



ST HUGH'S  
OXFORDSHIRE



Independent Schools Inspectorate  
Inspection Report 2014



## THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Hugh's School is an independent day school for pupils from 3 to 13 years, with weekly and flexi-boarders. It was founded in 1906 in Chislehurst, Kent, and is named after Hugh of Avalon, Bishop of Lincoln from 1156 to 1200. In 1946, the school moved to its current home at Carswell Manor, a Jacobean country house in forty acres of grounds in rural Oxfordshire. The school is administered by a board of governors who are also trustees, since becoming a charitable trust in 1967. As the school has evolved, purpose-built facilities have been erected in the grounds. Since the previous inspection, an art, design and science block have been built and new information, communication and technology (ICT) facilities provided. In addition, the school has opened a nursery for 3 and 4 year olds and the boarding accommodation has been completely refurbished.

At the time of the inspection, there were three hundred and thirty-two pupils on roll, of whom thirty-seven are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Seventeen pupils board weekly and there is flexi-boarding capacity for a further thirty-eight pupils.

The school aims to provide a secure, happy environment, promoting the welfare of all pupils and enabling them to gain confidence. It strives to prepare its pupils for a successful transfer to senior school and for the challenges of life ahead. It seeks to give its pupils a secure educational foundation and to develop a moral and spiritual awareness in its pupils who participate in a wide range of activities and contribute to the community.

The ability profile of the school is above the national average, with most pupils having at least above average ability. The school does not enter its pupils for national tests. Most pupils come from either a background of rural living or from professional families who have migrated to the countryside. The vast majority of the pupils were born in Britain. Two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and seventy two pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom fifty receive specialist help from the school. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs.

National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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**‘Pupils are appreciative of the high quality of pastoral care, demonstrated by the warm relationships between pupils of all ages and the adults that teach and care for them.’**

## **THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Main findings**

The achievement of the pupils is excellent and successfully fulfils the school’s aims. The pupils have a positive attitude to their learning that drives them to achieve highly across the curriculum. They are very well supported by good teaching throughout the school, with excellent practice in Years 7 and 8. Support for those with SEND and EAL is excellent but that for the most able is not always as strong. Pupils are very successful in their entry examinations to their senior schools and win a large number of scholarships. The excellent curricular provision provides a broad range of learning opportunities in both academic and creative subjects with many sporting opportunities available. An excellent variety of extra-curricular activities gives the pupils many opportunities to pursue their interests. Imaginative use is made of the school’s surrounding woods and countryside. The quality of provision in the EYFS is outstanding. All the staff plan effectively to provide the best possible chances for the children in their care. In response to the recommendations in the previous inspection, the marking of pupils work has significantly improved and there are increased opportunities for all pupils to use ICT and develop independent research skills.

The quality of the pupils’ personal development is excellent. A palpable sense of belonging and care for others is shown by all pupils and they greatly benefit from the real sense of community in the school. Pupils are appreciative of the high quality of pastoral care, demonstrated by the warm relationships between pupils of all ages and the adults that teach and care for them. The quality of arrangements to ensure the pupils’ welfare, health and safety is excellent. All procedures for the safeguarding of pupils are thorough. The buildings and grounds are extremely well maintained. The overall quality of boarding is excellent and the boarding house is very well led and managed. Both weekly and the many regular flexi-boarders boarders thrive in the nurturing atmosphere.

The quality of governance, leadership and management is excellent. They share a vision with leadership of maintaining the family ethos of the school and in continually improving the quality of provision for the pupils. Leadership in all sections of the school is highly successful in fulfilling the schools aims and is conscientious about its delegated responsibilities. The school has made good progress since its last inspection across a number of areas, including in the early years foundation stage. An effective cycle of teacher review continues to monitor the development of all staff. Parents comment extremely favourably on all aspects of their relationship with the school and close links are maintained.

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

### **The quality of the pupils’ achievements and learning**

**The quality of pupils’ learning and achievement is excellent.**

The school is successful in meeting its aims. Pupils of all ages are well educated. They listen attentively in class and write fluently, expressing their ideas clearly and confidently. They are highly articulate and display outstanding speaking skills in lessons, as well as at formal and informal meetings. In the EYFS, children are very well supported in the acquisition and development of communication and language skills. As a result, they are able to express themselves clearly. Children in Reception can recognise most sounds and some can spell and write simple words.

Pupils are competent numerically and successfully reason mathematically. In Nursery, children can count groups of objects and do so spontaneously; a child counted that he had fourteen pieces of pasta left to eat. Children in Reception can recognise and order numbers up to at least twenty and are able to say what is one more or one less than a given number. Older pupils calculate fractions and decimals confidently and enjoy geometrical challenges. Pupils are able to conduct investigations successfully in science and displayed a high level of investigative skills when conducting an experiment into springs.

Pupils of all ages are extremely creative with excellent foundations laid in the EYFS. By the time they leave the school, they are confident in expressing themselves in a wide variety of media. Pupils are able to use ICT effectively to enhance their work. They were observed using tablets confidently in several lessons including English, science and history. Year 1 pupils used a graphics programme extremely skilfully to design their own Christmas cards. In the EYFS, children can manipulate remote control cars and use the interactive whiteboard independently.

Pupils’ attainment cannot be judged against achievement in national tests but, based on their work in their books and observation of lessons, their levels of attainment are judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils gain places at their first choice of senior school with many being awarded academic, art, music, sports and drama scholarships. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make at least good progress according to their ability. Those children who are not making good progress are identified and monitored, and receive the necessary support. Pupils with SEND in particular make excellent progress thanks to the quality of the provision made. As a result, children are very well-prepared for the next stage of their education. More able pupils in Years 7 and 8 respond well to many exciting and innovative challenges, as seen in a meeting of selected pupils that explored the lives of ‘Old Boys’ who had featured on the school’s honours board. Such opportunities are more limited for younger pupils, but their enthusiasm for learning overcomes these constraints.

Pupils achieve highly outside the classroom and in their extra-curricular pursuits with significant success in many sports, in particular horse riding and tennis, and some have

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been selected to play for county teams in rugby, netball, hockey and cricket. Awards have been won for inter-school competitions in music, mathematics, public speaking, debating, poetry and skiing, where the school was second in the UK.

In all areas of the school and in all age groups, pupils have a wonderful, positive attitude to their learning that drives them to achieve highly across the curriculum and throughout activities. Children throughout the EYFS are active learners and show motivation to learn. The youngest children delight in the challenge of using binoculars as they walk around school looking for numbers. Pupils are always keen to offer opinions and to support one another with group work, as seen in a drama lesson where pupils improvised Twelfth Night in four minutes. They settle quickly to work, show perseverance and enjoy what they are doing. They are well motivated and enthusiastic learners.

## **The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

### **The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.**

Pupils benefit from a wide ranging and balanced curriculum in accordance with the school’s aim to give its pupils a secure educational foundation. In the EYFS, classrooms and surrounding areas provide children with interesting, bright, wellorganised spaces, with an excellent range of accessible, age-appropriate resources. All pupils, including those in the EYFS, benefit from specialist teachers in physical education, music, ICT and French. From Year 5, all subjects are taught by specialists, including Latin. Setting is introduced effectively in mathematics and English from Year 3, French in Year 6 and Latin in Year 7. In Years 7 and 8, the most able pupils are streamed into a separate class where they are prepared for scholarship examinations and offered suitable intellectual challenges.

Pupils make purposeful use of the excellent new facilities for science, art and design technology (DT). Construction of new accommodation for the teaching and performance of music is underway. Peripatetic lessons continue to be a feature of the expanding music department and many opportunities are given for pupils to perform individually and in groups.

In response to the recommendations of the previous inspection, to develop the pupils’ use of ICT and independent research, there is a new ICT suite and several banks of tablets for use across the school. ICT provision is enhanced by the virtual learning environment, which is used well by the senior pupils. The school has recently introduced a cross-curricular independent learning initiative in Years 3 and 4 and cognitive thinking skills are included in the curriculum from Year 3. Some good opportunities for independent work were provided in creative artwork, music and drama and in a project about Samurai warriors.

The curriculum is enhanced by use of the surrounding countryside. Nursery to Year 4 make excellent use of the outdoor learning environment in a very creative schedule of activities, closely linked to the core curriculum. Games provision is generous and the department ensures all children are included in teams and matches, having an emphasis on sport for all. There is an extensive programme of matches in all sports.

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**‘Throughout the school, teachers have established an excellent rapport with their pupils.’**

Pupils with SEND are fully provided for, as are pupils with EAL when necessary, and all have Individual Education Plans. They are supported exceptionally well by a richly resourced learning support department, now in its new location. The identification of, and planning for, the most able pupils in Years 7 and 8 is excellent. However, this is not consistent in the younger year groups. In the EYFS, planning provides a balance of stimulating and fun adult-led and child-initiated activities, both indoors and outdoors.

Pupils of all ages, including those in the EYFS, benefit from a wide range of interesting and stimulating off-site visits that are closely linked to the curriculum, such as to local farms, theatres, museums and a Hindu temple. From Year 4, pupils experience outdoor education with overnight stays and longer visits abroad, including a week at a French chateau and netball and cricket tours. The extracurricular provision is further enhanced by an extensive programme of visitors and speakers. A variety of experiences and life skills is provided through the Year 8 leavers’ programme after Common Entrance.

New modern language clubs for Mandarin, Italian and Spanish have been added to the extensive range of clubs on offer. The popular good life gardening club, along with the new cookery programme, enhances the healthy living provision at the school. The pumpkins provided for Halloween lanterns were well received. The school has good links with the local community with pupils regularly attending competitions and other events at local senior schools, they work with a local museum and Year 8 pupils carry out community service locally.

## **The contribution of teaching**

### **The contribution of teaching is good.**

Excellent teaching is found especially, though not exclusively, in Years 7 and 8 but teaching lower down the school, whilst predominantly good, is not always as strong, including in the core subjects. In the most successful lessons, there is clear planning for pupils of different abilities with, for example, targeted questioning that allows all pupils to develop deeper understanding. However, this provision is not consistent across the school and pupils who are more able do not always have suitably demanding work. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and the teaching is effective in capturing the pupils’ interest in their work and most teaching secures good progress, particularly at the top of the school where preparation for successful transfer to senior school is most thorough, in line with the schools aim. Throughout the school, teachers have established an excellent rapport with their pupils. This, together with the pupils’ excellent attitudes to learning, ensures that pupils receive a secure educational foundation.

In the EYFS staff have good knowledge and understanding of how to promote the learning and development of young children and of what they can achieve. They place great importance on the development of speech and language skills, maximising opportunities to extend the children’s vocabulary and promote effective communication. For example, staff use open-ended questions to challenge the children to think creatively, solve problems and extend their thinking. Staff are enthusiastic and passionate; they engage and motivate the children to be inquisitive, active learners. This enables the children to acquire the skills and capacity to learn and develop effectively in preparation for the next stage in their learning.

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**‘Teachers have high expectations of pupils’ behaviour and commitment; they use praise and encouragement effectively.’**

Teachers have high expectations of pupils’ behaviour and commitment; they use praise and encouragement effectively. All pupils who responded to the pupil questionnaires said that they are making good progress in their work. The vast majority find the work interesting, and feel that their teachers help them learn and give them individual assistance when they need it. Pupils have opportunities to think independently in project work and imaginative homework tasks, although this is not a core feature of many lessons. In some lessons peer discussion and self-review, to support and develop pupil’s understanding, is used effectively, as seen for example in a Year 6 religious studies lesson.

Plentiful, high quality resources in the classrooms and specialist teaching facilities are available to enrich teaching. The most successful teaching uses these well. Pupils have been introduced to the use of tablets and ICT in a variety of ways, such as filming their lighting of a Bunsen burner to consider safety in the laboratory and consolidating their skills in French modal verbs by using the interactive white board most effectively.

The quality of assessment throughout the school is good and the pupils’ attainment is regularly checked in order to identify those who require extra assistance. Consequently, pupils with SEND receive well-structured support. Lessons are carefully planned with provision for SEND and EAL pupils and, in the creative subjects, for talented pupils. Provision for the more able is less comprehensive but where opportunities are on offer, more able pupils readily show that they enjoy the challenge.

The school has developed a new marking policy which meets the recommendations made in the previous inspection. The marking of pupils’ work is generally excellent, with realistic targets for improvement set, although there is some inconsistency in the quality of marking within departments. On occasion, teachers also provide opportunities in class for the pupils to reflect on their work and to correct as part of their assessment for learning, and pupils benefit significantly from this experience. Tracking of pupils’ progress from assessment data is now being carried out effectively and the use of this by teachers to plan more precisely for individual needs is developing. Where teachers regularly involve the pupils in assessing their own work, progress is most evident. This is a particular feature of the creative subjects.

## **THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS’ PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

### **The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils**

**The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.**

The school is successful in achieving its aims to develop a moral and spiritual awareness in pupils and to lead them to value themselves and others. There is a real sense of community amongst the pupils and staff that makes a significant contribution to pupils’ personal development. A palpable sense of belonging and care for others is shown by all pupils. In the EYFS, children’s personal, social and emotional development is excellent.

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**‘The social development of pupils is outstanding at all ages. This is evident in the harmonious relationships that exist between pupils as well as with the teaching staff and other adults in the school.’**

They display good levels of confidence, curiosity and independence. By the time they leave the school, the pupils demonstrate a high standard of personal development and emotional maturity.

The spiritual development of pupils is excellent. They appreciate others and accept different opinions and skills. Pupils are aware of the non-material aspects of life and, for example, respond to the tranquillity of their surroundings when working in the forest classroom. Lessons in religious education and personal, social, health and cultural education (PSHCE), as well as assemblies, encourage a spiritual awareness through stories and activities that help develop a sense of self. In other lessons, pupils considered the feelings of others, such as the scientists when the comet probe successfully landed.

Pupils are given plentiful opportunities to consider the differences between right and wrong and their moral development is excellent. Pupils in the EYFS and Years 1 and 2 understand the golden rules and older pupils have a secure understanding of the code of conduct. Pupils develop their awareness of moral and ethical issues through assemblies and the newly revised PSHCE curriculum. They talk naturally about using their personal power to make decisions. They appreciate the reward systems that are in place and they are given opportunities to celebrate their achievements.

The social development of pupils is outstanding at all ages. This is evident in the harmonious relationships that exist between pupils as well as with the teaching staff and other adults in the school. The older pupils cope well with the fast pace of their busy school day. They develop more self-awareness and a stronger sense of responsibility through the leadership training programme, and are ready to fulfil their role as prefects as well as to contribute to the local community. Pupils develop social, economic and political awareness through the curriculum and through discussion of current affairs. The pupils elected to the two school councils take their responsibility willingly and seriously. Younger pupils encourage peers to join in their play so that no-one feels isolated. Children in the EYFS are confident to talk and play with all adults and each other, to explore their surroundings and freely use their imagination. They show respect for one another as they talk about items they have brought from home and speak politely to one another as snacks are distributed.

Pupils learn about their own Western cultural heritage through the curriculum and through educational visits. The whole school community took part in a moving remembrance of the 100th anniversary of the first World War, a spiritual occasion that linked past pupils of the school to the present. Through the study of other faiths and cultures, and activities such as making sweets for Diwali, visits to a temple and a synagogue, and visiting speakers, pupils learn to understand and respect other traditions. Pupils are aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and many charitable fund-raising suggestions are made by pupils and carried out with the support of staff and parents.

## **The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

**The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.**

Pastoral systems are very well managed throughout the school. For all pupils, their form teacher provides a kindly welcome and guides them through the day. In addition, pupils in



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**‘...the excellent relationships with staff give plenty of opportunity for pupils to express their views.’**

Years 7 and 8 have a tutor to whom they can turn for any additional advice or guidance. From the beginning in the EYFS and throughout the school, behaviour is managed very well. In the pre-inspection questionnaires a very large majority of pupils confirmed that teachers show concern for them as a person, and that there is someone they can turn to if they have a personal difficulty. Pupils and parents also felt that any bullying was dealt with effectively. The school has a comprehensive anti-bullying policy that is well implemented and clearly understood by the pupils.

Older pupils genuinely enjoy their responsibilities when helping to look after and guide their younger colleagues. Although a few pupils in the questionnaires expressed a view that their opinions were not sought or responded to, this was not borne out by inspection evidence. The form staff and tutors, the school council and the excellent relationships with staff give plenty of opportunity for pupils to express their views. Children in both Nursery and Reception form very close bonds and secure emotional attachments with their key person and other staff members.

The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with SEND. Pupils learn about the theory of healthy eating in science, and see this in practice in the variety of nutritious menus available to them. EYFS pupils learn to keep themselves healthy through daily routines, such as washing their hands before eating. They are able to say why it is important to make sure their hands are clean before they touch their food and why fruit is a better snack than biscuits. There are numerous opportunities for pupils to take regular exercise, both through the extensive games curriculum, the vast number of sporting extra-curricular clubs and at playtime.

## **The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

**The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.**

The safety and well-being of pupils is a high priority for all staff in line with the school's aim to provide a secure environment, promoting the welfare of all pupils. Policies and procedures for safeguarding pupils have recently been reviewed by the governing body and are fully in line with the current guidance. All staff have appropriate and regular training and are fully aware of their responsibilities both for the pupils and for their own conduct. Induction training for new staff in safeguarding and all other health and safety requirements is extremely thorough. All necessary checks on suitability to work with children are undertaken for prospective staff and correctly recorded. A designated governor has a specific concern for safeguarding and meets regularly with designated staff.

Buildings and grounds are extremely well maintained with careful attention paid to the school's rural environment. Meticulous records are kept of all tests on all equipment. Careful attention is given to fire safety, including an annual fire risk assessment, staff fire training and regular fire drills, both in the school and for boarders during boarding time. The admission and attendance registers are completed accurately and stored appropriately. There is good provision of accommodation for those pupils who are ill,

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injured or have SEND and all medical records, including administration of medicines, are carefully maintained. An appropriate number of staff are trained in first aid.

In the EYFS, staff give a high priority to keeping the children safe. Children feel safe in school. They are able to say which adults they can speak to if they are sad or worried, safe in the knowledge that the adults will support and help them.

## **The quality of boarding**

### **The overall quality of boarding is excellent.**

The outcomes for boarders are excellent and the school's aims for boarding are clearly achieved. The boarders develop confidence and flourish in a safe and healthy environment where their individual needs are identified and fully met. The small core of weekly boarders is usually accompanied by a large number of regular flexi-boarders who look forward to their boarding nights and encourage others to share their experience. Their enjoyment of boarding is apparent. Boarders are confident, polite and articulate. They represent their school and boarding with pride and enthusiasm. A strong sense of community pervades the whole school and flows through the boarding house. Relationships between staff and boarders, and amongst the boarders themselves, are warm, sincere and based on trust and mutual respect. Pupils know that their opinions matter and they have influence through school council, the suggestion box and informal conversations with house staff.

The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders are encouraged to be fit, healthy, considerate and kind. Their behaviour is exemplary and they thrive in the nurturing atmosphere. Pupils feel that they are well looked after and readily confirm that they have a choice of adults with whom they could discuss personal matters. Contact numbers for helplines and the Independent Listener are readily available. The accommodation has been quite recently refurbished to a high standard and is bright and airy. The furnishings are colourful and comfortable. The bathrooms are also well equipped and ensure the boarders' privacy. The social areas are equipped with games, televisions and DVDs. Several boarders, including flexi-boarders, commented that they felt at home in the boarding area. A phone booth with landline and access to mobile phones ensures ease of communication with parents. In a few responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire boarders suggested some difficulty with contacting friends or family outside school but, during the inspection, inspectors found no evidence to support this view. All boarders benefit from the wide-ranging extra-curricular provision of evening clubs and Wednesday evening boarding activities.

The catering provision is outstanding. Experienced, well-trained and knowledgeable chefs plan exciting menus taking into account, and often making special arrangements for, individual dietary needs. The kitchen areas are efficient, clean and well-managed, as are storage areas and dining rooms. The adventurous meals provided are of high quality and much appreciated by the boarders. Snacks and drinking water are available in the evenings. Medical matters are overseen by a team of four appropriately qualified and experienced matrons.

The storage and administration of medication is careful and efficient, with parental permission in place. Privacy and confidentiality are respected. The head matron also

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manages the care of serious allergies and chronic conditions. Food treats brought into school are checked for potential allergens. Boarders who may need to self-medicate are assessed before being allowed to do so. The residential matron is on call to attend to children who feel ill at night. Record keeping is thorough and careful. Although the current accommodation for the daytime care of sick children is basic, it is adequate for the needs of this community. Appropriate care is taken of the boarders’ possessions. The laundry provision is efficient and effective. Lockers are available on request. Valuables can be stored under lock and key.

Good communication with parents ensures that any pupil’s needs are fully met. The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are excellent. Robust procedures are in place to ensure the safety of all boarders is promoted and managed effectively. Thorough anti-bullying and behavioural policies and procedures are implemented. Incidents are rare and swiftly resolved. The school’s safeguarding policy and procedures are rigorous and are known by all staff including governors. Warm relationships are evident across the community and boarders feel secure and confident that any concerns are taken seriously and dealt with promptly.

The school’s database is used effectively for record keeping and communications between staff and parents to ensure the wellbeing and safety of boarders. Appropriate risk assessments are in place. Comprehensive health and safety and fire safety policies and procedures are efficiently implemented. There are regular reviews and evaluation to inform improvement plans.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent and is reflected in the quality of the relationships and personal development of the boarders. The team is committed to regular reflection and review of policies and procedures. This self-evaluation benefits from the involvement of a dedicated governor and the interest and support of the governing board. All the members of staff involved in caring for boarders have thorough job descriptions. Induction is effective and regular review links to training and continuing personal development. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the boarding provision.

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

### **The quality of governance**

**The quality of governance is excellent.**

Governors have a wide range of skills and experience, which are used effectively to discharge their responsibilities. Many governors have close links to the school being past pupils or parents. They provide highly effective oversight of all sections of the school. Governors have a clear knowledge of the EYFS. They support new initiatives, visit regularly and meet staff at both formal and informal occasions. The designated governor for EYFS works closely with leadership and provides valuable guidance. Through careful

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financial planning and informed investment in staff, accommodation and resources governors ensure the school fulfils its aims.

In addition to their committee duties, many governors are frequent visitors to the school. They visit lessons, meet with teaching and estate staff and attend events. They are kept well informed by active subcommittees that involve administration staff including the bursar. A comprehensive and extremely detailed termly report from the headmaster gives governors additional insight into many aspects of the school, including educational standards and provision. Parents’ views are also sought and these inform strategic planning for future development and investment. In addition to close support, governors provide challenge through careful monitoring of the school’s policies and procedures. They ensure the effective appraisal of the headmaster and the bursar.

The safeguarding governor works closely with designated staff and reports termly to the full board. There are weekly reports on any safety issues. Governors carry out their statutory annual review of safeguarding policies and procedures diligently and monitor the appointment procedures of new staff through the single central register of appointments. They are strongly committed to maintaining the high level of wellbeing for pupils and the wider school community.

## **The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

**The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.**

The leadership is highly successful in ensuring that the school fulfils its aims. It has been strengthened in recent years by key new appointments. A carefully established management structure ensures continuity of provision from the early years to the oldest pupils. Committed and visionary leadership focuses on the excellent personal development and achievements of the pupils, as well as the sense of family that pervades the school. Strong links have been formed with senior schools and the scholarships and awards gained by the pupils reflect the close involvement of leadership with all stages of the transfer process.

Management at all levels is highly conscientious over their delegated responsibilities for the pupils in their care. Policies are regularly reviewed and updated not only in line with regulations but also through a vision that focuses on the personal development of the pupils. Since the last inspection the school has made notable improvements, for example, in accommodation and in many aspects of teaching, whilst acknowledging in its development plan that there are areas for further improvement. Safeguarding policies and procedures are regularly reviewed and the recruitment checks on new staff and volunteers are carried out scrupulously and suitably recorded on a central register. All staff are aware of the importance of risk management and conduct regular risk assessments of all areas used by the children to eliminate or minimise risk. Thorough policies and procedures are in place and these are understood by staff and are well implemented. The comprehensive staff induction programme focuses not only on pupil welfare and relevant information but also on a warm welcome. New staff, just as new pupils, readily settle into the school community.

**‘The ambitious development plan focuses on continuously improving the overall provision for pupils whilst maintaining the strong family ethos of the school.’**

**‘The responses to the parents’ questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive. They are particularly happy with the high standard of behaviour, the range of the curriculum and enrichment activities, the overall boarding experience and the quality of the care given to the pupils.’**

The appraisal system has recently been reviewed and offers all staff the opportunity for self-evaluation, as well as setting targets for their future development. All staff receive their statutory training in safeguarding and child protection, as well as regular training in health and safety matters and first aid. Staff also have many opportunities for continuous professional development for which a generous budget is made available. In response to the recommendations of the last inspection, a thorough review has been made of marking at all levels, and a new policy is in place. Teachers have been guided through this and their compliance with its content is monitored. There has been considerable investment in ICT provision, not only in hardware such as a second ICT suite and sets of tablets, but also in a virtual learning environment that pupils and staff can access from home as well as in school. Older pupils are particularly enthusiastic about its use.

Leadership and management are kept informed by the views of staff and parents. Clear objectives are formed from these and are incorporated in the ambitious development plan which focuses on continuously improving the overall provision for pupils whilst maintaining the strong family ethos of the school. There is a regular cycle of subject review and these also inform the overall development plan as well as those for individual departments, including the EYFS. Since the previous inspection, the school has responded well to the recommendation regarding the outdoor areas; these have been significantly improved with new flooring, resources and equipment and the school is continuing their development.

In the EYFS, managers aspire to improve and continually strive for success through reflective and critical analysis. The detailed EYFS development plan shows the challenging targets and priorities to which the setting aspires. Monitoring of the educational programmes is effective and ensures that planning and assessment are consistent across the EYFS. Training is encouraged and much of that attended is aimed at bringing about improvements in teaching and learning.

The school has excellent links with parents, including the EYFS. These links enable excellent, stable relationships to develop with parents, which are maintained as pupils progress through the school. The responses to the parents’ questionnaires are overwhelmingly positive. They are particularly happy with the high standard of behaviour, the range of the curriculum and enrichment activities, the overall boarding experience and the quality of the care given to the pupils.

The school is very welcoming to parents and many opportunities exist for them to be involved in school life. There is a comprehensive programme of both social and information-giving events and parents are always invited to attend matches, plays, performances and other special occasions. The thriving Friends of St Hugh’s School meets regularly and organises a wide programme of social and fundraising events for the school.

In the EYFS, staff work very closely with parents to help children settle; they gather useful information about the children’s care needs and interests, to ensure continuity between home and school. Parents are welcome in the classroom first thing in the morning to settle children before the start of the school day. They are kept very well informed of their children’s progress and what they have been doing. Parents are encouraged to share what children are achieving at home to help inform assessment and planning and their contributions are valued.

**‘The school is very welcoming to parents and many opportunities exist for them to be involved in school life.’**

Parents feel that staff are always available and willing to discuss and deal with concerns. In the EYFS, they have daily contact with staff at drop-off and collection times. Parents in the rest of school can make appointments to see any member of staff at any time or speak to them as and when the need arises. In response to the questionnaire, almost all parents are happy with the way the school has handled concerns and say they receive timely response to questions. The school has clear and appropriate procedures for dealing with parental complaints.

A particularly comprehensive and informative website, a series of open mornings and a range of school prospectuses, newsletters and departmental handbooks provide all current and prospective parents with detailed information about the school. The parent handbooks produced for each section of the school provide much practical information. Parents enjoy receiving the year group and whole school weekly newsletters that describe the many activities that happen at the school. These are supplemented by the Colour News, a termly magazine.

Current parents feel that they are kept well informed of their children’s progress and of events that occur within the school. The school provides an appropriate number of full, detailed reports, which are complemented by a structured programme of parents’ meetings across the year. Parents fully appreciate the honest and informed advice they are given regarding the choice of senior or other schools. The overwhelming majority of parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire say that the school is well led and managed and they would happily recommend the school to others.

## ACTION POINTS

### Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

### Recommendation for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Extend effective identification and planning for the more able to all age groups, including pupils in the EYFS.

## 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 his deputy, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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 Serena Alexander Reporting Inspector

Mr Peter Brooks Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Rev Christopher Cann Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Mr Nicholas Parsons Team Inspector (Head of department, IAPS school)

Mrs Janis Tait Team Inspector (Former Head of Juniors, IAPS school)

Mrs Linda Smallwood Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

Miss Lucy Sumner Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years



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