



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**CATERHAM SCHOOL**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Caterham School

|                           |   |                              |                  |
|---------------------------|---|------------------------------|------------------|
| Full Name of School       | <b>Caterham School</b>  |                              |                  |
| DCSF Number               | <b>936/6538</b>   |                              |                  |
| Registered Charity Number | <b>1109508</b>  |                              |                  |
| Address                   | <b>Caterham School<br/>Harestone Valley<br/>Caterham<br/>Surrey<br/>CR3 6YA</b> |                              |                  |
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| Headmaster                | <b>Mr J P Thomas</b>  |                              |                  |
| Chair of Governors        | <b>Mr Jonathan Bloomer</b>  |                              |                  |
| Age Range                 | <b>11 to 19</b>   |                              |                  |
| Total Number of Pupils    | <b>820</b>  |                              |                  |
| Gender of Pupils          | <b>Mixed (472 boys; 348 girls)</b>  |                              |                  |
| Number of Day Pupils      | <b>652</b>  | Capacity for flexi-boarding: | <b>0</b>         |
| Number of Boarders        | Total:  | <b>168</b>                   |                  |
|                           | Full:   | <b>168</b>                   | Weekly: <b>0</b> |
| Inspection date           | <b>23 March 2010 to 24 March 2010</b>   |                              |                  |
| Final (team) visit        | <b>04 May 2010 to 06 May 2010</b>   |                              |                  |

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in June 2009 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Caterham School, founded in 1811, is a co-educational independent day and boarding school. It is located in the Harestone valley in mid-Surrey, and has a Christian foundation. Its governing body is wholly appointed by the Caterham School Foundation and a trustee body is made up jointly by the foundation and the United Church Schools Trust. The school aims to foster an environment in which pupils are happy, secure, confident and valued, and in which they achieve their academic potential, follow a wide-ranging and enriching curriculum and co-curriculum, and experience independent thinking and lifelong learning through innovative educational practice. The school is committed to high standards in pastoral care, and aims to promote strong spiritual and moral values, self-discipline, responsibility, and respect for others and the environment. Since the last inspection in February 2004, a new science block and refectory have been completed, together with enhanced sixth-form and health centre facilities.
- 1.2 There are 822 pupils on roll aged from 11 to 19, 473 boys and 349 girls, of whom 657 are day pupils and 165 are boarders; 272 pupils are in the sixth form. Entry to the school is by selective examination at the ages of eleven and thirteen, and a few pupils enter at sixth-form level. Standardised national tests taken in Years 7 and 9 indicate that, with few exceptions, the ability of pupils is above the national average, and in excess of three-quarters of the pupils are well above average. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs, four pupils have learning support and eighty-three receive help with English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.3 Pupils come primarily from professional and business families. Boarders are from various parts of Britain, Eastern European countries and, substantially, from East Asia. About ten pupils leave each year after completing GCSE examinations. Virtually all sixth-form pupils proceed to higher education, a few after taking a Gap Year.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

| School | NC name |
|--------|---------|
| Year 1 | Year 7  |
| Year 2 | Year 8  |
| Year 3 | Year 9  |
| Year 4 | Year 10 |
| Year 5 | Year 11 |
| Year 6 | Year 12 |
| Year 7 | Year 13 |

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The school is highly effective in meeting its aims of stimulating all pupils to achieve their academic potential, and promoting independent thinking and lifelong learning. Pupils throughout the ability range are highly successful in their learning and personal development. A wide-ranging and well-balanced curriculum and an extensive programme of activities are available inside and outside school. Pupils make good progress towards achieving excellent academic standards, especially in mathematics, classics, science, humanities, creative subjects, sport and drama. At GCSE and A level, they attain results that are high when compared with the national average for maintained secondary schools. Their progress is good in relation to their above average ability. The use of the library, and information and communication technology (ICT) facilities contributes well to self-motivated study. The pupils' overall success is promoted by mainly good and sometimes excellent teaching, their own positive attitudes, their application of ICT, study and thinking skills, and the breadth of their curricular and co-curricular experiences.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal qualities are outstanding and are promoted by the friendly and supportive atmosphere. Their responsibilities are widespread, for example when they act as prefects, games captains, pastoral mentors to new pupils, academic 'study buddies' to pupils in the lower part of the school, and in year group councils. Additional duties in boarding further foster leadership skills, self-reliance and community living. The co-curricular activities promote initiative and responsibility, notably in raising large sums of money for different charities and in outstanding direct support for overseas schools. The high quality of pastoral care and safeguarding, and the excellent example set by the staff, ensure that pupils experience a happy and purposeful day and boarding education.
- 2.3 The Christian ethos of the school is promoted well by the governors and senior managers, who display excellent oversight, and nurture a spirit of endeavour and compassion for underprivileged people. Development planning is good, and leadership and management are excellent. The school has greatly enhanced science and catering facilities, has developed sixth-form and medical accommodation, and has improved the curriculum and marking policies in the lower part of the school, as recommended at the previous inspection. It has also rectified a minor regulatory shortcoming concerning the admissions register. There are outstanding links with parents, within a family atmosphere. Parents' replies to the pre-inspection questionnaires were highly favourable. A small number expressed concern about the levels of homework, and a few felt that support for those with learning difficulties and disabilities is insufficient. The inspection findings do not support these views.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.

### **(ii) Recommended action**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Extend specific guidance to staff on marking and the writing of school reports about ways in which pupils can improve their work.
2. Review evening meal arrangements for all boarders and the availability of the sports hall for senior boarders in the evenings and at weekends.

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

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

- 3.1 The pupils are well educated and their success in academic work fulfils the school's aims of providing challenge so that pupils achieve their full potential. Results at GCSE in the period 2006 to 2008, the last three years for which comparative data is available, were high overall in comparison with the national average for all maintained secondary schools, and in line with the average for maintained selective schools. The grades achieved at GCSE in 2009 were better than previously and high in comparison to selective maintained schools. The results achieved at A level in 2006-8, and also in 2009, were high in relation to the national average for maintained schools and also high in relation to the national average for maintained selective schools. Pupils' achievement is good in relation to their above-average ability. The pupils are highly successful in their learning; they show thorough understanding and make notable progress in independent thinking and the idea of lifelong learning through innovative educational practice. They are highly articulate and write well factually, and also in creative contexts. They have a firm grasp of mathematics and readily devise fair experimental tests in science, having a logical approach to problems and explanations. They work effectively with one another in small groups and as individuals. The presentation of their work is generally of high quality, demonstrating concentration and high levels of effort. Pupils in the lower part of the school say that the 'study buddies' programme by sixth formers aids their motivation and helps them to organise their work more purposefully.
- 3.2 Pupils demonstrate creative capabilities, as was shown in a Year 10 art and design lesson on making and glazing ceramic tiles. They are well able to use ICT in support of their studies, for example in data logging on individual laptops in Year 11 physics. They have opportunities to exercise independent research skills, as seen in A-level geography and history project work. They apply themselves well and always show interest in their studies.
- 3.3 The school's achievements include excellent results in mathematical and science competitions, in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, and in music and speech and drama examinations and arts festivals. Individuals have also done well at art exhibitions and regional music festivals, and teams have regularly achieved well in boys' cricket, rugby and hockey, and in girls' lacrosse and netball. All-round academic and co-curricular achievements owe much to pupils' positive attitudes, the opportunities provided by the whole curriculum and the quality of the teaching. Pupils are particularly well motivated, their behaviour is exemplary, and they enjoy extremely good relationships with teachers and other staff and within the pupil body as a whole.



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

- 3.4 The school meets its aim of ensuring that pupils achieve their academic potential by offering an excellent, wide-ranging and enriching curriculum and co-curriculum suitable for the ages, abilities and needs of all its pupils. A broad range of subjects in the first three years includes the core subjects, three modern languages, Latin, study and thinking skills and a certificated course in ICT. Expressive subjects are well represented and a suitable range of topics is provided in religious, personal and social education (RPSE). The issue of making option choices too early has been addressed. At GCSE, where free subject choices are available, all pupils are able to postpone making a decision over either separate or dual award sciences until the end of Year 10, and International GCSE (IGCSE) courses are taught in mathematics, English and sciences. Additional mathematics is available for those pupils who have completed IGCSE mathematics in Year 10. Pupils also benefit from a wide range of option subjects at A level, including critical thinking, psychology and Greek. Careers education is well organised from Year 9 upwards, and pupils are prepared well to make examination subject choices and for life beyond school. Many pupils, requiring support in EAL, are provided with specialist classes. A small number of those with learning difficulties and disabilities, including pupils with statements of special educational needs, have individual educational programmes and receive one-to-one assistance. Gifted and talented pupils are catered for effectively through setting in core subjects, extension tasks in class and homework, encouragement to take part in scholastic clubs in a variety of subjects, and participation in regional and national academic competitions.
- 3.5 The school provides an outstanding range of co-curricular activities that enhance pupils' development. The Caterham Challenge in Year 8 and the Caterham Award in the sixth form provide opportunities for pupils to participate in a wide range of curricular and co-curricular activities. Sport, choral and instrumental music, public speaking and drama have a high profile. A full range of competitive games is played to a high standard by both boys and girls. Dance opportunities are also available, and a wide range of clubs and societies in such areas as art, textiles, jewellery making, creative writing, circus arts and languages is greatly enjoyed, as is participation in the school radio station. Throughout the school, trips are arranged to local and metropolitan areas of historical, geographical and artistic interest which broaden pupils' academic and aesthetic development. Cultural visits to, and work experience in France, Spain and Germany help to improve pupils' modern language skills, and the school has a US exchange partnership with a high school in Ohio. Pupils benefit from links with the local community; pupils at a local special school make weekly visits and older pupils regularly visit the elderly. The charity committee raises more than £25,000 each year, assisting a wide variety of causes including extensive support for adopted schools in Tanzania and the Ukraine, which selected sixth-form pupils visit annually. Pupils are involved in a wide range of enjoyable house activities in sports, music and drama. From Year 9 onwards, leadership and team building skills are promoted through participation in the Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, together with Young Enterprise activities in the sixth form.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.6 High quality teaching is a major factor in helping pupils to develop their academic potential, in line with the school's aims. It is mainly good and some of it is excellent. Teachers' skills have been enhanced by in-service training and a rigorous programme of mutual observation of lessons, and pupils' learning has improved as a result. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong, and they make good use of time and resources. Praise and encouragement are deployed to good effect, and this adds to pupils' enjoyment of their work. Since the last inspection, pupils have been given greater responsibility for their own learning, and more opportunities to think and reason for themselves. The setting of projects and the use of presentations by pupils are widespread, and ICT facilities and the library are used well. Study and thinking skills programmes have impacted positively on general academic achievement and examination results. Pupils were prompted most effectively to apply previous knowledge in a Year 12 psychology lesson revising the topic of memory, and were particularly challenged in their thinking in an inspirational Year 13 French lesson on immigration. Lively teaching methods, which include effective questioning techniques and small group and pair work, enable pupils to achieve well, because the tasks set are well matched to their abilities. Teachers give freely of their time out of class to assist individual pupils who experience difficulties to meet the standard of work required. They are well informed by EAL support staff, and plan individual help for particular pupils in their lessons. A number of responses to the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire suggested that there is too much homework, but inspectors found that the amounts required are appropriate for each age group.
- 3.7 Throughout the school assessment and marking have improved since the last inspection. Marking is often detailed and encourages pupils' effort, and some includes written prompts for improvement, a recommendation at the last inspection. Pupils say that they are often given verbal feedback in lessons, and know what they have to do to make progress. Much time and effort are put into the accumulation of assessment data which is used systematically to check on pupils' progress. Tracking and target setting programmes stimulate pupils' effort and motivation. The classrooms are well equipped, many having data projectors and related technology, and these resources are used effectively by teachers to produce stimulating lessons that maintain pupils' interests and promote their progress.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 Pupils have outstandingly well-developed personal qualities and are friendly, outgoing and confident. The school is highly successful in its aim of promoting their strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which is apparent in the responsible and thoughtful way pupils behave and in the pride they take in their achievements. They appreciate the many opportunities they have in the school, as indicated in interviews and in many of their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire.
- 4.2 Pupils are self-aware and have a sense of the spiritual. They display good levels of self-esteem, are caring and considerate towards others, and are sensitive to their feelings. They are well aware of the school's Christian ethos and show empathy and compassion. The experience of awe and wonder was evident in a Year 7 science lesson on images in plane mirrors.
- 4.3 Pupils display a high level of moral development. School rules aimed at respect for others, taking responsibility and promoting fairness are widely accepted. All pupils appreciate the reward systems, including the awarding of merits and commendations. Sanctions are clear and are well understood, but do not have to be used extensively. Pupils are highly proactive in charitable work and much effort was made in the inspection week to raise money for the summer break trips to a Tanzanian primary school and a Ukrainian secondary school. Pupils are well aware of the difference their support can make to the lives of those who are less fortunate than themselves.
- 4.4 Pupils are extremely well developed socially and they enjoy responsibility, whether as senior prefects, school and boarding prefects, team and house captains, and representatives on year group councils. Responsibilities are spread widely. Younger pupils also derive great satisfaction from the small responsibilities with which they are entrusted. Pupils benefit greatly from the close relationships in the school and the excellent system of pastoral care. Inspection week coincided with the last few days of the General Election campaign and the whole school learned much about the democratic process, and local and national public services and institutions, through active participation in a mock election.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural awareness is strongly developed. They display a welcoming approach towards those from different backgrounds both among their peers and in their meetings with visitors from other cultures and faiths. They have an understanding of their cultural heritage through literature, art and music, and they learn about other cultures in subjects such as RPSE, geography, history, and music. Pupils have a good appreciation of cultural diversity based on religious studies lessons of alternative faiths and traditions. The ethnic mix of pupils within the school encourages them to live in tolerance and harmony with one another.

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

- 4.6 The pastoral care extended throughout the school is excellent, and fulfils the school's aim of creating an environment in which pupils are happy, secure, confident and valued. Class and subject teachers provide outstanding support for pupils under the guidance of year heads and senior staff. Pastoral arrangements are highly effective in promoting pupils' personal development and academic achievement. Their self-confidence over a wide range of activities is fostered by praise and encouragement. New pupils say that the mentoring system greatly helps them to settle in when they first arrive at the school.
- 4.7 Relationships between pupils and staff, and among pupils themselves, are extremely strong, and a caring and friendly atmosphere is evident throughout the school. The pupils are well mannered, and adults provide them with excellent role-models. Individual issues raised by pupils are discussed thoroughly at regular pastoral meetings. Pupils work and socialise happily together with a sense of understanding of the needs of others. Behaviour in lessons and around the school is exemplary, rules are on display in classrooms and pupils treat each other with respect. Pupils report that bullying is very rare, and say that staff deal with any difficulties swiftly and constructively. Day and boarding house activities have a special impact in reinforcing a sense of identity and community. Sanctions are rarely used but, when necessary, breaches of the rules are addressed accordingly. More serious issues are rare. Questionnaire responses revealed some pupils feel that the application of sanctions is not always fair but inspectors found no evidence to substantiate these claims.
- 4.8 The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and is supported by designated child protection staff. Their training for inter-agency working is up-to-date, and they have trained all others working in the school. The policy is shared with senior pupils and is suitably publicised. Safe recruitment procedures are followed, and procedures ensure that checks on all staff, including governors, are completed before their appointments are confirmed. Fire precautions receive due attention and fire practices are held each term, including night time evacuations for boarders. Health and safety matters are well supervised by the health and safety committee. An accessibility plan has been appropriately updated, and is designed to improve the educational provision for those pupils with disabilities, in line with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. School lunches, which have improved over the last year, are healthy and varied. Pupils understand well the importance of physical exercise and having a good diet. The new health centre provides excellent facilities and constant support, with well-qualified staff, and appropriate records are kept. The admissions and attendance registers, the former of which was not completely compliant at the last inspection, are now maintained correctly and suitably stored for three years.

#### **4.(c) The quality of boarding education**

- 4.9 As a boarding inspection was conducted by Ofsted in June 2009, the school has not had a specific ISI boarding inspection. The ISI inspection has considered boarding in the whole-school context.
- 4.10 The boarding experience is excellent, and is a strong factor in promoting the personal development of the pupils and enhancing their moral, social and cultural development, in line with the aims of the school. The boarders gain in self-reliance and all take their turn in carrying out duties around the house for the common good. Older boarders act as house prefects responsible for supervising others, help to organise house activities, and provide a link between the house staff and the boarders. The school has fully implemented recommendations from its previous boarding inspection, undertaken by Ofsted, to ensure that medication is securely stored at all times, and to provide safeguarding training for all staff as part of their induction.
- 4.11 Boarders' relationships are friendly and they say that close friendships with their peers in the houses are a major reason why they enjoy boarding. The helpful contact with pastoral staff, including the matrons, is appreciated by the boarders. The atmosphere within the houses is warm and 'family-like'. Boarders from different parts of the world, mainly East Asia and Eastern Europe, receive a high quality induction programme and all boarders mix together easily. Care is taken to ensure that pupils sharing rooms are compatible, and over time the composition of the rooms is changed to widen each boarder's circle of friends.
- 4.12 Various activities are available to boarders out of school, although responses to the pupils' questionnaires revealed concerns about the early timing of supper, and that some senior pupils do not feel that there is always enough to do in the evenings and at the weekends because the sports hall may not be open for their use. Investigation of these claims by inspectors found that there was some substance to these views. During the evenings and at weekends several school facilities, including the sixth-form centre, are available, but the sports hall is accessible only at certain times. Visits to local towns are organised at weekends and local church services can be attended on Sundays. House staff, who are totally committed to providing a caring boarding experience, are active in organising a range of house activities.
- 4.13 The accommodation is of a good quality and the standard of decoration is high. In some instances up to six junior boys share study bedrooms. Since the last inspection, the houses have been refurbished, common room areas and other facilities have been upgraded, and each house has been equipped with computer terminals for email communication and internet access. The girls' accommodation is homely, with many personal pictures and possessions in evidence and some of the boys' rooms are also well personalised. Pictures in the corridors of each house reinforce an atmosphere of boarders happily enjoying themselves in a range of activities.

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

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The school is governed excellently by the trustees, who are dedicated to its value system, and the aims of ensuring that pupils fulfil their potential in curricular and co-curricular areas. A more efficient single-tier structure of governance has been adopted since the last inspection. The trustees visit frequently, know the staff well and provide strong support to the school. The governors offer a wide range of skills, there is an induction programme for new governors and governor training is ongoing. They are effective in overseeing welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding, and they maintain a high quality of resources and staffing.
- 5.2 The governors keep themselves well informed about the school through the work of their various sub-committees, which meet regularly to deliberate in such specialist areas as finance, safeguarding, academic matters, nominations, and health and safety. However, no governor has particular oversight of boarding. The chair has expertise in safeguarding and, together with other senior governors, is involved in the appointment of senior staff. The governors take a close interest in forward planning and oversee important developments relating to the premises, accommodation and curriculum. Governors with financial expertise work closely with the bursar and are involved in highly effective financial planning. They receive regular reports from the headmaster which give them clear insights into the way the school is run.
- 5.3 The governing body is fully aware of its responsibilities and is committed to the welfare of the pupils. In line with the recommendations of the last inspection report, the governors and senior managers have extended curricular flexibility in Years 7 to 9, have much improved accommodation in several areas, including science, and have remedied minor regulatory shortcomings. The governors are keen to provide favourable working conditions for staff and offer a certain amount of accommodation on the school site. They keep closely in touch with the Parents' Association (PA).

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels in furthering the aims of the school. They have developed a clear educational direction and have created an environment in which pupils are happy, secure, confident and valued, and ensure that they fulfil their all-round potential. The headmaster and the rest of his senior management team (SMT) are approachable, caring and highly capable. Since the last inspection, the SMT has revised and extended the timetable, including the introduction of more curricular coherence into the lower part of the school, has put greater emphasis on teaching and learning, and has established tighter overall monitoring of the work of academic departments and extended the evaluation of their performance.
- 5.5 The success of the leadership and management is reflected in the significant all-round achievements of the pupils and their level of personal development. Development planning is clearly defined, and is based on a number of measurable objectives identified as a result of widespread consultation. Annual appraisal systems are fully operational, and all departments and their staff are involved in self-

evaluation. This process includes senior management assessing its own performance in effecting developments that are beneficial to pupils' overall academic and co-curricular progress.

- 5.6 Strong emphasis is placed on the appointment of high quality staff and their induction, which is designed to ensure their full understanding of how the school operates and to enable new staff to benefit from the support of experienced colleagues. Professional development is fostered largely within the school, but it also draws on external expertise for whole-staff training and the introduction of new initiatives. Lesson observation is extensively developed, both formally by senior staff and informally by arrangement among colleagues teaching related subjects. Non-teaching staff, who are loyal and dedicated, make an outstanding contribution to pupils' personal and academic development through their support roles within the school community. The recruitment and selection of staff receive close attention, and all those working with children are suitably checked in accordance with the necessary procedures, which are carefully followed and include the particular requirements for staff in a boarding school. The central register of appointments is fully robust. Senior staff are suitably trained in their roles to safeguard the welfare, health and safety of pupils.

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

- 5.7 Links between the school and parents are a real strength and underpin the academic and personal development aims of the school. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that parents are highly supportive of the school. They were particularly pleased with: pastoral care; behaviour; attitudes promoted; pupils' progress; the range of subjects offered and the co-curricular activities available; areas of experience offered; the information available; the way that concerns are dealt with; the ease of communication; and the governance and management of the school. No significant issues were raised but a little concern was expressed over the provision for special needs and the content of work pupils have to do at home. The inspection found little evidence to support these concerns.
- 5.8 Parents are welcomed into school on a regular basis, and attendance at sporting events, concerts and drama productions, in particular, is high. Popular evening classes are run for parents in several areas, including study and thinking skills, jewellery and print making, sculpture and photography. They are also invited to help with various activities and trips. The PA is strongly involved in social activities and fund-raising for extra items of equipment, and produces the well-regarded Parents' School Directory.
- 5.9 Annual parents' evenings are provided for all year groups, and option evenings are organised for Years 9 and 11. All parents are sent written reports and academic grade assessments on a regular basis, giving a clear indication of their children's progress during the year. Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with all relevant information about the school. Parents of current pupils receive regular newsletters that highlight the successes of the pupils, both in and out of school. Other information is available in the annual school magazine and on the website, and the increasing use of the email Clarion Call system has provided parents with ready communication with the school. The required statutory information, including policies and procedures, is openly posted on the school website for parents of current and prospective pupils. The headmaster and senior staff meet parental representatives regularly to share information and the school has

sent out parental questionnaires on several occasions in recent years. Parents are encouraged to make immediate contact if concerns arise. The school is committed to making a prompt response, and issues are handled with appropriate care and attention. A willingness to adapt practice is evident where a concern reveals the possibility of change that is advantageous to the school community.

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



## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| Mr Neil Gamble           | Reporting Inspector                             |
| Dr Eric Boston           | Team Inspector (Head of Department, ISA school) |
| Mrs Margaret Burnet-Ward | Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)               |
| Mr Magnus Cowie          | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)        |
| Mr Paul Clark            | Team inspector (Head of Department, HMC school) |
| Mrs Fiona McGill         | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)        |