



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
MILTON ABBEY SCHOOL**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Milton Abbey School

Full Name of School	Milton Abbey School		
DfE Number	835/6015		
Registered Charity Number	306318		
Address	Milton Abbey School Blandford Forum Dorset DT11 0BZ		
Telephone Number	01258 880484		
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Email Address	hmpa@miltonabbey.co.uk		
Head	Mr Magnus Bashaarat		
Chair of Governors	Mr James Barnes		
Age Range	13 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	225		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (174 boys; 51 girls)		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	11	
Number of Boarders	Total:	214	
	Full:	214	Weekly: 0
Inspection Dates	17 to 20 March 2015		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspections were in November 2010, followed by an Intermediate Boarding Inspection in March 2013.

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.

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration and tutorial sessions and services in the abbey church. Inspectors visited all the boarding houses, the school farm, the library and the medical centre. 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 Rodney Fox	Reporting Inspector
Mr Geoffrey Hill	Team Inspector (Former Director of Music, HMC school)
Mr Roger Shaw	Team Inspector (Senior Master, HMC school)
Mr John Tuson	Team Inspector (Academic Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Jean Gray	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Miss Margaret Pepper	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Head, ISA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Milton Abbey School was founded in 1954, on a site containing a gothic abbey church, established in 993, and a neo-gothic mansion, dating from the 18th century, in a valley landscaped by Capability Brown. It is located close to the market town of Blandford Forum, in north Dorset. Established as a boys' boarding school, over the last ten years it has undergone a staged transition to full co-education, with girls entering all year groups from September 2014. Today it is a boarding school, with a few day pupils, catering for just over 200 pupils aged between 13 and 19 years. The school is an educational charity governed by its trustees.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a carefully structured and unusually broad curriculum, to enable each pupil to achieve their academic potential and develop the skills necessary for the world of work and life in the 21st century, together with a wide range of sporting and cultural activities, to enable each pupil to lead a fulfilling and rewarding school life. To this end, in addition to GCSE and A-level courses, the school offers a range of vocational courses, many of them based in the school's own farm, and substantial support for those with particular learning needs. The aim is to place the individual at the centre of the school experience and, through the school's small size, to promote confidence and self-esteem in a happy, caring and supportive environment that inculcates values of compassion, tolerance and respect, and in which every pupil feels valued and understood.
- 1.3 The headmaster has been in post since January 2014. Since the previous full inspection, in addition to becoming fully co-educational, the school has opened two new boarding houses and joined the Round Square association of schools committed to the IDEALS of internationalism, democracy, environmentalism, adventure, leadership and service.
- 1.4 Of the 225 pupils in the school at the time of the inspection, all but 11 were boarders and 101 (81 boys and 20 girls) were in Years 12 or 13. Pupils come from a wide range of backgrounds, mostly from families living in England. About one in seven come from overseas, with no one nationality predominating. Pupils joining the school are seeking a curriculum that can be adapted to match their varied individual needs and circumstances.
- 1.5 Standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of pupils in Years 9 to 11 is broadly in line with the national average, although some cohorts are of slightly below average ability, and with a wide spread of ability within year groups. The ability profile of pupils in Years 12 and 13 is below the national average for pupils in sixth-form education. Six pupils have a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care (EHC) plan. The school has identified a further 121 pupils as having a special educational need and/or disability (SEND), of whom 92 receive specialist learning support for a variety of learning disabilities, ranging from those with mild dyslexia to some with acute learning difficulties. English is an additional language (EAL) for 32 pupils, 18 of whom receive specialist help.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) 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 equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10

Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Middle Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Milton Abbey is highly successful in achieving its aim to enable each pupil to achieve their academic potential and develop the skills necessary for the world of work and life in the 21st century. At all stages of the school, pupils are enabled to gain the self-belief necessary to enable them to make good progress and achieve standards in their work and other activities that are good in relation to their particular needs and abilities. Internet access restrictions can sometimes limit opportunities for independent research. The unusually broad curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent. A very flexible curriculum allows individual pupils to choose a learning pathway that meets their needs, often by taking a mixture of GCSE, A-level and vocational courses. This, together with the generally excellent quality of the teaching and the highly effective learning support available, is a significant factor in the success achieved by the pupils, particularly in the more practical areas of the curriculum.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent, strongly promoted by the excellent quality of the boarding and the strong pastoral care and guidance available. Pupils are confident, articulate and tolerant. They exhibit the British values of respect for one another, democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and tolerance in their communal life. They are considerate, courteous and proud of their school. Boarding provision is excellent. Pupils enjoy boarding and feel safe in their houses. Pastoral care is excellent. Pupils find their teachers helpful and can join in a good range of activities. The teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) in all-age groups sometimes limits opportunities for age-appropriate discussion. The arrangements made to promote welfare, health and safety, including child protection and the safe recruitment of staff, are good and all policies and procedures are rigorously implemented, although detailed records of relevant staff training are not maintained.
- 2.3 The governance, leadership and management of the school are excellent. A very committed governing body and a newly-established senior management team are proving highly effective in providing leadership and direction. A very large majority of the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were satisfied or very satisfied with the school and with the manner in which it treats their children as individuals. The recommendations of the previous inspections, a standard inspection in November 2010, followed by an intermediate boarding inspection in March 2013, have all been fully met.

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Endure that the teaching of PSHE facilitates discussion of issues at an age-appropriate depth.
 2. Make sure that restrictions on internet access do not inhibit unduly the pupils' independent academic research.
 3. Maintain a detailed record of staff who have received safeguarding training so as to be certain that no-one has been accidentally omitted.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The pupils' achievements and learning are good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aim to enable each pupil to achieve their academic potential and develop the skills necessary for the world of the 21st century. Pupils, who come with widely different educational backgrounds and needs, often after suffering a negative experience of education elsewhere, are enabled to rebuild the foundations of their knowledge and skills, as well as the self-confidence needed in order to progress. They secure suitable levels of knowledge and understanding in all the required areas of the curriculum, according to their abilities and particular learning needs. Virtually all pupils, including those with SEND, leave the school having acquired Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) or A-level qualifications, or with a mixture of both, a majority having secured a place in tertiary education. Individual pupils achieve excellence in a range of activities and sports, including sailing and riding, the national youth music theatre, the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), catering competitions and playing representative rugby and hockey at county and regional levels. The school has performed at the Edinburgh Festival for the last two years and competed successfully in the Ten Tors challenge. Individual pupils take responsibility for aspects of the school farm and stables.
- 3.3 In lessons and in their books and files, pupils mostly demonstrate good levels of attainment. They can often articulate confidently ideas that they find difficult to express clearly on paper. In practical skills, art, photography, music, drama, countryside management, equine care or hospitality, they show good levels of creativity and independence that are less evident in a classroom situation. Mostly they acquire suitable levels of numeracy and literacy, but there are a number who need assistance with writing examinations, or who process written information more slowly than is required in examinations. The analysis that follows uses national data for the years 2011 to 2013, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in both GCSE and A level have been below the national average for maintained schools. Results in 2014 were broadly in line with those in the previous three years. Over the last three years, the proportion of BTEC entries awarded the equivalent to an A* to C grade A-level qualification has been above the national average. Based on the work seen in lessons and in books and files, the inspection judgement is that, throughout the school, pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of their needs and abilities. The most able pupils, some of whom also have SEND, progress appropriately for their abilities, as is apparent, for example, in art, music and drama, as well as from their gaining offers at prestigious universities. The small number of pupils with EAL rapidly acquire English language skills and also progress well according to their abilities, benefitting from the small class sizes and individual help available.
- 3.4 The pupils have excellent attitudes towards their work. They are anxious to succeed, take pride in their work and apply themselves well in class. They are co-operative and relate well to their teachers. Many have only limited learning skills and depend on their teachers to provide a carefully structured learning experience, to which they respond well. They demonstrate good ability to search out information for themselves, although the restricted internet access available can impede them. They are rarely academically challenging in class, although often perceptive in their observations.

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

- 3.5 The contribution of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.6 The curriculum is broad and responsive to the very specific needs of those it serves. The school thus richly fulfils its aim of providing a carefully structured and broad curriculum, enabling each pupil to achieve their academic potential while also developing skills appropriate to the world of the 21st century.
- 3.7 Pupils in Years 9 to 11 receive a balanced curriculum, which is effective in its coverage of all the requisite areas of learning, with science being particularly generously provided. Pupils are provided with a variety of pathways at each stage of their school lives, with a number of carefully selected BTEC courses which enable progress to be made in areas such as equine studies and countryside management, starting at subsidiary level in Year 10. The BTEC courses chosen frequently take advantage of the school's rural setting and extensive grounds. In Years 12 and 13, pupils are encouraged to select a balanced choice of subjects, often marrying A-level and BTEC courses, to achieve the overall programme in which their success is most likely. Each A-level course, or its equivalent, is taught for four hours a week, a relatively low allocation, compensated by the small class sizes. The curriculum is highly flexible. It is shaped to the needs and, where possible, the preferences of individual pupils, with, for example, further mathematics and electronics being made available to individuals who wish to study them. The provision of learning support is excellent, and the organisation of the curriculum enables pupils with SEND to flourish. The PSHE programme is taught by tutors to all-age tutor groups and, while this has many advantages, it can sometimes inhibit discussion at an age-appropriate depth. The school is aware of this and is already investigating other arrangements. British values are implicit to the way in which the school operates; although not a discrete topic within the curriculum, they are actively promoted and lived throughout the school. The curriculum in Years 12 and 13 is enriched by a series of 'headmaster's lectures', which cover a range of contemporary ethical, political and cultural issues in a balanced and non-partisan programme.
- 3.8 Sport is an important part of life at Milton Abbey. Excellent facilities, including a swimming pool, two gymnasiums, a golf course, a squash court, an all-weather pitch, a sports hall and a number of outdoor pitches, are used during thrice-weekly sessions, which also see pupils using facilities away from school. Pupils have excellent opportunities to discover areas in which they can excel, while a very large proportion of the pupils represent the school in team sports. The CCF is vibrant. All pupils in Year 10 participate, as do about half of those in Year 11. A large number of pupils take part in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils in Year 9 experience a carousel of activities, including mountain biking, film making, sailing and yoga. Both parents and pupils, in their questionnaire responses, recognised the wide range of extra-curricular activities available.
- 3.9 The school has an extensive range of community links, local, national and international. Members of the local community join pupils to perform choral works in the abbey three times a year. The school's actors have recently performed in a joint production with a local amateur dramatic group in the school's theatre. Links have been developed with a professional football club which have resulted in coaching sessions, for girls in particular. Funds have been raised for charities, local and national, chosen through a democratic vote. Pupils from the school have travelled overseas, as part of the Round Square programme, to liaise with pupils from other schools.

- 3.10 Pupils frequently leave the school campus on educational trips, for example to theatres in Bath or Stratford-upon-Avon, or to more local country shows and game fairs. The school's membership of the Round Square group acts as a catalyst for the way in which some of its extra-curricular programme is directed. For example, pupils recently travelled to Morocco, to participate in an international drama festival, and spend time with local families. Preparations are underway for a visit to Kenya in the summer holiday.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The contribution of teaching throughout the school is excellent.
- 3.12 The great majority of lessons are carefully planned, based on good knowledge and taught at a suitable pace. Most are matched closely to the abilities of the pupils, although a small minority of the lessons observed was unambitious in the challenge offered. Lessons are highly structured but the best also leave scope for the pupils to develop independence. This is particularly evident in the more practical areas. Since the previous inspection the focus on classroom teaching has been increased and the current high standards make a significant contribution to pupils' progress and achievement in accordance with the school's aims.
- 3.13 Classroom behaviour is well managed and pupils are highly engaged in lessons. The excellent relationship between teachers and pupils is a major factor in promoting progress, as well as fostering the school's ethos of tolerance and respect for the ideas and opinions of other people. Class sizes are small, some extremely small, and this allows teachers to meet the pupils' learning needs very well and sensitively to tailor the guidance they give to individuals. Teachers give freely of their time, providing substantial additional support outside lessons to those who need it, as was appreciated by pupils responding to the questionnaire.
- 3.14 Marking in books and files is typically thorough and feedback stickers are used constructively by teachers to suggest areas to focus on and to encourage pupils to reflect on their work. Written reports, which are sent home to parents two or three times a term, are very detailed and written to aid pupils' progress.
- 3.15 Very good use is made of technology to enhance teaching in a number of subjects, which meets a recommendation in the previous inspection report. In many cases it is used to provide an effective visual aid, but in others as an intrinsic part of the pupils' learning, as in a music technology lesson for pupils in Year 10 using a composing package. In an information technology lesson observed, pupils learnt how to code a game of their own devising. Pupils use the internet effectively as a tool for research, although the strict filtering system blocks some useful sites and the procedure for a pupil to request that a site is unblocked takes time.
- 3.16 The school has an extremely well-staffed and well-qualified learning support department which provides additional help in lessons as well as individual support outside lessons. A core group of pupils in each lower school year receives learning support lessons instead of modern foreign language teaching. Teachers have good access to details of pupils' individual learning needs and they use this information effectively to tailor their lessons appropriately, meeting another recommendation of the previous inspection report. Suitable help is given to pupils with EAL both in class and by the learning support department. The school meets all provisions set out in the learning plans of pupils with statements or EHC plans.

- 3.17 The small class sizes enable the needs of more able pupils to be met by posing them more challenging questions in class or through the provision of extension activities. Where possible, additional subjects such as further mathematics are made available to provide additional challenge. Some subjects, mathematics and languages, for example, are taught in groups selected by ability to enable pupils to progress more rapidly according to their stage of development.

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 pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' personal development is strong, and amply fulfils the school's aim to prepare pupils for life in the 21st century. Pupils throughout the school demonstrate a high level of spiritual awareness. They are at ease with themselves and their place in the world. Often having come to the school with low self-esteem, they rapidly develop a sense of self-worth and the confidence needed to progress. They talk appreciatively about the beauty of their surroundings and recognise the Christian values and care for others that are central to the ethos of the school. Pupils of all faiths and none participate whole-heartedly in services held in the abbey church, singing lustily and many of them playing an active part in reading, leading intercessions and, during the inspection, leading the whole service, including giving the address. The pupils' sense of wonder is evident in their responses to the creative arts, in art displays, dramatic and musical performances, as is their understanding of the cycle of life from their involvement in rearing animals on the farm.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is strong. Pupils in Year 11, for example, discussing the ethical issues surrounding energy generation using wind turbines, were well informed and perceptive. Pupils have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong and the importance of rules. They understand and respect the law of the land and the democratic principles on which it is based. Their behaviour towards one another is considerate and tolerant. Older pupils lead by example and the peer mentors and senior pupils selected to hold positions of responsibility for the well-being of others in the community are highly regarded.
- 4.4 The social development of pupils is excellent. Pupils learn to live alongside each other in supportive house communities. They have a strong sense of responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves and readily engage in fundraising activities to support their two chosen charities. Pupils in Year 12, who are not members of the CCF, are involved in community service: currently they organise a toddlers' group. Pupils willingly take on school or house responsibilities and exercise them reliably.
- 4.5 Pupils have a strong understanding of their own and different cultures. They are aware of the principal institutions and public services of the United Kingdom. British values are intrinsic to the way the school conducts itself and pupils acquire a thorough grounding in western European culture through the high quality of the drama, art and music that they encounter. Only a small minority of the pupils come from abroad but there are no apparent cultural tensions between pupils and a good deal of understanding of each other's background and beliefs. For those who participate, trips abroad allow pupils to experience different life styles at first hand. For instance, a party is going to work on a project in Kenya later this year, one of a number of trips planned. Membership of the Round Square association enables pupils to meet pupils from other schools across the world and participate in community project work, enhancing their cultural understanding.
- 4.6 By the time that they leave school, pupils' personal development is excellent. They are confident, courteous, articulate and caring young people, with a strong social conscience and an appreciation of the wider world. They are notably tolerant and

respectful of other people. They are well prepared to lead happy and fulfilling lives. They are proud of their school and its central part in their lives.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Staff work tirelessly to provide high-level pastoral care, based on a thorough knowledge of each pupil. The culture of support pervades all areas of the school, and was appreciated by pupils and their parents in their questionnaire responses. The pupils feel safe and well looked after, and parents agree with this view.
- 4.9 Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, are excellent. Pupils know that staff can be approached if a problem or dilemma arises. The extensive network of support is based on tutor groups in houses, backed up by house staff, heads of houses and mentors. Also available in support are the staff of the medical centre, a counsellor and an independent listener.
- 4.10 Pupils are encouraged to take regular physical exercise and a wide choice is available. In their responses to the pupils' questionnaire, a small minority expressed concern that the school does not seek their views or respond to them. This view was not supported by pupils at interviews and further inspection evidence revealed good opportunities for pupils to express their views, including house and school councils and the food committee, as well as the 'open-door' policy practised by senior staff.
- 4.11 In their responses to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils felt that staff are inconsistent in the way that they award sanctions; a few felt that rewards are also a problem. The inspection found that the school is effective in promoting high standards of behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying, including cyber-bullying. Good, clear policies are implemented to ensure that pupils can live safely in the school community. The school does not tolerate bullying and prompt action is taken if it does occur. Examination of records showed that rewards and sanctions are appropriately used and monitored.
- 4.12 An appropriate accessibility plan is in place, which includes measures to improve educational access for those with SEND.

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

- 4.13 The arrangements made for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.14 The school has a detailed safeguarding policy, which has been amended so as to comply fully with the most recent regulations. It is carefully implemented, with all staff being properly inducted and trained in child protection, although records of those who have received training have not been maintained in a comprehensive manner. Good links are established with local safeguarding agencies so as to facilitate referrals or the seeking of advice when necessary. Procedures to ensure the safe recruitment of staff are rigorously implemented and scrupulously recorded on a single central register.
- 4.15 The school has an effective fire prevention policy and procedures, which comply fully with the regulations. Fire evacuation practices are conducted regularly, including in all boarding houses at least once every term, with some in 'boarding time'. Fire risk assessment is thorough.

- 4.16 The management of measures to promote welfare, health and safety is meticulous. All necessary checks and maintenance are carried out regularly and properly recorded. A programme of bringing risk assessments up-to-date and of training relevant staff in how to conduct risk assessments is well underway. Appropriate arrangements are made to ensure the health and safety of injured or sick pupils, and those with SEND, including, where necessary, the preparation of a personal emergency evacuation plan. Suitable guidance is given to staff planning out-of-school trips and expeditions to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to minimise risk.
- 4.17 The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained, copied and stored for three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.18 The outcomes for boarders are excellent.
- 4.19 Boarding makes a very positive contribution to the boarders' excellent personal development. The school successfully achieves its aims to place the individual at the centre of the school experience and to promote confidence and self-esteem in a happy, caring and supportive environment. Individuality is respected and each boarder is seen as a valued member of the school community by both staff and pupils. Overseas boarders are well integrated, and make fast progress in speaking English. Those with SEND receive focused support, including help in the evenings when often an online homework package is a useful tool in managing prep.
- 4.20 In their questionnaire responses, boarders were unanimous that they enjoy boarding. A small minority felt that the school does not listen to their opinions, but inspectors found that boarders are able to participate in and make a positive contribution to the community in numerous ways; for example, through the food committee or house and school councils. Senior boarders have clearly defined roles and are a very reliable help for the staff as well as role models and mentors for younger pupils.
- 4.21 In an atmosphere of mutual trust, very relaxed and positive relationships exist amongst the boarders themselves and between boarders and the hard-working and committed boarding staff. With tutors attached to houses, and a generous quota of resident staff, boarders say that they find it very easy to turn to someone if they have problems, and they would have no hesitation in reporting unacceptable behaviour. They have easy and confidential access to a school counsellor and helpline numbers are displayed on house notice boards, together with a contact number for an independent listener who is known to them.
- 4.22 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent.
- 4.23 New boarders are quickly put at their ease by a very effective induction system. Careful thought went into the design of the two new boarding houses, and the refurbishment of the other three is an on-going programme. Boarders feel at home in bright and comfortable rooms where a purposeful working environment is promoted. Senior pupils have single rooms, and the provision of showers and toilets is good. Many pupils take advantage of the opportunities to personalise their space, some with great artistic flair and ingenuity. Problems with heating and window restrictors identified in the last inspection have been satisfactorily resolved. All houses now have large common rooms that are the hub of community life. Well-equipped house kitchens allow pupils to prepare snacks. Drinking water is always

available and correctly labelled. The house matrons have locked cupboards for the safe storage of over-the-counter medicines and controlled drugs. School meals are eaten in the historic 700-year old Abbot's Hall, continuing the original function of a refectory. Although in their questionnaire responses a small minority of boarders expressed concerns about food, inspectors found an interesting choice of food, both hot and cold, with the popular options of sandwiches and baguettes at lunchtime. Special diets are well catered for. Boarders are very appreciative of the snacks available in the houses, particularly the bacon baps served at morning break.

- 4.24 In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a small minority of boarders said that there were problems in contacting family and friends. Inspectors found that the mobile telephone signal on the school campus is very weak, but the school makes communications with parents in other ways as easy as possible. For example, house phones can be operated by prepaid swipe cards, and a dedicated broadband link for video-conferencing has been set up. Through newspapers and the internet pupils have good access to the outside world and their friends. Boarders' health is supported by the 24-hour medical care provided in the excellently resourced medical centre. Doctors hold surgeries in school, and arrangements can be made for boarders to go off site to visit the surgery and other health professionals. Clear protocols are in place for the safe storage and dispensing of medicinal drugs.
- 4.25 Fire drills take place regularly in boarding time, and any problems highlighted by these are logged and swiftly resolved. A small minority of pupils expressed concern about the balance of free and directed time, but inspectors judged that the wide extent of the activities programme is appropriate. At the weekends, trips to local attractions and social visits to other schools are greatly appreciated, as well as the opportunity for pupils to have time to themselves, sometimes just walking in the extensive grounds. The matrons supervise the efficient collection and return of laundry. Washing machines are available in houses. Everyday items can be bought at school; weekend visits to local towns enable more specialised purchases. A small minority of boarders felt that their belongings were not safe. Inspectors found that the school provides them with suitable opportunities for secure storage. Lockable spaces are provided in every room, and house staff operate banks and look after valuables in the house safe.
- 4.26 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is good.
- 4.27 Procedures for safeguarding are rigorous, and all staff are suitably trained in child protection. Good behaviour is promoted with the support of positive incentives and the atmosphere in the houses encourages it. Procedures for countering bullying, including cyber-bullying, should it occur are seen as effective by the boarders who are confident in them. Regular call-overs for registration occur and ensure that staff are always aware of the whereabouts of boarders. They are conversant with the procedures to be followed in the case of a missing boarder.
- 4.28 All boarders benefit from the ample provision of well-qualified resident staff. The 24-hour presence of adults in the houses helps ensure that visitors understand the limits of their access. Staff accommodation in the houses is appropriately separate, but boarders can easily contact staff at night. All resident adults who are not employed by the school have suitable written agreements. Risk assessments covering all aspects of school life are regularly revised.
- 4.29 The leadership and management of the houses are excellent.

- 4.30 The highly caring and enthusiastic house staff are proud of their houses. They run them efficiently and sensitively in line with the boarding aims. Regular meetings of the deputy head with house staff, and their communications with the house teams, including tutors, produce consistency in management and effective links between the academic and pastoral aspects of the school.
- 4.31 The senior leaders are fully informed and involved with life in the houses. Boarders' pastoral and academic records are mostly kept electronically, and the maintenance and monitoring of these, together with the daily house information sent to the deputy head, ensure effective care of pupils. Governors visit the boarding houses regularly and monitor the National Minimum Standards for boarding. There is a very full system of induction for new members of staff and an effective system of appraisal, which encompasses house responsibilities.
- 4.32 In response to questionnaires, an overwhelming number of parents thought that the school keeps their children safe and treats them as individuals.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The school benefits from committed, experienced and suitably qualified governors. Through their committee structure governors are able to exercise effective oversight of all appropriate areas of school life, including educational standards. They have recently reviewed their own structure and organisation in order to discharge more effectively their responsibilities for education, finance, risk management, operational efficiency and resources. Individual governors take responsibility for key areas such as child protection and health and safety, whilst the chairman is in regular contact with the headmaster, providing support and advice as appropriate.
- 5.3 Governors are well known in the school because, as part of their commitment, they are expected to take part in a regular cycle of one-day visits to the school, to meet people, watch lessons and visit departments. Consequently, they do have good insight into the working of the school to enable them to provide effective support, challenge and stimulus for the staff.
- 5.4 The governors are meticulous in their oversight of the child protection policy. The policy and its implementation are reviewed annually, as required. Minutes of the governors' meetings reveal that the board members questioned the members of staff, including the designated senior lead, thoroughly about the policy and its implementation, before adopting the policy. Health and safety form a significant part of the bursar's termly report to the governors, and the governor representative on the health and safety committee also keeps the board aware of any safety matters that have arisen.

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

- 5.5 The leadership and management of the school, including links with parents and others, are excellent.
- 5.6 The leadership and management of the school are highly effective in securing the aims of the school and in the discharge of their responsibilities. Communication between the leadership team and managers at all levels and in all parts of the school is excellent. Weekly reports from department heads to the senior management regarding departmental issues, and heads of houses making similar reports on a daily basis, ensure that any concerns are speedily identified and responded to. Robust oversight ensures that policies are consistently implemented and that regulatory compliance is maintained, particularly with respect to the safeguarding of pupils. By nature of the size of the school, regular contact amongst pastoral teams and members of academic departments is such that there is a constant and very effective platform for dialogue.
- 5.7 The good quality of the pupils' education and the excellent standard of their personal development, are evidence of highly proficient educational management and leadership. The systems of care for pupils are strong, and result in a happy supportive and inclusive community. The ethos that is promoted is reflected in the pupils' positive attitudes towards each other and their awareness of the importance

of tolerance, respect for other people and support for the principle of democracy. A very large majority of the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they believe that the school is well led and managed. The school has addressed the recommendation of the previous report to develop the management of academic departments. An academic management team, which includes some heads of department, is led by the director of studies and meets regularly specifically to consider teaching and learning. Heads of department have regular meetings to discuss whole-school academic strategies. Scrutiny of pupils' work, marking audits and lesson observations all contribute to clear leadership and educational direction.

- 5.8 Leadership and management are skilled in self-evaluation, setting priorities and achieving them. A comprehensive and detailed strategic plan, covering all aspects of the school, incorporating marketing and infra-structure, teaching and learning, pastoral care and the total curriculum, clearly identifies current priorities and longer-term plans to improve facilities.
- 5.9 Management is highly successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high-quality staff. The appraisal system is efficiently managed and staff are well supported in their continuing professional development. All staff receive regular and appropriate training for their roles and in meeting the needs of pupils in safeguarding and in welfare, health and safety.
- 5.10 Links with parents are excellent. Questionnaire responses suggest that parents are highly satisfied with the education and support provided for their children; they state their children are safe, happy, are thriving and are growing in self-esteem.
- 5.11 The school maintains very constructive relationships with parents in accordance with its aims. A very small minority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their concerns are not handled well, and that the school's response is not quick enough. Inspectors found that the school has an appropriate procedure for handling complaints which is available to all parents. Examination of the complaints file indicated that records of complaints are detailed and clear and follow the school procedures in a timely manner. An overwhelming majority of parents responding to the questionnaire said that they would recommend the school.
- 5.12 Considering the distance from the school at which many families live, parents have numerous opportunities to be actively involved in the education of their children including watching them perform and play sport. The parent-teacher committee, with representatives from each year group, meets termly. All parents are informed of the meeting and are asked for any issues they would like to be raised. The parents' association was established in 2014 with the aim of arranging a wide range of events and activities for parents, which enable them to meet each other in informal social settings. Events and dinners are held both at school and in London. A weekend trip to the champagne region of France is being planned. Parents are invited to a dinner hosted by the headmaster on the evening prior to a parent/teacher meeting for their child. Opportunity is provided for house staff and tutors to meet the parents in a social and less formal context.
- 5.13 High-quality information is provided to parents of current and prospective pupils. An informative monthly e-bulletin newsletter is sent to all parents. A social media account has been established which is used on a daily basis to provide information about school news. The parent portal is an interactive view into a child's life at the school, including an online homework package which enables pupils to share their set assignments and completed work with family members.

- 5.14 A very small proportion of questionnaire responses said that parents wanted better information about their child's progress. Inspection evidence shows that the reports issued to parents are frequent, clear and useful. All reports show effort and attainment grades for work completed in class and for prep. Grades are given for organisation, behaviour and punctuality. End-of-term reports include full comments from subject staff and house staff. These comments are constructive, personalised and give clear targets.

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