



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL**

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Royal Grammar School

Full Name of School	Royal Grammar School
DfE Number	391/6037
Registered Charity Number	528148
Address	Royal Grammar School Eskdale Terrace Newcastle upon Tyne Tyne and Wear NE2 4DX
Telephone Number	0191 281 5711
Fax Number	0191 212 0392
Email Address	hm@rgs.newcastle.sch.uk
Head	Dr Bernard Trafford
Chair of Governors	Mr Paul Walker
Age Range	7 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	1295
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (797 boys; 498 girls)
Numbers by Age	7-11: 252 11-18: 1043
Inspection Dates	01 Dec 2015 to 04 Dec 2015

PREFACE

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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations 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.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI standard inspection was in February 2010.

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 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.

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, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Tony Halliwell	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Fiona Angel	Team Inspector (Head of Curriculum and learning, HMC school)
Mr Garry Binks	Team Inspector (Head of Physics, HMC school)
Miss Jacky Gill	Team Inspector (Head of Geography, HMC school)
Mr Paul Lunn	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Andrew Potts	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Jane Prescott	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Ms Elaine Purves	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Dr Charles Runacres	Team Inspector (Principal, ISA school)
Mrs Susan Smith	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)

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 for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	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	8
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	9
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	10
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	11
(a) The quality of governance	11
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	11

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Royal Grammar School, founded in Newcastle in 1545, is a co-educational day school for pupils from the ages of 7 to 18. It received a royal charter from Queen Elizabeth I in 1599 and has occupied its present site near to the city centre since 1906. The junior school was established in 1906 and the school became fully co-educational in 2008.
- 1.2 The school aims to create an environment in which all pupils feel safe, valued and respected and where bright, enquiring pupils are offered challenge and high expectation. It encourages pupils to be creative and searching, to utilise original thinking and questioning, and to follow the care and courtesy modelled by their teachers. The emotional well-being of every pupil is central to the school's functioning, and the school believes that academic attainment is strengthened by the importance it places on the extra-curricular life of its pupils. The school is non-denominational and aims to encompass every pupil's faith and culture.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school has added 2 forms to the junior school, and girls now comprise nearly 40% of the pupil population. A significant amount of new building has been completed: additional classrooms in the junior school and senior school; a reception area and adjoining administrative centre; and a new sports centre with a swimming pool, second sports hall, and associated teaching and changing facilities.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection the school had 1295 pupils, drawn from the diverse, multi-cultural and multi-ethnic Newcastle community and the surrounding region. Of these, 252 comprise the junior school and 1043 are in the senior school. The school is selective by ability. Pupils are admitted to the junior school in Year 3 and Year 5. Admission to the senior school is in Year 7 and the ability profile is well above the national average, with around a half of pupils having well above average ability. The ability profile of the senior school in Year 10 is above the national average, with over a third of pupils having well above average ability. The sixth form's ability profile is above the national average for pupils in sixth form education. The school identifies 59 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), usually associated with dyslexia, and 11 receive specialist learning support. English as an additional language (EAL) is spoken by 64 pupils, none of whom are judged to be in need of formal support.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The pupils' achievements and learning throughout the school are exceptional, as a result of the outstanding curricular and extra-curricular provision. The school is highly successful in achieving its stated aims in which able, enquiring pupils are offered challenge and high expectation. Progress rates across the school are excellent for pupils of all abilities, including the more able and those with SEND, with no significant differences between groups. Pupils in lessons demonstrate high levels of learning skills. They gain excellent results academically and achieve consistently high levels of success in an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, resulting in regional, national and in some cases international success. Teaching throughout the school is excellent; teachers know their pupils extremely well and encourage them to perform at the highest level, although the intellectual challenge offered to pupils in the school's best teaching is not consistently applied across all subjects. The extensive programme of extra-curricular provision is a strength of the school and is highly valued by both the pupils and their parents.
- 2.2 Pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care and welfare systems together with carefully managed health and safety and risk assessment procedures. Relationships between staff and pupils and between the pupils themselves are of the highest quality, and this creates a happy and purposeful community in which pupils thrive. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils show strong moral and social awareness and their sense of core British values is evident in most subject areas.
- 2.3 The successful fulfilment of the school's aims is a direct result of excellent leadership and careful governance. Senior management at all levels and members of the governing board are active in monitoring and evaluating the school's success, as well as providing challenge where needed. Policies are subject to regular review by members of the governing board, and the school is rigorous in ensuring that all staff undergo the required recruitment checks and child protection training. Strong leadership ensures that teaching, learning and pastoral care are afforded the highest priority. The school has responded to the recommendation of the previous inspection to confidently direct its teaching to build energetically and vigorously on the pupils' enthusiasm for learning. The vast majority of parents were overwhelming in support of the school as well as the education and care that their children receive.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Ensure that the intellectual challenge offered to pupils in the school's best teaching is consistently applied across all subjects.

3.THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement and learning is exceptional.
- 3.2 The school is highly successful in meeting its aim of providing an education where bright, enquiring pupils are enabled to be creative and original thinkers in an atmosphere of purpose and fun. Pupils throughout the school show extremely high levels of knowledge, understanding and skill. They are highly articulate, write coherently and express themselves with confidence. Pupils listen carefully and are able to read and speak fluently. They are highly accomplished mathematicians and their scientific knowledge is excellent. Pupils show exceptional levels of creativity in art and music, and in drama they achieve exceptionally high levels of performance as observed in rehearsals for the musical, *Seussical*. A significant number of sixth form pupils gain gold and silver awards in chemistry and mathematics Olympiads, and art pupils are regularly invited to display their work in public exhibitions.
- 3.3 Pupils in the junior and senior schools achieve outstanding local, regional and national results in a variety of team competitions and sports events, locally, and their individual successes are numerous. The senior school currently has 2 world-champion acrobatic gymnasts. Most sixth form pupils gain entry to universities with highly competitive entry requirements. Nearly 90 pupils were successful in gaining distinctions in external music examinations and 80 were entered for the Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Silver Award.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent 3 years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national curriculum tests at age 11 are well above the national average for maintained junior schools. Mathematics and reading results have been exceptional. Results at GCSE have been well above the national average for maintained schools, and above the national average for maintained selective schools. International GCSE (IGCSE) results are above worldwide averages overall. Results at A level have been well above the national average for maintained schools, and above the national average for maintained selective schools. Results for 2015 were consistent with previous years.
- 3.5 Standardised assessments show that those in the junior school make progress well above the national average. The level of attainment at GCSE and IGCSE indicate that pupils make excellent progress in the senior school in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The level of attainment at A level indicates that those in the sixth form make progress that is high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The results of pupils with SEND and the more able indicate excellent progress in relation to their starting points, due to the individual support that they receive. In the observation of lessons and written work, and in curriculum interviews, all pupils were seen to make excellent progress. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire almost all pupils and their parents were overwhelmingly satisfied with pupils' progress.
- 3.6 Pupils throughout the school demonstrate an excellent attitude to learning and are quick to settle to tasks set in lessons. They work co-operatively with each other and ask challenging questions; junior school science pupils used difficult concepts to solve scientific problems. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenge offered by

their teachers, are well organised and show initiative when receiving complex tasks to perform.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The school's curricular and extra-curricular programme is highly effective in contributing to the pupils' academic progress and wider development. It meets the school's aims; pupils are offered challenge and high expectation. The programme is well suited to the ages, abilities and needs of the pupils throughout the junior and senior sections of the school.
- 3.9 The junior school curriculum offers breadth and accessibility to all pupils and covers the requisite areas of learning. Pupils are offered two foreign languages. The extensive extra-curricular programme includes popular activities such as a sewing and cookery club. The senior school's curriculum has expanded since the previous inspection and now includes German from Year 7, Spanish from Year 8 and the introduction of philosophy and religion. The curriculum allows pupils ample choice at GCSE and A level. In Year 12, pupils are able to follow the Extended Project Qualification, which helps them to develop skills to work more independently. This allows choice in areas of study whilst enabling more able pupils the opportunity to undertake research projects.
- 3.10 Across the school a well-planned and relevant programme of personal, health and social education (PSHE) includes mindfulness, issues of adolescent mental health, study skills and an understanding of fundamental British values. Political issues and discussions, both curricular and extra-curricular, are handled in a considerate and balanced manner. High-quality provision enables teachers to create a positive and supportive environment in which all pupils can achieve irrespective of ethnicity, gender or disability. Since the previous inspection, additional resourcing has provided pupils with more extensive careers and higher-education information, supplemented in the sixth form with practice interviews and advice from tutors and former pupils on career opportunities.
- 3.11 The school provides an outstanding range of co-curricular activities which is effective in supporting pupils' personal development. The variety of activities on offer is extensive and includes music and drama alongside a wide range of societies, often pupil initiated and led, such as the dentistry society. Additionally, pupils are involved in a wide range of house activities and competitions including sports, music, drama and charity events. A full range of competitive games is played by both boys and girls, with a focus on inclusivity. Pupils' leadership and team-building skills are promoted through their participation in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) from Year 9 onwards, and in the DofE award scheme and World Challenge from Year 10. Opportunities for leadership are also a strength in the junior school; all pupils in Year 6 are provided the opportunity to be a prefect. Those in the senior school have opportunities to work within the wider community and are enthusiastic about these pursuits, which include voluntary service working in local junior schools, performing in the choir in local retirement homes and hosting an annual fund-raising event for local charities. An extensive and carefully planned programme of residential and non-residential field trips and visits, such as a recent overseas visit to India, further supports the curriculum and enhances pupils' cultural awareness.

- 3.12 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire demonstrate that the vast majority felt that the school provides a good range of extra-curricular activities. Pupils were overwhelmingly positive about the range of activities on offer in the school, and almost all considered the work set to be interesting.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.14 Teaching makes an overwhelmingly positive contribution to the pupils' progress and reflects the school's aims to deliver intellectual challenge and high expectations, and to provide opportunities for creative thinking and questioning. Excellent teaching and outstanding subject knowledge throughout the junior and senior schools foster amongst pupils a genuine interest and enthusiasm for academic, creative and practical subjects. It enables them to achieve at high levels. Teaching in senior school psychology lessons and in junior school art, which uses challenging questioning, shows high levels of achievement and independent thinking.
- 3.15 Energetic, assured and well-planned teaching enables pupils to make rapid progress. Excellent time management is a feature of most lessons, for example in those where pupils receive precise timings for oral tasks. Excellent creative planning, for example in physics, enabled pupils to learn about the life cycle of stars. In the junior school, a good range of challenge was observed in many lessons, which enabled pupils to quickly understand concepts. Teachers also make excellent use of resources to support their lessons; information and communication technology is utilised in the majority.
- 3.16 Teaching across the school is based on a clear understanding of the pupils' needs and prior attainment. Those with SEND or EAL are well supported across the school. Intellectual challenge is observed in the school's best teaching; however this is not consistently applied across all subject areas. Opportunities for challenging the most able were observed in many subjects and in the extensive programme of academic competitions. In the most successful teaching, pupils receive open-ended tasks to nurture their creative thinking. For example Year 10 biology pupils were tasked with designing a greenhouse to grow cress plants, and junior school pupils designed science experiments to test hypotheses. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, the vast majority of parents felt that more able pupils receive the appropriate amount of challenge.
- 3.17 Teachers ensure that pupils work with focus in the classrooms, and encourage collaborative working in lessons. They welcome discussion and debate in the classroom; in a sixth form politics lesson the teacher set up a fictitious cocktail party in which pupils took the roles of famous politicians to explore theoretical perspectives. Coverage of political issues is non-partisan and handled sensitively; sixth form prefects presented current socio-political issues to younger pupils during form time.
- 3.18 Marking across the school supports pupils' learning with mostly helpful and detailed feedback with suggestions for further improvement. Standardised data is used increasingly by departments to assess pupils' learning and to ensure that they achieve their potential. Parents are highly satisfied with the quality of teaching. Pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses expressed high levels of satisfaction with the teaching that they receive. A small minority of their responses raised concerns about the amount of work that they were set, but this was not

supported in pupil interviews. Inspection evidence deemed all pupils to have a clear homework timetable, with a fair allocation of set tasks for them to undertake each evening.

- 3.19 In response to the recommendation from the previous inspection, the school has built on the pupils' enthusiasm for learning by creating a whole-school focus on teaching and learning. Teachers meet regularly to discuss teaching methods and styles, and a 'learner blog' develops ideas further and is a focus of departmental meetings. Teachers provide effective monitoring and guidance at all levels, and this significantly contributes to the pupils' achievements in lessons.

4.THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The junior and senior schools are successful in meeting their aims of being an inclusive, supportive and friendly community. Pupils have numerous forums to discuss ideas and to learn to develop self-respect and respect for others. They are positive and outgoing, leaving school as knowledgeable and emotionally mature individuals with a clear sense of self-worth.
- 4.3 The school's multi-faith community offers many opportunities for pupils of all ages to develop understanding of different cultural and religious backgrounds, and the celebration of national and international festivals such as Armistice Day and Diwali extends this knowledge. Openness, respect and acceptance is apparent in pupils' relationships and philosophy, and religious education classes offer opportunities to discuss, discover and make personal decisions concerning spirituality, religious beliefs and moral standpoints in a safe environment. The school is secular in ethos and pupils are encouraged to be tolerant and appreciate difference. For example, pupils of different faiths are able to access a room in which to pray and the school has a Christian Union society.
- 4.4 Pupils throughout the school understand the rewards and sanctions as laid out in the code of conduct, however their sense of right and wrong extends beyond these rules. They believe in 'fair play' and understand the need to identify and combat discrimination. Through PSHE, assemblies, lectures from outside speakers and form time discussions, the school promotes an understanding of shared values that characterise modern multicultural Britain, knowledge of public institutions and respect for the English law, which permeates all aspects of school life. All pupils have equality of access across the curriculum and provision is made for different cultural needs, such as in physical education lessons where full-body suits may be worn.
- 4.5 The pupils' strong cultural development is developed in many subject areas, such as population studies in geography and world forms in music. The friendships established in this diverse and multicultural school allows pupils to openly discuss their personal values and cultures. This adds to a deeper awareness and understanding of the world around them. A presentation by a pupil concerning public attitudes to different religious groups resulted in a discussion regarding headwear and attitudes towards minority ethnic women. The opportunity for exchanges and trips abroad, such as the art and languages trip to Madrid and Segovia, furthers the pupils' knowledge of western culture and of those further afield. The PSHE curriculum includes topics relating to the Prevent strategy, and staff are trained to deal sensitively with issues for discussion.
- 4.6 Pupils gain a sense of service to the community and to wider society through voluntary work and fundraising. A recent charity week raised £15,000 with pupils leading many of the activities, such as 'henna hand painting' by younger pupils and the sixth form fashion show. Pupils willingly accept responsibility and have many opportunities to take responsibility for themselves and for others through the various leadership roles available to them; they are selected as sports captains, school council representatives, form prefects and digital leaders. They also demonstrate leadership in music, drama and CCF.

- 4.7 A very small minority of pupils in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses felt that they are not provided the opportunity to take on responsibility within the school. Discussions with pupils found no evidence to support this view. The PSHE programme evolves in response to pupils' suggestions, current events and weekly discussion. Careful tracking of topics ensures that pupils leave the school as knowledgeable citizens, able to make their own decisions and well equipped to face further challenges in the future.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The pastoral care successfully meets the school's aims to ensure that pupils feel happy, safe, valued and respected. Care and courtesy are a significant part of the school philosophy. Pastoral care is strengthened by the school's pastoral leaders, who now bridge the learning and support responsibilities to form a close connection with the academic side of school life. All staff attend information sessions on emotional well-being issues to identify and support individual needs confidently and effectively. A blog on the school website discusses how parents can respond effectively to topical pastoral issues.
- 4.10 Relationships between pupils and staff throughout both the junior and senior schools are excellent. Pupils are confident of receiving support and guidance from their teachers should any concerns arise. Those in the sixth form have received training in order to help support younger pupils both informally through the vertical house tutor group system, and in formal subject clinics. They undertake their role as peer mentors seriously and with high commitment.
- 4.11 An extensive range of health-related activities ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to take regular exercise, with consideration of healthy lifestyles promoted in the curriculum. A nutritious choice of freshly prepared meals including vegetarian and Halal options, salads and fruit is always available from the dining room.
- 4.12 The school has robust policies in place to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying, including cyberbullying. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they feel the school achieves high standards of behaviour. A small minority of senior school pupils felt that the school does not deal well with bullying. Inspection evidence gained from pupil interviews and scrutiny of documentation regarding the prevention of bullying does not support this view. The very rare incidents of bullying that do occur were deemed to be dealt with promptly and sensitively. A small minority of senior school pupils indicated that the school does not ask or respond to their views, and questioned the fairness of the use of rewards. In discussions, pupils stated that elected councils provide a forum for them to express their opinions and that feedback is made to all form groups. They also expressed a good understanding of the rewards system and deemed it to be fair.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve the educational access to all areas for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 The school's safeguarding arrangements, policies and procedures are robust and effectively implemented. All staff undergo rigorous checks prior to appointment, and these are appropriately recorded on the single central register. Staff fully understand their responsibilities regarding safeguarding, and child protection is afforded high priority. Designated safeguarding leads are thoroughly trained and maintain strong links with outside agencies. Training for all staff in safeguarding is carried out regularly, with an appropriate number of staff trained to a higher level. Induction for new staff and volunteers is prompt and thorough, and fully meets the current requirements.
- 4.16 The school maintains a comprehensive risk register which encompasses all areas of the junior and senior school operations. Comprehensive policies cover all areas of health and safety, including risks due to fire and other hazards. Fire practices take place regularly and staff are effectively trained in fire awareness. Risk assessments are thorough for both curricular and extra-curricular activities. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of pupils with special physical or learning needs. Robust systems are in place for reporting health and safety concerns that are subsequently dealt with promptly by the maintenance team. The health and safety committee is effective and overseen by a nominated governor.
- 4.17 The medical room is well equipped and staffed, providing for all sick pupils including those with special needs. Medicines are stored and administered efficiently, and all the necessary protocols are carefully adhered to. The majority of staff are first-aid trained to a basic level, a number also having qualifications in outdoor pursuits and first aid at work. Parents are kept fully informed when a pupil requires medical attention. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses the vast majority of parents say their children are happy and feel safe in school. Records of concerns about pupils' welfare are stored securely, and information is shared appropriately. Admission and attendance registers are correctly maintained and properly stored for three years.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors provide excellent oversight of the whole school and are highly successful in supporting the school's aims of providing an environment to enable the successful fulfilment of its vision for academic and extra-curricular excellence. The governing body includes specialists with a wide range of skills, among them current parents and former pupils. Governors have excellent opportunities for training, including charity law and safeguarding. The main subcommittee and appropriate working groups review all development plans. Careful financial management has enabled the school to complete a number of significant developments, including construction of a new sports centre and the maintenance and extension of the bursary scheme.
- 5.3 Members of the whole-school leadership team attend governors' meetings and submit academic and pastoral reports to the governors, who effectively evaluate all aspects of the school's performance as well as matters such as pupil emotional well-being. Governors make regular monitoring visits to the school, offering both support and challenge to staff. They maintain a carefully constructed and robust risk register covering all aspects of the school's operation.
- 5.4 Governors provide strong oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities, through regular meetings with designated staff and thorough checks of appropriate records. Individual governors take responsibility for specific areas such as health and safety, safeguarding and SEND provision, and report to the whole governing body. They approve school policies, most of which cover both the junior and the senior school, and regard safeguarding as a high priority. Governors undertake an annual review of safeguarding and termly reviews of child-protection arrangements, and this is presented to all governors for approval and action where necessary.

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 Excellent leadership and management ensure that the school successfully fulfils its aims and continues to strive to maintain the highest standards throughout. The school is rigorous in ensuring regular policy review, and there is excellent monitoring of the implementation and the effectiveness of policies and their associated procedures. This includes the key areas of safeguarding, welfare health and safety, and all staff are appropriately trained in these areas. The school operates secure safer recruitment procedures and has comprehensive and effective arrangements for the checking of suitability of all staff, including volunteers, supply staff and governors.
- 5.7 The leadership and management know and understand the school. Their regular observation of the educational provision; focused interactions with all staff, pupils and parents; and thorough analysis of data from a variety of sources including surveys keep them fully informed. The senior management team know when they must lead

on change, and they also appreciate when they can facilitate it through utilising the enthusiasm and professionalism of the heads of year and departmental heads. Through their reflective and considered approach to school development, the leadership team have instilled an open minded and equally reflective culture amongst other middle managers and leaders. This approach has spread amongst many teachers, which has encouraged them to develop their own interests and enthusiasms for their subjects and their other areas of specialism. The result of this is that the pupils are better informed and supported. By creating this culture throughout the school, the leadership is positively affecting pupil achievement. For example, the recent emphasis on monitoring the emotional well-being needs of the pupils is sharpening the academic focus.

- 5.8 The recommendation from the previous inspection, ‘to confidently direct its teaching to build energetically and vigorously on the pupils’ enthusiasm for learning’, has been fully addressed. This is demonstrated by the desire of all pupils across the school to master the fine detail in their subject knowledge and understanding. This enables them to routinely reach the highest levels of achievement.
- 5.9 The school has recently updated the appraisal system that is now used for both the support and teaching staff. Many teachers share ideas and useful teaching strategies within and between departments. Initial teacher induction is provided in the school, and the school continues to work with a number of local schools to share ideas and teaching skills. This networked approach both in the local community and amongst staff in the school, coupled with the clear encouragement for staff development, has provided a strong impetus for the changes in the school since the previous inspection.
- 5.10 In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents expressed overwhelmingly high levels of satisfaction with the school’s education of their children, the support offered to the pupils and the school’s communication procedures. No areas of concern were raised by a significant number of parents. An appropriate complaints procedure is in place and suitably implemented on the very rare occasions that it is invoked, and parents feel confident that they can raise any concern with the school.
- 5.11 Parents have good opportunities to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children. They are encouraged to become informed and involved, and their attendance at pupil progress meetings, performances and sports fixtures is strong and warmly encouraged. A parents’ organisation, ‘The Friends of the RGS’, organise social activities such as walks on the Northumberland coast and also run a second-hand uniform shop.
- 5.12 The school maintains an excellent relationship with current and prospective parents, regularly providing detailed information through printed publications and its website. Recent initiatives have further improved communication through email, electronic forms and the parent portal. Regular newsletters and senior leaders’ blogs to parents provide useful information and provoke reflection on the school and on educational questions.
- 5.13 Parents receive regular and informative reports, clearly detailing achievement and any concerns as well as interim grades of their children’s progress. Individual year groups have appropriate briefings, when required, to help choose academic options.

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