



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ROYAL HOSPITAL SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Royal Hospital School

Full Name of School	Royal Hospital School		
DCSF Number	935/6056		
Registered Charity Number	N/A (part of Crown Charity)		
Address	Royal Hospital School Holbrook Ipswich Suffolk IP9 2RX		
Telephone Number	01473 326200		
Fax Number	01473 326213		
Email Address	headmaster@royalhospitalschool.org		
Headmaster	Mr Howard W Blackett		
Chair of Governors	Mr Henry Strutt		
Age Range	11 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	676		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (392 boys; 284 girls;)		
Numbers by Age	11-16:	423	
	16-18:	253	
Number of Day Pupils	107	Capacity for flexi-boarding:	0
Number of Boarders	Total:	569	
	Full:		Weekly: 0
Inspection date/initial	02 Feb 2010 to 03 Feb 2010		
Final (team) visit	01 Mar 2010 to 03 Mar 2010		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. It 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 March 2006.

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 March 2009 and can be found at 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 The Royal Hospital School is a co-educational boarding and day school. It aims to provide a civilised, caring, Christian community, based upon reasonable behaviour, mutual respect, value, trust and courtesy between staff and pupils. It wishes to help pupils to develop their full potential with their academic work, in games and outdoor pursuits, in music, drama, artistic, cultural and other practical activities, depending on their aptitude and interests, and to encourage the development of qualities such as personal responsibility, honesty, reliability, truthfulness, integrity, independence, adaptability, perseverance, initiative and self-confidence. The school has strong naval connections, all pupils wear naval style uniform for ceremonial occasions and many learn to sail. The school is part of the Crown Charity, Greenwich Hospital, but its governance is mainly devolved to the school's own governing body.
- 1.2 Founded in 1712 by the Greenwich Hospital for the education of the sons of seafarers, it moved to its present 200 acre site at Holbrook, near Ipswich, in 1933. The first girls were admitted in 1991 and day pupils were accepted in 2006. Since the previous ISI inspection in 2006, seven boarding houses have been refurbished, with separate houses established for pupils in Years 7 and 8, and a new music school has been built.
- 1.3 The school has 676 pupils on roll, 392 boys and 284 girls, and 569 of these are full boarders; 423 pupils are aged 11 to 16 years and the sixth form has 253 pupils aged 16 to 18 years. The ability profile of the school is above the national average, but encompasses a relatively wide range. Most pupils are recruited from the UK, with about one in ten boarders from overseas. Fifty-nine pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and 45 of these are receiving specialist support. No pupil has a statement of special educational need, but the school has identified 65 pupils who may require general support because of learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and 43 of these receive specialist support.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils of all abilities achieve well in their academic studies and extra-curricular activities. They are articulate, confident and capable of independent thought. Pupils have good literacy skills, a sound understanding of mathematics and use information and communication technology (ICT) competently. In GCSE and A-level examinations they achieve high results when compared with the national average for pupils in all maintained schools. Their progress is good in relation to their above average ability. The pupils' positive attitude to their studies, very good behaviour, excellent relationships and the good teaching contribute to their overall success. They benefit enormously from the extensive range of high quality extra-curricular activities, particularly in music and sports.
- 2.2 The pupils have outstanding personal qualities and the school meets its aims in this respect. The houses are at the heart of the school community; their friendly, family ethos fosters the pupils' loyalty and respect. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibilities and to show leadership, for example, as peer supporters, heads of house, members of school council, prefects or in the combined cadet force (CCF). Pupils take pride in their school and its traditions and enjoy being there. Community action and charitable fund-raising activities enable them to contribute in a purposeful way. The high quality of pastoral care and the commitment of the staff ensure a happy and fulfilling educational experience.
- 2.3 The strong ethos of the school is clearly overseen by the senior management team and the governing body. They are committed to the personal development of the pupils and to raising academic achievement. The school has carried out almost all of the recommendations of the previous inspection, and has plans to complete the remainder. It has also taken swift and satisfactory action to rectify the recently identified regulatory shortcomings. The school has significantly refurbished much of its boarding accommodation and completed a new music building. However, it has been undergoing a period of very rapid structural change, causing disquiet among parents and pupils, especially about the changes to houses. Some staff, including middle managers, have become slightly overwhelmed by the number of new initiatives and have not felt fully consulted. A small minority of parents reported that they did not feel encouraged to be involved in school life and expressed dissatisfaction at the support for the gifted and talented and those with learning difficulties. The inspection findings do not support these views, except with reference to developing further challenge for gifted and talented pupils.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended, and therefore it was required to:
- ensure that criminal record checks are carried out on all newly appointed staff and that references are always requested and verified [Regulations 3.(2)(b), 4.(2)(a), (b) and (e), under Welfare, health and safety and Suitability of staff and proprietors].

2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report. The very small number of missing Criminal Records Bureau checks had been carried out and the outstanding reference checks had been completed.

(ii) Recommended action

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. communicate more effectively with, and involve, the school community when major changes are made;
2. ensure that the most able pupils are extended, and pupils of all ages are motivated to learn more independently.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Standards are high. Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims. They are articulate, confident and capable of independent thought. Results in GCSE and A-level examinations over the last three years for which nationally comparative data are available have been high when compared with the national average for pupils in all maintained schools. Almost all pupils gained five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including English and mathematics. At A level two-thirds of all entries achieved A or B grades. They write fluently and most have very good literacy skills. They listen attentively in class and carry out instructions carefully. Pupils work very well together and show great concentration and perseverance when tackling tasks individually. Their practical skills, for example in art, drama, design and technology (DT), physical education and science, are strong. They enjoy opportunities to use their creativity and produce high quality work in the arts, drama, DT, English and music. Their ICT skills are well developed and they use these effectively to research and produce written work and to make presentations. Most pupils have a sound understanding of mathematics and can apply this knowledge well in other areas.
- 3.2 Pupils make good progress over time in relation to their ability, which is above the national average. They develop good powers of analysis and reasoning and can apply them in less familiar contexts. In order to meet its aim of helping pupils to develop their full academic potential, the school has identified and is beginning to implement appropriate strategies to extend the most able and to encourage more independent learning. Pupils apply themselves well and show interest in their academic work, some developing a genuine passion for particular subjects.
- 3.3 The school enjoys many individual, group and team successes in a wide range of sports, music and other activities. Pupils have regularly achieved success in national mathematics challenges and some have gained awards in the prestigious national Maths Olympiad. Not only do many individual pupils do well in instrumental music examinations, but the 130-strong school choir has national renown and was chosen to sing in the Royal Albert Hall Christmas Concert with the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra. The school band has also performed to a high standard at a variety of ceremonial and other less formal occasions. Teams and individuals have achieved sporting success at county, regional and national level in athletics, cricket, cross-country running, rugby and sailing. Pupils make the most of the many opportunities provided for them and the support of the committed staff, and they strive to excel.

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

- 3.4 Curriculum provision is good. The school's broad curriculum and very wide range of extra-curricular activities enable the pupils to develop personal strengths and achieve well in a variety of areas, in line with the aims of the school. An appropriate range of languages, science, the humanities, practical and creative subjects is included. A well-planned, separate programme of personal, social, health and environmental education (PSHEE) includes relevant topics for pupils of all ages. Pupils benefit from specialist careers guidance from Year 10, although the school does not provide opportunities for formal work experience. New A-level subjects

have recently been introduced to reflect the pupils' interests and abilities, for example, film studies, history of art, psychology and textiles. In response to the previous inspection, changes to the structure of the school day have provided a better balance between curricular and extra-curricular activities. Movement around the school has been reduced, sixth-form pupils have longer periods in which to focus on independent study and younger pupils are able to use all the facilities for activities while older pupils are in lessons.

- 3.5 The education is suitable for the ages, abilities and needs of the pupils. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection in providing appropriate support for pupils with LDD and EAL. Many of these pupils receive specialist individual teaching and a detailed register contains useful information and guidance for other teaching staff. Subject departments have begun to identify gifted and talented pupils and to provide some opportunities for further challenge within the curriculum; in addition, the lecture programme for scholars and other extra-curricular events have improved support for able pupils.
- 3.6 The extensive range of extra-curricular activities is extremely successful in meeting the school's aim to develop the pupils' talents and interests to the full. All staff contribute to the provision of activities that enrich the sporting, creative and cultural life of the school. Since the previous inspection, a growing number of clubs and societies have been linked to specific subject areas to provide enrichment opportunities. The CCF continues to be a great strength of the school and, with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, plays a significant part in developing skills such as teamwork, initiative and leadership. The school's excellent musical provision includes a barbershop group as well as orchestra, choir, band and rock and pop groups. High quality drama productions add significantly to the cultural and creative energy in the school. An expansion in the number of sports teams and fixtures and the introduction of new options, such as boys' hockey, has led to an increased participation in team games. Other popular physical activities include aerobics, multi-gym, rock climbing, swimming and table tennis. The school is a nationally recognised centre of excellence for sailing and offers RYA and Yacht Master training. Pupils of all ages gain much from taking part in the school's sailing project for the disabled. The over-subscribed community action programme also enables pupils to share their ICT skills with the elderly, assist at local primary schools and work with disadvantaged groups, as well as raising considerable sums for charity.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.7 Teaching is good, and fulfils the school's aims. It is effective in promoting the pupils' progress and helping them to achieve their potential. Pupils feel well supported both in and out of the classroom, not least when they need additional help. Teachers are enthusiastic in their approach, have very good subject knowledge and they know their pupils extremely well. The quality of teaching has risen since the previous inspection and much good practice was seen. In the best lessons, the pupils made very good progress because the teaching was carefully prepared and offered a variety of activities and approaches, which allowed the pupils to engage in discussion and gave them time for reflection and analysis. A brisk pace was maintained and resources were used effectively. Pupils enjoyed well-chosen practical activities in drama, science and music, which supported their more theoretical learning. More innovative use of ICT in the classroom and interactive whiteboards is being developed. On occasion, the teaching was less successful, almost invariably because teachers talked too much and allowed pupils little or no time to contribute or participate.

- 3.8 The results of standardised assessments taken after entry allow teachers to understand the pupils' abilities and to plan to meet their needs. The learning support department produces helpful advice on how best to support pupils with LDD and most teachers are mindful of this. Setting arrangements enable the teaching to challenge brighter pupils to work at a faster pace, although the teaching strategy for the academically gifted and talented is yet to make a significant impact on the differing abilities within sets. However, in a few departments, such as modern languages, much thought has been given to employing different methods and materials tailored to the pupils' particular abilities.
- 3.9 Pupils are assessed regularly in all subjects and the monitoring and tracking of progress are excellent throughout the school. Very effective use is made of target grades for pupils in Years 10 to 13. Homework is set regularly and marking is both frequent and punctual, but the quality of feedback varies. The best, usually seen on GCSE and A-level work, offers personal encouragement as well as constructive criticism and clear strategies for improvement. Insufficient attention is paid to ensuring that younger pupils present their work well and take note of corrections. The application of the whole school and departmental marking policies lacks consistency. Progress has been made, especially in recent months, in implementing the recommendations of the previous inspection. The introduction of target grades has helped to raise academic expectations and the longer lessons and the widespread availability of ICT have played a part in increasing the quality of teaching. Strategies to encourage independent learning across the curriculum are only just being introduced and sharing the best practice both within and across departments is yet to be fully developed.

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: they are ready to become active, responsible citizens who will contribute to society in a positive manner, exercise good judgement and show tolerance, courtesy and respect for others. They are friendly, confident and outgoing and loyal to their house and school. The school very successfully fulfils its aims concerning the development of values and personal qualities.
- 4.2 Pupils develop a strong sense of the spiritual through the regular chapel services, the Christian ethos of the school and their rich curricular and extra-curricular experiences. Many pupils commented on their enjoyment of singing enthusiastically at practices and services, feeling part of a close-knit community. They develop a keen self-awareness through the tutor programme and in PSHEE and other lessons. In religious education (RE), pupils were developing an understanding of Nirvana by considering their own place in the world and whether a sense of self was real. They gained a deeper understanding of the spiritual world when an English lesson focused on the moment of creation. In history, pupils displayed great sensitivity and empathy in response to the horrors of the slave trade.
- 4.3 Pupils have an extremely well-developed sense of morality. They respect school rules and have a very clear understanding of right and wrong, reinforced through the daily chapel services or assembly. Pupils serve others through the community action programme, for example, by organising an annual event for disabled athletes, and are aware of the needs of the less fortunate. They take responsibility for their environment by helping in their houses and through recycling and reducing waste. Pupils raise considerable sums of money for charity through events such as the Charity Gala Concert, sponsored walks and refreshment sales.
- 4.4 Pupils develop excellent social skills. They are courteous, polite and well mannered and behave appropriately in all situations. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, infused with respect, tolerance and good humour, and characterised by genuine affection and consideration, while respecting the appropriate boundaries. Pupils have many opportunities to take responsibility and to exercise leadership as heads of house or school, peer supporters, sports captains, prefects and members of house and school councils. They show excellent team spirit working together in sporting, musical, inter-house and other activities. Pupils develop very positive relationships across the year groups and mix easily at meal times, during activities and in the houses.
- 4.5 Pupils have a strong sense of British and other cultures. They are genuinely proud of their school and its traditions: events such as the daily colour ceremony and divisions emphasise their loyalty to Queen and country, as well as their naval heritage. Through the PSHEE programme, discussions and visiting speakers they gain a broad knowledge of public institutions and services in England. Pupils develop their cultural awareness and an appreciation of cultural diversity through subjects such as music, art, English, drama, history, geography, RE and languages. Younger pupils have produced pottery reflecting the influence of the Mimbres peoples and older pupils draw upon a wide range of cultural influences in their personal research in art. Pupils benefit from the extensive extra-curricular programme that includes theatre visits, trips abroad and visiting speakers. Pupils from other cultures are well integrated into the school; whole school celebrations of

events such as the Chinese New Year successfully encourage mutual understanding.

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

- 4.6 The school provides an exceptionally high quality of pastoral care and support for all its pupils, reflecting its aims. Pupils are confident that they can easily seek help from staff. Pupils particularly value the personal support and guidance provided by their tutors and their tutors know them very well. A formal tutor group meeting is held weekly, but many individual discussions occur at other times. Pupils' regular assessments are discussed with tutors; pupils clearly understand the grading system used and find it helpful. They also appreciate the rewards given for achievement. Older pupils value the benchmark and target grades and understand what they need to do to fulfil their potential. A well-planned procedure provides pupils with individual guidance in choosing their AS subjects. However, during the GCSE option process, after an initial presentation, pupils have to request individual assistance and few choose to do so.
- 4.7 The school's anti-bullying policy and procedures are rigorous, and include a well established system for the training of senior pupils as peer supporters. Pupils do not think that bullying is a problem, and those who have raised concerns have been satisfied with the action taken and the positive outcomes. Policies to promote good behaviour and discipline are well understood and appropriate records are kept centrally of sanctions and rewards. A significant proportion of the responses to the pupil questionnaire indicated that sanctions vary between houses and are applied unfairly. However, in discussion with pupils, they explained that the inconsistency was related to minor offences and sanctions for more serious misdemeanours were applied uniformly. A significant proportion of questionnaire responses also indicated that the school did not listen and respond to their views. Discussions revealed that this was a direct response to the recent changes in the designation of houses and not general dissatisfaction.
- 4.8 The safeguarding policy contains all the necessary elements, is made known to the whole school community and is supported by the designated officer and regular training for all staff. Clear procedures are in place for the safe recruitment of all staff and governors, but at the time of the initial visit these had not always been followed meticulously enough. This has now been rectified and all outstanding checks have been made. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. The recommendations from the 2005 fire inspectors' report, which had not been followed up at the time of the previous inspection, have now been satisfactorily met. The school has a very thorough and appropriate health and safety policy, and rigorous risk assessments are undertaken for all activities, incidents are recorded and reports made to governors. The health centre is a first class facility, well equipped and appropriately staffed by well-qualified professionals who keep excellent records. Pupils speak highly of the treatment they receive. The school's dining hall provides a good range of healthy and nutritious food. All Year 7 pupils are taken on a tour of the kitchens and learn about healthy eating and the catering facilities. The pupils' food committee is active and effective. Since the previous inspection the school has completed all the necessary planning for improving access for those with learning or physical problems. The admission and attendance registers are well maintained and correctly stored for three years.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.9 The school provides an outstanding boarding experience which is strongly endorsed by the pupils. They are proud of their houses and enjoy the close camaraderie, the increasing independence and the chance to take on responsibility as they get older. They emerge as confident, mature and self-assured young men and women.
- 4.10 Pupils enjoy excellent relations with the house staff and value the care and support they receive, especially from the matrons who are often the first to be called on in a crisis. Senior pupils take responsibility for those junior to them, ensuring good communication across the years as well as providing a cohesive family atmosphere. Pupils feel consulted and house councils have successfully suggested welcome improvements such as the provision of porridge in house kitchens and the acquisition of a new pool table.
- 4.11 A wide range of activities is available at weekends as well as the chance to rest and recoup energy. The library, ICT rooms and other specialist and sports facilities are available to boarders in the evenings. Activities, both on and off-site are organised by house staff on Saturdays when school commitments have been completed. The chapel service is the main event on Sundays and late breakfast is much appreciated.
- 4.12 The rolling refurbishment of the houses has produced first class accommodation which is both warm and welcoming, and provides spacious areas for relaxation as well as easy access to house staff. The pupils' rooms offer ample space for study as well as easy access to the internet, and many rooms benefit from en-suite facilities. The impending conversion of Raleigh House from a boarding to a day house in order to accommodate the increasing number of day pupils has caused disquiet amongst both parents and pupils, which was reflected in questionnaires and discussions. The recent conversion of Drake and Blake to junior boarding houses raised similar concerns, though pupils in Years 7 and 8 are now enjoying the facilities offered by these houses, and senior pupils now understand some of the advantages and appreciate the focus within their houses on the older age group. The school has addressed all the recommendations from the previous ISI inspection and the most recent statutory boarding inspection.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The school's governors offer strong support to the school. They ensure that the school maintains high-quality resources and staffing and they exercise an effective oversight of welfare, health and safety in most respects.
- 5.2 The board takes its duties seriously and has commissioned an outside body to review its structure and procedures. It has a well-organised committee structure, but is keen to ensure that this remains appropriate to the changing needs of the school. The governors keep themselves well informed about the school through the work of their committees, whose chairs meet regularly with the senior staff. Their particular focus on strategic planning in recent years, working closely with the senior management team, has resulted in a well-considered and comprehensive strategic plan for the school. The education committee works very closely with senior staff, analysing and reviewing matters such as academic results, the curriculum, and the monitoring of pupil progress.
- 5.3 The governing body is fully aware of its responsibilities and governors are mindful of the welfare of the pupils throughout the school. The regulatory deficiency concerning the rigorous checking of staff references and processing of criminal checks has now been rectified. Governors are committed to undertaking relevant training and an appropriate induction programme for new governors is being developed. They take an active interest in the school, supporting events and visiting the staff common room and boarding houses. Several governors with relevant expertise visit the school frequently and take responsibility for a particular area such as safeguarding, or pastoral care and boarding. Close contact is also maintained with the parents' association.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is sound overall. The school's senior management has been faced with enormous challenges in recent years, taking the school through a period of significant and rapid structural change. The introduction of day pupils and the recruitment of larger numbers of pupils who are not from seafaring families are now successfully under way. Throughout this difficult period, the leadership and management has ensured that the school's core values, and its emphasis on strong personal qualities have not been lost, while focusing on the more recent priority of raising academic standards. The pupils' achievements and the high quality of their personal development indicate success in maintaining this clear educational direction.
- 5.5 An appropriate, detailed school development plan has been drawn up, with well thought out priorities, clear timescales and measurable objectives. Each department also produces its own development plan annually, following a format linked closely to the school's overarching priorities. A cycle of formal monitoring and review has now been set up for all development planning in addition to the well established biennial appraisal of staff. This appraisal system has itself been the subject of senior management scrutiny and a further scheme for reviewing every department in depth at intervals has recently been introduced. Guidelines have also been drafted to make departmental lesson observation more rigorous and widespread. Some middle managers have been daunted by the pace of change. They were fully

consulted about the recent alterations to the structure of the school day and have been instrumental in managing its effective introduction. However, they have not yet all taken on board the many new initiatives related to teaching and learning. Much very good practice is evident within the school, but it has not been widely shared.

- 5.6 High-quality staff are recruited to the school and a well-planned and thorough induction programme is in place. The support for newly qualified teachers and trainees is also well organised and effective. Professional development is encouraged for all staff and participation is monitored closely each year. The central register of appointments is appropriately detailed and at the time of the initial visit it revealed clearly where a few gaps in the checking procedures for new appointments had occurred. All staff are trained in their roles in safeguarding, and in health and safety. Recruitment procedures have now been thoroughly reviewed and further monitoring processes introduced to ensure that none of the particular requirements for staff in a boarding school are overlooked.

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

- 5.7 The school has developed a good relationship with parents. Those who live overseas are particularly appreciative of the effective electronic communication which enables them to be much more directly in touch with their child's progress and activities. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents indicated that they are pleased with the school's teaching, curriculum, pastoral care, extra-curricular activities and boarding provision, and with the information they receive. They also strongly believe that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and achieves high standards of behaviour. The school produces an informative parents handbook, regular newsletters and an annual magazine. The website is regularly updated with news and general information and it displays all the officially required information for parents of current and prospective pupils, including policies and procedures. Parents particularly appreciate the ease of e-mail communication with the boarding housemasters and housemistresses, and the swift responses. Much praise was recorded on the questionnaires for the house staff and the tutors referring to the exemplary care which they provide.
- 5.8 Parents receive useful assessment reports electronically twice each term, giving grades for achievement and effort in every subject with a brief comment; pupils in Years 10 to 13 also have target or benchmark grades. Full reports with detailed comments, including advice as to how pupils might improve, are sent at the end of term. Parents consultation meetings are held for each year group.
- 5.9 A small minority of parents reported that they were not encouraged to be involved in the life and work of the school. However, the inspection showed that the parents association is active and many other opportunities are available for parents to be involved. For example, a number of parents regularly attend the Sunday chapel services, support the sports teams, attend concerts and plays or take part in fundraising events. A few parents expressed dissatisfaction at the support offered for those with LDD or who are gifted and talented. The inspectors found that the provision for pupils with LDD has been reviewed and significantly improved in recent years; however, the proposed gifted and talented co-ordinator is not yet in post to lead that strategy. A significant minority expressed concern at the management of change recently and the way in which it had been communicated, with particular reference to the creation of the junior boarding houses last year and the introduction of a day house next year.

5.10 Parental concerns are normally resolved informally by direct contact and an exchange of letters. Complaints made in writing and their outcomes are carefully recorded even though the official complaints policy has not yet been invoked.

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

Inspectors

Mrs Marion Gibbs	Reporting inspector
Mr Ian Lovat	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC)
Mr Nicholas Marchant	Team Inspector (Head of Dept, HMC)
Mrs Helen Morgan	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA/IAPS/HMC)
Mr Stewart Roberts	Team Inspector (Head, HMC)
Mr Roger Tapping	Team Inspector (Senior Teacher, GSA)