



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST LEONARDS-MAYFIELD SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	St Leonards-Mayfield School	
DfE Number	845/6035	
Registered Charity Number	1047503	
Address	St Leonards-Mayfield School The Old Palace High Street Mayfield East Sussex TN20 6PH	
Telephone Number	01435 874600	
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Email Address	enquiry@mayfieldgirls.org	
Head	Miss Antonia M Beary	
Chair of Governors	Mr Nicholas W Bagshawe	
Age Range	11 to 18	
Total Number of Pupils	372	
Gender of Pupils	Girls	
Numbers by Age	11-19:	372
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	216
Number of Boarders	Total:	156
	Full:	115
	Weekly:	41
Inspection dates	25th to 28th Sep 2012	

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 October 2009.

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 the chair of governors and 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

Mrs Maureen Bradley	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Barbara Denning	Team Inspector (Former Director of Sixth Form, GSA school)
Mrs Angela Drew	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Bryony Edwards	Team Inspector (Head of Department, GSA school)
Mr Stephen Jefferson	Team Inspector (Former Director of ICT, GSA school)
Mrs Dorothy MacGinty	Team Inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Mrs Flora Bean	Team Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Leonards-Mayfield School is an independent Roman Catholic boarding and day school for girls aged eleven to eighteen. It is situated in the village of Mayfield in East Sussex. The school community is part of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus founded in 1846 and the first pupils entered the school in 1872. Today it is governed by a board of fourteen trustees, three of whom are Sisters of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. The school seeks to promote social and moral well-being, to teach pupils to take care of, and to value, themselves and to think in terms of making a positive contribution to society as adults. They aim to provide intellectual challenge for each individual at all stages of their education and to foster a love of learning and to 'grow strong in faith and lead fully human lives'. Since the previous inspection in October 2009 the school has improved facilities for teaching information communication technology (ICT) and textiles. The lower school library has been upgraded. New tennis and netball courts and a fitness suite have been added to the physical education department. A distinctive feature of the school is its involvement in equestrian sport and a second sand school has opened for equestrian pursuits since the previous inspection. Social areas have been refurbished and an area called 'The Hub' has been made available to allow pupils of all ages to integrate. Traffic circulation and parking around the site has been improved.
- 1.2 The school has a total of 372 pupils, of whom 116 are in the sixth form. There are 156 boarders of whom 41 are weekly or flexi boarders. Although a Catholic foundation, the school welcomes pupils of all faiths and nationalities. Day pupils travel from across Kent and East Sussex and boarders from across the UK and around the world to attend the school. Parents are predominantly from a range of professional backgrounds. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. On leaving the school from the sixth form, most girls go on to UK universities and a few proceed to universities overseas. The school has identified 80 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) who receive specialist learning support from the school, but no pupil has a statement of special educational need. There are 55 pupils receiving support for English as an additional language (EAL). The school is culturally diverse with a wide range of nationalities being represented.
- 1.3 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 school is very successful in providing an excellent educational experience and in seeking to realise the unique potential of each pupil within an inclusive community rooted in the Catholic tradition of the Society of the Holy Child Jesus. It fulfils its aim to encourage equally the spiritual, intellectual, creative, physical and emotional development of each pupil. The results in public examinations and pupils' high levels of achievement in extra-curricular activities are the outcome of excellent teaching by dedicated staff. The good and sometimes excellent progress of the pupils at all ages is helped by the positive relationships between teachers and pupils and the individual support given both in the classroom and in specialist help. Pupils with SEND and those with EAL make good and often excellent progress. An excellent broad curriculum enriched by a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities allows pupils to develop their talents and to discover hidden ones. The pupils have exceptional creative skills, and achievement is particularly high in the artistic subjects. Pupils in the sixth-form benefit from excellent extension activities to increase their knowledge of politics and business, but the careers education is less well developed and not broad enough in its coverage. The understanding of the world of work is not a significant part of any curricular area throughout the school.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent and is a notable strength of the school. The high priority given to creating a school community based on tolerance and respect results in excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The philosophy of its founder, Cornelia Connelly, was 'generosity of spirit' and this underpins the framework for developing behaviour which is exemplary, consideration towards others and strong Christian values. The excellent standards of health and safety and pastoral care combined with the friendly and supportive environment allows pupils to thrive. The quality of boarding education is excellent and day pupils and boarders integrate happily. The high standard of care given to boarders is a strength and international pupils soon settle as a result of a welcoming induction programme. The role of sixth-form girls in supporting younger pupils is instrumental in creating a strong community spirit. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small number of pupils suggested that their views were not listened to and that sanctions were not always applied fairly, but the inspectors found no evidence to support these views.
- 2.3 The quality of governance, leadership and management of the school is excellent. The governors provide a thorough oversight of all aspects of the school and through strong financial control they plan successfully to provide the facilities and resources for the future. They have made the monitoring of school policies and safeguarding arrangements a high priority and have ensured that all regulatory matters are frequently reviewed. The governors provide excellent support for the head and senior management team (SMT) who have introduced many new educational initiatives since the previous inspection. The monitoring of pastoral care and the academic tracking of pupil attainment have been particularly beneficial to pupils' progress. Some of the new initiatives are not yet fully developed in practice but good progress is being made. School development planning and evaluation is well advanced at SMT level but has yet to be extended to all staff so that they can share in the educational vision for the future. The school has excellent links with parents who in the pre-inspection questionnaire showed a high level of satisfaction with the education and care provided for their children. The school has made good progress

since the previous inspection in the quality of marking and the monitoring of policies and procedures.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

1. Involve staff at all levels in school development planning.
2. Re-evaluate the effectiveness of the careers programme and extend its provision to all ages to promote a stronger understanding of the world of work.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and their learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The ethos of the school is to encourage in each pupil a sense of achievement and their aim to inspire pupils to develop independent thinking, creativity, curiosity and high level skills across all subjects is fully realised. The pupils' achievements are substantiated by excellent results in public examinations and in their many extra-curricular activities.
- 3.3 Excellent levels of knowledge, understanding and skill are demonstrated by pupils across all ages, subjects and activities. They are extremely articulate and have a high level of oral expression in debate and in drama. High standards of grammar and vocabulary enhance their literacy skills and their skilful questioning allows them to explore ideas and to reason with logical thought. Mathematical knowledge is particularly strong and is used effectively across all areas of the curriculum. Confidence in scientific knowledge and ICT is evident and pride is taken in the presentation and organisation of their work. Highly developed skills of peer assessment and self analysis, and the encouragement they are given to be reflective of their achievements, leads to deeper understanding and good application of knowledge. The pupils have exceptional creative skills, and achievement is particularly high in the artistic subjects as observed in the quality of ceramics produced by the sixth form.
- 3.4 Pupils have excellent and sometimes exceptional levels of achievement in extra-curricular pursuits. The school succeeds in a range of team and individual sport at county, regional and national levels at all ages. Notable achievements have been gained in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award up to gold level. The school has exceptional success in riding with a significant number of girls competing for their country and winning national competitions. Excellent performance levels and grades are gained in instrumental music and choral work. The school choir, Schola, has sung in St Paul's Cathedral. High levels of achievement in drama and dance are a feature of all ages.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent years for which comparative data is available. Results in GCSE examinations have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. In 2011 69% of all GCSE grades were A* - A. Results in A-level examinations in 2009-2010 were well above the national average for maintained schools and above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. A-level results in 2011 were above the national average for girls in maintained schools. Over 75% of all pupils achieve grades A* - B in their A levels. Pupils with SEND perform to the same high level and in addition EAL pupils demonstrate good and often excellent achievement in IGCSE and the Cambridge English examinations. The level of attainment at GCSE and A level, and the nationally standardised progress data that is available, indicates that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability and in some years the examination results show progress to have been excellent. In most lessons observed, progress was seen to be excellent for the most talented and gifted pupils due to the challenges built into lessons. For those requiring extra support for SEND or EAL, the quality of work achieved in the

specialist centres was seen to be of an excellent standard. The majority of pupils are successful in achieving places at their first choice of university.

- 3.6 Attitudes to learning are very positive across all ages. Pupils apply themselves with enthusiasm and are constantly attentive demonstrating perseverance when challenged. Throughout the school, pupils work co-operatively with each other but also enjoy working independently. They are motivated to do their best at all times and have excellent relationships with their teachers. The sixth-form pupils are well organised and enjoy initiating new ideas throughout the school to benefit all pupils.

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 curriculum of the school, including the extensive range of extra-curricular activities, fully reflects the ethos of its Catholic foundation to provide a breadth and depth of opportunity for the pupils. The curriculum is well planned and contributes effectively through all the requisite areas of learning to pupils' excellent achievement. It fulfils the school's aim to provide a stimulating and creative educational experience that fosters academic excellence and progress. The inclusion of a wide range of creative subjects and an excellent extra-curricular programme provide opportunities to ensure that pupils complete their school careers with more than just examination certificates.
- 3.9 Since the previous inspection, the curriculum has been reviewed for Years 7 to 9 with the addition of Latin, an increase in language study and textiles. The choice of subjects at GCSE is wide and the school caters as much as possible to individual choices. New A-level subjects have been introduced to broaden the sixth-form curriculum including politics, psychology, home economics and physical education. The creative side of the curriculum is a particular strength and includes opportunities for developing creativity in music, art, ceramics, drama, and theatre studies. Good skills in ICT are developed through dedicated lessons and through general integration into most subjects. Pupils speak positively about the opportunities to extend their interests and talents in a varied range of sport and physical pursuits. The life skills programme covers important aspects of personal, social and health education (PSHE). It has also been reviewed since the previous inspection and is particularly strong in enhancing the personal development of the pupils, especially in helping to raise their self-esteem and learning how to keep themselves healthy in both body and mind. The careers education is less well developed and concentrates mostly on the choice of subjects for examination purposes and entrance to university. The understanding of the world of work is not a significant part of any curricular area.
- 3.10 The curriculum allows for pupils with SEND to have full access to all subjects without having to miss timetabled lessons. Dedicated centres for the teaching of SEND and EAL offer excellent support in English skills to enhance performance across the whole curriculum. Individual education plans (IEPs) outline fully the targets for individual pupils to help them focus on areas of weakness. Pupils with EAL study their own curriculum in English and are entered for IGCSE or Cambridge English examinations in addition to having the opportunity to enter for GCSE and A level. The school's focus on challenging all pupils allows the most gifted and talented to be intellectually extended in all subjects.

3.11 The excellent breadth and depth in the curriculum is enhanced by the wide range of opportunities provided by the extra-curricular programme and the links the school makes with the local community. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and a wide range of sports support the aim of allowing pupils to develop healthy interests outside the classroom. The inclusion of an extensive equestrian programme is an extra strength and one for which the school is noted. Pupils enjoy an exceptionally wide range of musical interests including orchestra, flute and jazz groups, chamber music and an inspiring choral tradition. Individual tuition is available to the highest of grades in most musical instruments including the harp. Drama and dance are very popular. In the sixth-form, pupils enjoy clubs and societies which extend their language skills as in the foreign language film society and book club, and can practise their public speaking in the debating club and model united nations group. Many of these activities are shared with the local community through performances and invitations to use the facilities. Educational trips throughout the country and overseas further expand curricular experiences.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

3.12 The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is excellent.

3.13 Teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' progress, and fully supports those aims of the school which seek to develop the unique potential of each individual and to foster academic excellence. A particular strength is the provision for pupils of differing levels of ability. Teachers take great care to adopt an inclusive approach in the classroom while employing a range of strategies to ensure that all pupils including the gifted and talented achieve their best. These strategies include one-to-one support in quiet moments, provision of extension work, use of individual educational plans, and a range of teaching methods. Pupils benefit from excellent specialised teaching and support from the SEND and EAL departments which are closely integrated within the main teaching programmes.

3.14 Teaching approaches are often imaginative as, for example, in the use of charades to explain the nature of slave revolt. Pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, to debate, and to explore challenging concepts as seen in a religious studies lesson investigating the nature of God's goodness. Teachers know their subjects well, plan comprehensively for all eventualities and nearly always maintain a brisk pace in lessons to ensure that a high volume of work is covered. In the very small proportion of classes where teaching was only sound, lessons depended too much on strong teacher direction. Relationships in the classroom are of an excellent order and reflect the school's commitment to mutual trust and respect for all. Pupils have excellent relationships with their teachers which allow a good level of discourse to further their learning. Sixth-form teaching is suitably specialised drawing on excellent subject knowledge. It provides a stimulating climate for pupils in which they learn to challenge and evaluate the ideas put forward by their peers and teachers in an environment which helps to develop both their confidence and their intellectual prowess.

3.15 Throughout the school, teaching benefits from an excellent range of effectively deployed resources, which include imaginative and well used spaces such as the concert hall, the dance studio, and the ceramics area. Good use is made of ICT in a variety of classes as seen in Spanish and Latin lessons, and in a topical geography lesson relating the impact of the recent floods. The library is a valuable resource prized by pupils both as a place of quiet study, for general reading and as an aid to research.

- 3.16 Marking is effective in providing constructive and informative feedback to pupils who were often very positive regarding its benefit. The recommendation of the previous inspection to raise the quality of marking has been met. In some cases, however, the absence of uniformity across subjects' marking criteria led to uncertainty on the part of younger pupils. Very good assessment procedures are a strength of the school. Assessment is frequently in evidence in lessons as teachers seek to confirm knowledge. Robust systems check pupils' longer-term performance and draw on a combination of data. This performance is monitored and regularly evaluated so that additional support can be planned for those falling below target aspirations.

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 spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The quality of personal development is a strength of the school and is promoted by the school's Catholic ethos in the high priority it gives to developing spiritual awareness, moral values and a sense of community where all individuals feel valued.
- 4.3 Spiritual awareness is excellent and is nurtured by a dedicated staff working in a calm and spiritually stimulating environment. The pupils reflect the feeling of serenity that permeates the school's environment. They make effective use of the opportunities for worship and personal reflection arranged by the chaplaincy team and pupils; the chapel is at the heart of the school. Chapel services with both music and drama, and morning liturgy, provide time for worship and quiet contemplation. Pupils appreciate the non-material aspects of life and are thoughtful and insightful young people who have a strong sense of self-worth and are not afraid to be themselves.
- 4.4 The girls' moral development is excellent. Pupils have a good sense of right and wrong and show respect for good conduct and the law, successfully following the Cornelia Connelly philosophy of 'generosity of spirit'. The expectation for all members of the school to show courtesy and consideration towards others at all times is emphasised and widely upheld. An atmosphere of mutual respect and tolerance prevails and standards of behaviour and discipline are exceptional. Pupils understand and support rewards and sanctions procedures. As a result of strong role models from teachers and older pupils, and the clear guidance and structures that exist, they are equipped to make informed decisions and judgements. In a sixth-form lesson, pupils were seen to demonstrate their judgement extremely well in a debate on the morality of the use of stem cells.
- 4.5 Pupils of all ages show excellent social development and engage readily in conversation with their peers and with adults. Forms are cohesive units and there is much genuine support and friendship both within and across the year groups. The pupils, particularly in the sixth form, enjoy taking responsibility for events and contribute well to the life of the school. Younger pupils were seen making friendship bracelets at a meeting of the Cornelia Club and the structure of house activities means that all years can come together socially as well as participate in friendly competition. All successes are celebrated and are highlighted in assemblies. Pupils are aware of those less fortunate than themselves and consider charity work important to their school life. A group of Year 12 pupils slept outside overnight, with boxes and sleeping bags to raise awareness of human trafficking. The school council and food committee are just two examples of how the pupils work together to contribute to school decision-making. Opportunities to lead and take responsibility are numerous, including the prefect system and captains of houses and sports teams. Pupils are involved in the 'Actions not Words' programme to further their work in the local community.
- 4.6 The school community is culturally diverse and there is a real interest in the traditions of those from other countries especially of those in the boarding community. Knowledge of other faiths and customs is promoted widely through the

curriculum. Visits to places of interest both at home and abroad expand horizons. Year 7 pupils' knowledge and understanding of cultural matters was deepened when they researched Shakespeare and then visited the Globe Theatre in London, and the choir recently travelled to Rome. Year 12, when studying ceramics, research the cultures of Greece, Turkey and Mexico and pupils develop a strong knowledge of English public institutions through the life skills programme.

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

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The caring support given to pupils creates a distinctive, warm and friendly environment for both day pupils and boarders and makes a significant contribution to their excellent personal development. They successfully achieve their aim to provide a distinctive environment in which the experience of living together enhances the lives of all students and staff. Girls are individually known and valued and they readily express their appreciation of the kindness and helpfulness of their tutors and teachers. Girls feel that there is always someone to listen to them. The tutorial system is highly effective with pastoral matters being co-ordinated extremely well. Good communication is maintained between the boarding housemistresses and the day school. The chaplaincy provides a confidential listening service in a welcoming and secure environment. Parents are kept well informed about the welfare of their children and pastoral provision has recently been enhanced by the development of detailed welfare plans to monitor the progress of pupils requiring additional pastoral support.
- 4.9 The girls are mutually supportive and the school's strong community spirit is palpable. Warm relationships exist between older and younger girls. The sixth form provide exemplary role models for the younger pupils with the chaplaincy team playing a sensitive part in organising activities for younger pupils. Prefects are assigned to forms and Year groups and their role in offering advice and resolving difficulties is appreciated.
- 4.10 The school's ethos promotes mutual respect and the relationship between staff and pupils is excellent. A small number of girls indicated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that sanctions were not always applied fairly but the inspectors found no evidence to support this view. The sanctions and reward policy is well understood and is evident in the pupils' exemplary behaviour in the classroom. Anti-bullying policies are implemented effectively and promoted through the recently revised life skills programme and other areas of the curriculum. When interviewed, the pupils reported that incidents of bullying are rare and handled quickly if any concerns are raised.
- 4.11 Pupils have a healthy lifestyle. Living in a beautiful rural environment, they enjoy a wide range of physical activities for exercise and express a high degree of satisfaction with the food provided. The school has an appropriate three-year disability plan in operation and access to buildings and toilets for those with disabilities is good. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small number of pupils suggested that their views were not listened to; however, the inspectors found that the boarding council and food committee, and the school council chaired by the head girl, offered girls effective opportunities to express their views.

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

- 4.12 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.13 All members of the school community work as a team to achieve the aim of providing a safe and caring environment in which pupils can thrive. The policies and procedures for the safeguarding of children, including anti-bullying, are thorough and clear and fully implemented throughout the school, an improvement since the last inspection. All staff and governors have been trained appropriately in matters of child protection. Safe staff recruitment procedures are now fully implemented and the recommendation of the previous report to monitor procedures more rigorously has been fully achieved.
- 4.14 The school uses professional agencies to conduct both risk assessments and condition surveys on buildings. An effective health and safety team monitor the risk assessments with particular attention to high risk areas such as science laboratories, the swimming pool and sports facilities. Due attention is paid to the safety of pupils on trips outside school.
- 4.15 All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken and fire prevention procedures are clear. Many staff are qualified in first aid. The health centre is fully equipped and medicines are stored securely. Medical professionals are in attendance in the health centre throughout the day and during the night when necessary. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.16 The quality of boarding education is excellent.
- 4.17 The warm and welcoming atmosphere in the boarding houses is infectious and ensures that the girls thoroughly enjoy their boarding experience. From the moment they arrive, opportunities for girls to make strong and lasting friendships begin and this continues throughout their time in the school and beyond. Boarders demonstrate excellent levels of maturity, tolerance and acceptance of each other. The positive and friendly relationships between girls and house staff are a strength and as a result new girls are made very welcome and settle in quickly. Any homesickness is quickly dispelled. New international boarders arrive for induction before the main body of the school to help them become familiar with their surroundings. This allows plentiful opportunities to begin to recognize faces and to make new friends. Girls have many opportunities for responsibility and leadership roles within boarding. Each house has its own house council, a house captain and deputy. Girls are also responsible for small daily tasks to contribute to the smooth running of the houses. An important part of life in boarding is time to pursue the Catholic ethos through the liturgical life of the school and in supporting just causes. The ethos of the house system is inclusive, whatever the pupils' faith or beliefs, and is at the heart of the girls' positive experience, and in keeping with the aims and values of the school.
- 4.18 The quality of care is outstanding. House staff work diligently together with non-resident house tutors to ensure that individual needs are taken into account. Record keeping is meticulous and up-to-date, an improvement since the previous Ofsted inspection, and ensures that all house staff, including non-resident tutors, are well informed about individual girls. This is seen as a priority and the exacting care and

attention to detail in the houses is outstanding. Moving to the next stage in boarding is given careful consideration by staff to anticipate and overcome any concerns. Communication between the health centre and individual houses is excellent and documentation is meticulous in every respect. Individual care plans are provided if required. The health centre staff provide excellent medical care and advice from well qualified nurses who give due care and attention to all needs including any continued medical conditions or injuries. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, pupils were wholly positive about the care they receive. The girls find they have ample opportunities to contact family and friends but a small number of pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaire reported that a lack of good internet facilities sometimes hampers communication. The school communicates regularly and effectively with parents of boarders and follows up any concerns immediately.

- 4.19 The quality of the accommodation and decoration is good. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small number of parents were concerned that boarding accommodation was not comfortable but the inspection team found the houses to be warm and cheerful and well maintained with comfortable furnishings. Each house has cheerful common room areas, suitable recreational facilities and adequate washrooms. The boarding house system has clear year-group sleeping areas within each house for Years 7 to 11. Individual rooms in Years 12 and 13 offer independence for girls who enjoy the privilege of being in the main area of the school. Good kitchen facilities in all houses ensure there is always time in the evening for snacks before bed. The quality and range of meals enjoyed by all is excellent with a varied choice of hot dishes, vegetarian options and a salad bar. Girls are encouraged to eat healthily. Some pupils reported in their pre-inspection questionnaire that the food is not good but during the inspection no evidence was found to support this. Separate dining areas for different year groups ensure that girls do not have to wait too long for meals when they have had a busy day. Areas of boarding have very good arrangements to ensure that girls are comfortable and secure. The recommendation of the previous boarding report to ensure the outdoor areas, such as the new car park, are adequately lit and free from reasonably avoidable safety hazards, has been fully met.
- 4.20 A varied and interesting programme of activities is offered in the evenings and at weekends. Girls can take part in a variety of music, art, drama and sporting options. The chaplaincy always has an open door and there are weekend outings and trips to local attractions or to London. There is also independent self-directed time and opportunities for quiet reflection and prayer, giving a holistic balance to encompass all aspects of life. A small number of girls mentioned that there is not always enough to do in the evenings and weekends; however, inspectors found no evidence to support this view during the inspection.
- 4.21 Arrangements for boarders' welfare and safeguarding are excellent. Safeguarding policies are fully implemented. Policies are reviewed to ensure that they reflect the most effective practice. All staff involved in boarding are thoroughly trained in safeguarding procedures including child protection and they understand fully their responsibility for those in their care. Boarders report unanimously that they feel safe at school and have a number of house and school staff to whom they can turn when needed. Boarders have access to help lines which are clearly displayed on notice boards and they have the contact details of an independent listener and the Children's Rights Director. The use of computers and mobile telephones is carefully and sensibly monitored for the safety of boarders. Supervision levels are good in the evenings and at weekends and boarding staff are well supported by non-resident tutors on a rotational basis. Regular fire drills take place both during the day and in

hours of darkness. Registration procedures are clear and staff are vigilant in following up any absences and ensure they know the whereabouts of girls at any given time. The responses to the pre-inspection parental questionnaires indicate that parents appreciate the staff support and care for their children. Behaviour in the boarding houses is exemplary and in discussion boarders reported that there is little, if any, bullying in the school, and resolved or dealt with quickly should it occur. This ensures that a harmonious atmosphere prevails.

- 4.22 Leadership and management of boarding are excellent. Clear structures ensure effective lines of communication between the day school and boarding staff. Regular meetings at all levels between senior pastoral staff and boarding staff keep all well informed and up-to-date with matters of policy and procedure. Accurate record-keeping of meetings ensures there is good monitoring of any concerns with clear guidelines to follow up. The documentation of policies and procedures for the management of boarding is meticulous and contains excellent guidance for the smooth running of a boarding house with clear procedures for any eventuality or emergency. Risk assessments for all house matters and outings and trips have a common sense approach to dealing with risk. The school communicates regularly and effectively with parents. All boarding staff are well trained and highly experienced and have regular opportunities to take part in continued professional development. Boarding is highly regarded and contributes fully to the overall experience of girls in the school.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is excellent.
- 5.2 The governing board is very effective in its principal role of providing a thorough oversight of the educational standards within the school and upholding the school's distinctive ethos.
- 5.3 The governors provide excellent support for the head and SMT. They offer a breadth of experience and their skills are deployed to the best advantage for support across the whole school. The board appoints delegated committees to help support the SMT and to ensure that its responsibilities are fully discharged and monitored. The governance committee ensures that all policies are reviewed regularly and meet the needs of the school. The monitoring of policies and their implementation is now of a high priority to the board, as recommended at the time of the previous inspection. The education committee has focused on improving practice in the classroom through establishing link governors to subject areas and encouraging practice that individualises pupil progress. The finance committee maintains a close liaison with the head and the bursar and carefully monitors the school budgets. They have made considerable progress in providing new facilities and refurbishment of buildings whilst keeping a close control of the finances. Responses to any issues raised by the health and safety committee are dealt with promptly.
- 5.4 Strategic development planning considers all aspects of the school and targets are set and reviewed. The governors are highly reflective and continually seek ways to consolidate current good practice and improve any areas of weakness. Governors undertake regular training in their responsibilities especially for safe recruitment procedures and child protection. They are aware of the need to keep abreast of information on safeguarding and the governor with responsibility for child protection meets regularly with senior managers and reports to the board. An audit of child protection procedures and arrangements has been undertaken recently. All governors have attended some child protection training. Safe recruitment procedures are carried out and the governors monitor the procedures through regular examination of the central register. All the recommendations of the previous inspection have been fully met.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 Through strong and clear leadership and management, the school is successful in promoting high standards of achievement and personal development for the pupils within its care. The SMT reflects well the aims of the school and are committed to promoting success across the full range of educational experiences.
- 5.7 Since the previous inspection, the SMT have reviewed and implemented policies and structures across the whole school. Lines of responsibility for monitoring have been established to good effect and full records of actions taken are maintained. This fulfils the recommendation of the previous report. The monitoring of pastoral

care and the tracking of individual pupils' progress are now both particularly strong and the pupils benefit greatly. Key staff have been employed into senior management positions and are having a significant impact on establishing effective educational practice. An annual appraisal system has been introduced and opportunities for continued professional development and promotion have been increased. Staff retention and recruitment is good and many teachers reported feeling motivated and positive about recent developments initiated by the SMT. The school's arrangements for the safe recruitment of staff are now meticulously undertaken and all staff are trained in child protection. Methods of communication throughout the school regarding the execution of policy are improving. Many initiatives are new and some are still not fully embedded in practice but the progress being made is evident in the improvements to individual pupil's achievements and care. Considerable efforts have been made in developing new facilities and resources to support the educational developments and to enhance the overall school experience for the pupils.

- 5.8 The school seeks a balance between academic success, the promotion of each pupil's personal development and the provision of high quality pastoral care. The SMT is effective in instilling a culture of self evaluation to achieve this balance. A comprehensive school business plan provided by the governors has proved to be a valuable tool in the assessment of the school's future needs. Targets set within the business plan are under review and have not yet translated fully into the school development plan used by the SMT. Middle managers are practised in reviewing the aims and successes of each department but the involvement of the whole staff in school development planning, so that all understand the school vision, is still to be achieved. Pastoral leadership is strong. The improved provision of life skills, the promotion of excellent boarding leadership, and the inclusive and welcoming opportunities within the chaplaincy are particular strengths and are significant in the nurturing of personal development. Staff speak warmly of the support offered by the SMT particularly for the personal and compassionate care they offer staff and girls in need.
- 5.9 There are frequent opportunities for parents to be involved in the life of the school. Many meetings and social events are arranged by the parent association called 'The Friends' including quiz evenings, a summer ball and the Michaelmas fair, allowing parents, staff and pupils to mix socially. The school holds at least two evenings for parents in school each year for information or discussions about their children's progress.
- 5.10 The school makes good use of technology to communicate with parents. Email is frequently used to contact staff and assessments on progress are communicated to parents through the email system every three to four weeks. Full reports are issued at least twice a year which are informative and constructive with guidance for improvement clearly identified. The school website includes the required and relevant information regarding school life and opportunities to catch up with school news. The published material about the school is of high quality. An excellent annual magazine as well as a weekly e-newsletter keeps parents abreast of the pupils' achievements.
- 5.11 In the pre-inspection questionnaire parents were very positive about most aspects of their children's education. Parents especially commented on the safety and care of their children, the range of subjects offered and the high standards of behaviour expected. They felt that the staff treated their children as individuals and that they could easily contact the teachers if they had a concern. A small number of parents

raised concerns about the leadership and management of the school; however, the inspection team found no evidence to support this view.

- 5.12 Complaints are dealt with in accordance with the published complaints procedures. In the previous academic year there were no formal complaints.

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