in the school throughout the year.
- 5.10 Annual parents' evenings are provided for all year groups, and option and information evenings are organised for Years 9, 11 and 12. Pastoral evenings in Years 9 to 11 are well attended and highly valued. All parents are given two reports and academic grade assessments each term, giving a clear indication of their children's progress throughout the year. Reports are informative but do not always provide meaningful targets for improvement or detailed advice on how to make progress in particular subjects. Other information is available in hard copy, through the parents' portal on the website and in the high quality termly school magazine. The extensive use of email has given parents ready communication with house and academic staff. Legally required information, including policies and procedures, is openly posted on the school website for parents of current and prospective pupils. Parental questionnaires are sent out on a regular basis.

5.11 Parents appreciate the way that the school handles their concerns. A formal complaints policy, which complies with regulations, is in operation. The school is committed to making speedy responses to any concerns, and issues are handled with appropriate care and attention. A willingness to adapt practice is evident if a concern reveals the need for change that is of benefit to the school community.

What the school 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 the chairman of governors and the chair of a major committee, 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

Mr Neil Gamble	Reporting Inspector
Mr Sean Hamill	Head of Department, HMC school
Mr Peter Hamilton	Headmaster, HMC school
Mrs Kate McCarey	Pastoral Development Co-ordinator, HMC school
Ms Heather McKissack	Senior Mistress, HMC school
Mrs Cathy Williamson	Former Deputy Head, GSA school