

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

THE ROYAL HOSPITAL SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

20th - 23rd March 2006

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

The Royal Hospital School

Full Name of the School	The Royal Hospital School
DfES Number	935/6056
Registered Charity Status	Crown Charity
Address	Holbrook, Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 2RX
Telephone Number	01473 326200
Fax Number	01473 326213
Email Address	headmaster@royalhospitalschool.org
Headmaster	Howard Blackett
Chairman of Governors	Commodore Bryan Burns CBE RN
Director of Greenwich Hospital	Rear Admiral John Chadwick CB
Age Range	11-18
Gender	Boys and Girls
Inspection Dates	20th – 23rd March 2006

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). The CSCI report is available separately (www.csci.org.uk).

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. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The stated aims are to provide a full boarding school education for boys and girls in the top half of the ability range who are in sympathy with the seafaring traditions of the school. The aims include the study and practices of navigation, a civilised, caring Christian community, high expectations of reaching potential in academic work and activities, promoting the welfare of pupils and their spiritual, moral, cultural and social development, high standards of appearance and behaviour, and the acquisition of skills relevant to adult life and service to the community. While these aims and aspirations have much in common with other independent schools, The Royal Hospital School (RHS) has many distinctive features, mostly arising from its links with Greenwich Hospital (GH) and seafaring. Many of the pupils receive bursaries from GH, in all cases because of their seafaring ancestry. All pupils are issued with naval style uniform which is worn for ceremonial occasions. They all learn to sail and take part in other relevant activities, not least in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF); entry to the school is now more flexible; and from 2006 it will include day pupils. A new headmaster was appointed in 2004.
- 1.2 RHS is one of the largest co-educational boarding schools in the country. The school has accommodation for all staff on the extensive campus, within 200 acres of grounds overlooking the estuary of the River Stour, just outside Ipswich. RHS has 11 boarding houses, most built in Queen Anne style in 1933 when the school moved to the present site. The chapel, assembly hall, dining hall, sports hall and swimming pool have been built in a similar style. Various buildings have been completed in the last 20 years including the library, rooms for technology and computer studies, an upper sixth form house for boys and girls, and sixth form centre. A major redevelopment of the boarding houses is underway.
- 1.3 RHS was founded in 1712 by GH; itself founded 1694, for the education of the sons of seafarers. The school is the principal beneficiary of the funds from this charity derived from navy related revenues like prize funds and confiscations. Benefactors, grateful for the protection of the navy, have made generous gifts, like the present estate. RHS was originally based in Greenwich in what is now the National Maritime Museum. RHS aims to increase the number of full fee-payers and to reduce dependence on GH funding.
- 1.4 The number of pupils has fluctuated over the last 20 years, dipping below 600 in 1990 but rising to 680 at the time of the last inspection in 2000, following the introduction of girls in 1991. Currently there are 630 pupils in the school; this will rise again in September with the introduction of day pupils. Most pupils are admitted in Year 7 but a few join in Year 9 or enter the sixth form, which numbers 180. Parents of over 20 per cent of pupils receive the services boarding allowance and a further 60 per cent have the naval connections to qualify for bursaries. The broad social mix includes a small number of pupils from overseas and ethnic minorities.
- 1.5 Entry is now open to pupils of all abilities, capable of benefiting from the education provided. In practice the quality of entry is broad. The overall ability of pupils is higher than the national average but below that for selective schools so comparisons of academic performance were made with all maintained schools. For 24 pupils English is an additional language (EAL); a similar number receive support for special educational needs (SEN), while another 25 have very mild educational difficulties.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The education provided is almost entirely consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy, which are clearly understood and communicated by staff and pupils. The outstanding extra-curricular activities and the carefully thought-out curriculum meet the needs of the pupils from a wide range of abilities and the expectations of parents. The full boarding experience is enhanced by strong seafaring traditions and the ceremonial and naval practices help to give pupils pride in their school.
- 2.2 The school is highly successful in creating a caring Christian environment but more can be done to improve the learning environment. The aim of promoting the acquisition of knowledge and skills relevant to adult life is largely fulfilled by the education provided.
- 2.3 The school meets satisfactorily the requirements of contributing to the linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development of all pupils, though success varies a little across these aspects. The pupils were confident, open and articulate in their interviews with inspectors and in lessons they demonstrated good listening and understanding. They ask intelligent questions in class and enjoy joining in discussions. Good examples were seen of literacy and numeracy but the work scrutiny showed that most pupils are capable of developing these skills further, both in the classroom and in activities.
- 2.4 The curriculum offers additional opportunities to broaden education and is responsive to the needs and demands of pupils. Documentation is well designed to inform pupils and parents about curricular choices at all levels. The school has undertaken a thorough review since the last inspection. It has not been able to accommodate all parental suggestions, although a greater flexibility of language and science choices is under review along with the provision at A level of physical education (PE) and economics. The setting arrangements do not create significant barriers to pupils' learning in any year group. The school aim, to enable pupils to reach their full academic potential, is, judged by recent examination results, being met with reasonable success but there is scope for further development.
- 2.5 The curriculum is supplemented by a range of extra-curricular activities, which is outstanding in quality and quantity. However, the programme would be better balanced if more activities were related to subject areas. Pupils' rate of participation in activities is high and they benefit greatly. While they recognise the value of this choice to their broader education, they are also aware of the tension between the demands of the curriculum and those of their activities. As examinations loom closer tutors sensibly allow those pupils who are under pressure to suspend their commitment to an activity. Tutors also advise pupils on choice of subjects and activities and help them to achieve an appropriate balance in their workload. The good relationship between pupils and their tutors supports their development. The activities programme demands a huge commitment from staff but this is willingly undertaken and facilitated by all teachers living on the campus. Careful monitoring of the impact of this heavy involvement in activities on progress towards the goal of raising the academic profile is needed.
- 2.6 Parents justifiably express great satisfaction with the opportunities provided for pupils' cultural development. The quality of music is in many ways outstanding and a high proportion of pupils benefit from involvement with the chapel choir, the choral society (with parents and locals), the band, the marching band, the orchestra and the instrumental lessons, though the orchestra would benefit from developing more string players. The main chapel organ is one of the finest in any school and it inspires highly committed singing from the

congregation. The second organ provides ideal support for the considerable repertoire of the choir.

- 2.7 In many ways the school is raising expectations of pupils and not least in relation to games and outdoor pursuits. Though all pupils are expected to learn to sail in Year 7, they can choose from a good range of sports and girls have equal opportunities. The aim is to achieve more success in matches against other schools at first team level. The games programme has been enriched by the introduction of boys' hockey as a major sport. Some activities enable close links to be developed with the community and provide opportunities for voluntary service. Numerous trips, overseas tours and educational visits provide valuable enrichment. All pupils learn to march and parade to a very high standard.
- 2.8 Educational experience is enhanced by the excellent environment: the extensive campus overlooking the Stour Estuary, the fine buildings meeting all essential academic and pastoral needs, and the high quality facilities and equipment within the buildings. Though the buildings date from the 1930s, the swimming pool, the sports hall, the assembly hall and the chapel are still giving good service. The library has been improved, work has already begun on upgrading the boarding houses and plans are complete for a new music school. Improvements have been made to the information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure but usage by both teachers and pupils is not yet fully developed. The provision of other resources and equipment is generous though budgets are currently being tightened.
- 2.9 The curriculum meets all the regulatory requirements for breadth and access but the support provided for pupils with SEN, with EAL and for the gifted and talented (G&T) has rightly been recognised by the school as an area for further development. The progress of some pupils is held back by language difficulties and some teachers have requested more training in dealing with learning difficulties.
- 2.10 Arrangements, in place to prepare pupils for careers and the next stage of education, are generally satisfactory though parents and pupils would like them to be more extensive. Almost all pupils go on to university and are well advised on their choice; most obtain places in their chosen universities. The leadership training they receive is strong in quality and quantity, and the sense of responsibility they develop enables pupils to move on to the next stage in their lives with confidence.
- 2.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.12 Progress is being made towards meeting the aim, expressed in the school's self-evaluation, of developing a culture of academic excellence but much remains to be done. Pupils' grounding in knowledge, skill and understanding in the subjects and activities has progressed since the last inspection. Teachers' expectations are beginning to rise and pupils are responding, though they need to take more responsibility for their own learning. They can apply their knowledge and are able to think and act critically and creatively when given the opportunity, but in too many lessons these opportunities are insufficient. While academic achievements are modest those in other aspects of pupils' education are considerable, not least in practical, social and cultural areas. Pupils' learning is broadened greatly by the extra-curricular activities programme. Substantial achievements are gained in music, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and CCF and in a few games, representative honours are gained at county and even national level, as in sailing.
- 2.13 Academic attainment is generally satisfactory and, although it is better in some subjects, the differences across the curriculum are not great. Pupils in the most and least able groups are

least close to realising their potential, partly because programmes to provide support for their individual needs are not yet well developed. In several lessons the most able were not fully extended. Results are generally better in the sixth form than in Years 7-11. The results of boys and girls are not significantly different. The progress identified in some houses is better than in others and the school could usefully research the reason for these differences. Results over 2001-5 show an upward trend.

- 2.14 GCSE results in years 2001-5 are generally satisfactory with pupils performing above the national average for all maintained schools both in average points scores and the proportion of high grades. Girls' results are very slightly better than boys'. More is being made of pupils' potential in the sixth form, though some pupils of lesser ability leave after GCSE. Although over two-thirds of grades at A level were at A or B the school believes more A grades are possible and is directing efforts towards stretching pupils in the higher ability bands.
- 2.15 The school aims to educate pupils in the top half of the ability range and this is largely achieved. Nationally standardised tests on entry in Year 7 indicate that only six per cent are below the average and further tests in Year 10, which include later entrants, show seven per cent below the average. These results are increasingly used as baselines for monitoring pupils' progress using a computer based data system.
- 2.16 Pupils are articulate and able to express themselves clearly. They ask intelligent questions in class and enjoy joining in discussions but they can also listen and absorb what they are told. In the lower ability groups, evidence of thinking skills is not strong but pupils respond well when allowed to work in groups. Pupils are generally able to reason and argue cogently and think for themselves although in some departments opportunities for them to lead discussion and explore wider issues outside the syllabus are limited. Where relevant, they can express themselves in foreign languages and in music, as sight readers and performers. In creative subjects pupils display relevant skills to a good level.
- 2.17 Without a clear school reading policy, the quality of reading is less strong, though pupils read well in chapel. Guided reading lists and effective monitoring of pupils' reading would be beneficial to pupils and assist the school's aim to develop a literacy policy. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that for the most part pupils write effectively, although fluency is not always evident. In the sixth form they take notes effectively in lessons and pupils' files show a suitable quantity and quality of written work. In Years 10 and 11 the picture is less good with pupil files showing reliance upon material produced by teachers or downloaded from the internet. Pupils can apply mathematics and mathematical concepts effectively, most evidently in the sciences and in business studies.
- 2.18 Pupils make good use of ICT but mainly for word processing. The results of research on the internet were not extensive but in the sixth form a few pupils use data projectors for presentations. Other pockets of good practice are found, for example, in modern foreign languages and music (though currently they are separated from their keyboards during the building works), but evidence of the use of ICT in lessons is not widespread, other than for drafting and redrafting coursework essays. Within lessons electronic whiteboards are used by teachers in a limited number of departments but very few pupils were seen using this facility.
- 2.19 Pupils are very cooperative and work well with others on common tasks. Pair and group work is positively done and pupils remain well on task. Independent work is also well done, with evidence of real commitment in terms of the amount of work produced by individuals in most subjects. This is, however, organised and directed by teachers and closely related to coursework. Pupils expect teachers to produce the worksheets on which lessons are based.

Evidence of truly independent learning is not widespread, especially below the sixth form. The library is rarely used for research or independent study. With a few notable exceptions, involvement of pupils in planning, shaping and, where appropriate, leading lessons, is limited. In activities though, they readily accept responsibility and exercise initiative.

- 2.20 Pupils are positive and compliant in lessons. They settle easily and quickly to their work and usually concentrate well throughout; distraction and lack of focus were only evident in the few lessons which were not well planned and managed. Pupils apply themselves well to set tasks and persevere with them, though attitudes to study could be stronger. Enjoyment is evident in many lessons, particularly in creative subjects, for example when in drama/theatre studies they devise their own scenes, in music make their own compositions, and in science plan their own practicals; but enjoyment was not so evident in some other subjects.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.21 The pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. This is promoted by the unique ethos and character of the school, which is successful in creating a calm and ordered environment. The emphasis on service and charitable works helps pupils to develop a strong sense of fairness and of personal responsibility as they progress through the school. Though they come from a wide variety of social backgrounds, they become assured and self confident, friendly and pleasant. They develop a true sense of their own identity and self worth; indeed, pupils show a high degree of self knowledge.
- 2.22 Chapel is an outstanding area of influence where pupils participate fully in worship and congregational practice and develop spiritually. The whole school attends and pupils respect the atmosphere under the benign supervision of house prefects. Services are held most days of the week along with additional voluntary communions. The magnificent organ and the experienced director of music encourage pupils to sing with outstanding enthusiasm. The chapel, and its associated activities, do much to create the desired caring, Christian community, based on reasonable behaviour, mutual respect and courtesy between pupils and staff. The staff leading the service and the Year 7 pupil confidently preaching a Christian message reinforced spiritual development. The experienced chaplain adopts a warm and inclusive approach in services. Pupils explore values and religious beliefs in discussion in RS and personal, social and health education (PSHE).
- 2.23 The school is successful in providing an atmosphere in which personal development can prosper but more can be done to improve the learning environment. The goal of high standards of personal appearance, good manners and self-discipline is consistently achieved. Pupils play an important part in maintaining good order around the campus; the organisation around the dining hall and supervision during chapel being just two examples.
- 2.24 Pupils are encouraged to develop morally and distinguish clearly between right and wrong. They appreciate the need to respect laws and school rules and their behaviour is very good. Although the number of suspensions is high, sanctions are generally appropriate. Pupils display a caring, kind and respectful attitude to one another and their teachers and show courtesy both in and outside of the classroom. Anti-bullying policies are well supported and the degree of social awareness is outstanding. The community action team, CCF, St John Ambulance, Oak House work with the elderly, charities and the RS programme encourage pupils to develop a strong moral sense.
- 2.25 Lessons in PSHE reinforce the service ethos of the school and offer opportunities for group discussion on subjects such as relationships. Within the curriculum, further cultural awareness is developed in such areas as science, French and history; for instance, in one lesson the assimilation of the American Indians was discussed. Information on public

institutions and services in England is offered in the general studies programme and school assemblies. Pupils' social development is a considerable strength throughout the school and owes much to the broad range of ways in which it encourages participation.

- 2.26 Pupils are keen to contribute to school life and enjoy the sense of community in the boarding environment. The outstanding activities programme provides opportunities for pupils of all and varying abilities in areas such as music, band and honour guard, sport including sailing, coastguard, drama, Duke of Edinburgh Award and the school magazine. Involvement in school affairs is encouraged by the school council and catering committee. Roles of responsibility and leadership are very well developed in school, house, CCF, community action and other activities and games. In community service pupils have opportunities to develop initiative and take on responsibilities that extend beyond the school. Every morning a bugler and guard perform the flag-raising ceremony. All junior pupils march to meals and are willing to practise hard to maintain high standards. The band and guard parade is an outstanding part of the school tradition and pupils are proud to dress smartly and march with precision. Some pupils came to watch the band and guard parade for the inspectors; they expressed their interest and enthusiasm for ceremonial which is among the finest in the land. It provides another dimension to school life and the RHS experience.
- 2.27 Pupils have very good opportunities to develop an appreciation of, and respect for, their own and other cultures in chapel, PSHE, music, art, literature, drama, media studies and history, as well as other subjects and activities. In these areas aesthetic ideas are also developed, often through practical involvement. The chapel choir and marching band perform in many different venues and pupils are encouraged to attend the many concerts and plays in the school. A trip to Sri Lanka is planned to see the results of extensive fundraising efforts aimed at building a new school and teaching English and sport to some of the children. Pupils show a good understanding of the diversity of the country they inhabit and enjoy supporting the traditions of other cultures.
- 2.28 The school meets the regulatory requirements for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching

- 2.29 Teaching is largely supportive of the aim to make the most of the potential of all pupils. However, the school educates pupils from across a wide band of ability, including some with special learning needs, and not all of these needs are currently being met. Progress would be increased by more careful attention to individual pupils' requirements in each subject, including greater challenge for the pupils of high ability. The recent appointment of a member of staff in charge of curriculum (learning) support is an indication of the school's determination to improve in this area. For most pupils, teaching enables satisfactory progress in acquiring new knowledge, skills and understanding in line with their ability.
- 2.30 Overall teaching was satisfactory but in well over a third of lessons, teaching was good or occasionally very good. In only a handful of lessons was it considered to be outstanding and in a similar number unsatisfactory. The most effective lessons were characterised by good use of a variety of resources and activities, appropriate pace and clearly expressed high expectations of the pupils. Unsatisfactory lessons were so teacher-dominated, lacking in interest and poorly managed that pupils' learning was impeded. In many lessons lack of pupil involvement discouraged independent learning and enthusiasm for the subject. Pupils respond best when teachers set practical tasks, as in Year 9 music when the whole class prepared and sang songs from *Sound of Music* and in a Year 12 class practical on DNA profiling. All teachers live on campus and pupils benefit from the willingness of all staff to support pupils in their studies outside lessons. However, teachers' expectations, particularly

of the ability of pupils to think and learn for themselves, are often not high enough. Teachers encourage pupils to take a pride in their work and to organise their files carefully.

- 2.31 Teaching is satisfactorily planned, though in some lessons the limited range of activities employed limits the pace of learning and the engagement of the pupils. Most lesson plans do not routinely incorporate a wide use of resources. Examples of good practice should be more widely shared. Planning does not routinely take into account individual pupils' special needs, including those with English as an additional language. While these needs are identified to all teaching staff, further training and support is needed to enable teachers to plan ways for these pupils to make more effective progress in lessons. With lessons of 35 minutes, if pupils can cross the extensive campus in the five minutes' travelling time, teachers have to plan carefully their use of lesson time and mostly do this well.
- 2.32 Teachers are well qualified in their academic subjects and usually demonstrate appropriate knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, though, even in the sixth form, this may not be pitched at a sufficiently challenging level. The effective professional development of teachers is an aim of the school and teachers have access to appropriate training, though this is mainly directed towards keeping up to date with changes in examinations. The new appraisal system, which involves both middle and senior management as appraisers, focuses upon quality of teaching and is beginning to work well. This is needed to ensure greater consistency in application of school policies and to encourage the sharing of good practice across the school. The use of target setting as part of this process and the identification of individual training needs are major strengths of the system. Teachers are encouraged to take part in mutual lesson observation but this practice is not yet widespread. Heads of department are growing in awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching.
- 2.33 All departments are well resourced and well maintained, so that the teaching environment is favourable. Displays in classrooms and corridors stimulate interest. Considerable investment in ICT includes the provision of electronic whiteboards but teachers need further training and support in using these resources to enhance their teaching. The library is a pleasant environment and is reasonably well stocked for most subjects but it is not well used. Few departments set assignments involving use of library books and very few pupils use the library for independent reading and reference.
- 2.34 The school has clear policies for assessment and marking but their implementation is left to departments and individuals so outcomes are variable. The best formative and constructive feedback to pupils is seen in the sixth form. In earlier years, marking is often sketchy and does not include corrective and formative comments to help pupils improve. Grades are regularly awarded to all pupils for their academic progress and effort. All teachers are involved in consideration of these grades and of action to be taken to support individual pupils thereafter. Heads of department do not regularly monitor marking to ensure more consistent implementation of otherwise sound policies. Pupils commend the system in biology.
- 2.35 The school is developing use of standardised ways of measuring pupil progress from baseline to GCSE and from GCSE to A level. The results of major tests and standardised scores are stored centrally and efforts are being made to improve dissemination. This provision of information about performance, not least in identifying learning needs and teaching methods, is valuable but teachers need more training and support in the use of and interpretation of data. This information is also being shared with the governors' education committee, which supports the school's aim, communicated to parents, to raise standards in comparison with other independent schools.

- 2.36 Some heads of departments and other teachers are concerned that the time and energy spent on the demanding extra-curricular activities programme and the pastoral responsibilities natural to a full boarding school have an adverse effect on teachers' ability to prepare for lessons and to complete marking and assessment to a satisfactory standard. Some staff feel the pressure and this affects their attendance, but most would not want the activities programme reduced in importance.
- 2.37 Teachers encourage pupils to behave well, and in almost all lessons they are cooperative and responsible in their learning. In the small number of lessons observed where poor behaviour adversely affected pupils' learning, it was the lack of pace and variety of activities and the teachers' low expectations of the pupils which led to disengagement and consequent disruption.
- 2.38 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The high quality of pastoral care and the welfare of pupils are well managed. The staff work hard to provide care and guidance, assisted by a committed support team. Most responses to the parent and pupil questionnaires testify to the success of these efforts. Pupils and their individual situations are well known by those who care for them and this knowledge informs actions. Pupils, parents and staff believe that good pastoral care is high among the school's aims and say that the quality of pastoral care has risen since the last report.
- 3.2 Arrangements for pastoral care are well established and effective. New pupils are assigned to peer counsellors for support on arrival. In the pupils' questionnaire responses, 14 per cent said they did not have an adult they could talk to but during the inspection period pupils said that they are able to talk to friends, an older pupil or any member of staff, if they have a problem and most pupils were clear to whom they would turn. In practice, each pupil meets their tutor frequently and further care comes from their housemaster/mistress, senior master/mistress, and the deputy head, who work well as a team. In addition, pupils can approach the chaplain, their matron or staff in the medical centre. Most parents said the school handled problems and concerns well, though a few disagreed. Training is provided for prefects and peer counsellors but the quality of training varies across houses.
- 3.3 Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are generally very sympathetic. Teachers are perceived as hard working in their efforts to help pupils and mutual respect is evident. A third of pupils in questionnaire responses said the school does not listen or respond to their views, but inspectors found this was more a case of the school not agreeing to all their requests. Pupils say that house councils focus on house matters and do not deal with whole school issues. However, when pupils write to the headmaster, he usually invites them to meet him to discuss their suggestions. Just prior to the inspection, the school reverted to the normal breakfast after pupils expressed dissatisfaction with healthy menus.
- 3.4 Given its traditions, it is not surprising that discipline is very good. Measures to promote good positive behaviour are embedded in the culture of the school and pupils respond well. The practice of marching to the dining hall helps create a sense of order, also evident in the quiet movement between lessons and in the dining hall. The clear disciplinary framework is understood even if inconsistencies exist across houses. Disciplinary incidents are, under the school's policy, dealt with severely, leading to a considerable number of suspensions. Although a quarter of pupils questioned responded that the school does not deal well with incidents of bullying, evidence from a variety of sources indicates that the relatively few instances, once known, are dealt with effectively. A clear anti-bullying policy is in place and this is reinforced through PSHE, tutor groups and in chapel.
- 3.5 The school has in place a child protection policy which informs staff on procedures to be followed, but this needs to be updated to ensure it complies with all aspects of Safeguarding Children in Education.
- 3.6 Fire practices are held regularly, and on the last occasion involved two local appliances, a simulated incident in the clock tower and a casualty. The inspection by the fire service in December 2005 identified a number of actions, now being undertaken and some to be tackled during refurbishment. A number of fire doors, mentioned in the fire officer's report, were still wedged open.
- 3.7 The day-to-day management of health and safety, which is the responsibility of the bursar but delegated to three of his staff, is generally satisfactory. Risk assessments are carried out

across the site by the area health and safety representatives and for trips, monitored by the deputy head. Periodic audits are carried out by external advisors. Particularly good awareness of health and safety issues was seen in science, geography, the coastguard and community action.

- 3.8 Arrangements for health care in an excellent, well resourced, health centre with 28 beds and a team of six nurses, providing 24-hour care, are very good. Week-day doctor's surgeries, daily nurse-led surgeries, a school counsellor, dental practice and physiotherapy provide comprehensive care for pupils. All medication is properly administered by the medical centre and the school is aware that it needs to follow any further CSCI recommendations in this respect. The written policy on first aid is comprehensive and meets requirements.
- 3.9 The school's healthy eating policy was unpopular with pupils but a compromise has been reached. The choice of food at lunch time is well-liked by pupils, but they are less satisfied with supper. A food committee enables pupil representatives to discuss menus and other catering matters with the catering manager. The catering budget has been increased for the coming year to improve standards further. Boarding houses are regularly supplied with fresh fruit, biscuits and milk.
- 3.10 Valuable aspects of pupils' welfare are administered by the logistics department which, though costly, provides every pupil with a naval uniform and replaces it at appropriate intervals. The department also provides laundry, repairs and school furniture.
- 3.11 Although the school has a special needs policy which covers learning difficulties, it is aware that it does not have a policy in response to the SEN and Disability Act but it has drawn up a draft policy for discussion and aims to have it finalised by the end of this academic year.
- 3.12 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) update the child protection policy to ensure it complies with all aspects of Safeguarding Children in Education [Regulation.3(2)(b)];
 - (b) complete the action steps identified by the Fire Service in December 2005 including not wedging open a number of fire doors [Regulation 3(5)(b)];
 - (c) complete the writing of a policy in response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.13 The school links with its parents are very good and those with the community are even better. The response of parents to a questionnaire indicates a high level of satisfaction with the education and support provided by RHS. Parents are particularly pleased with the extra-curricular activities and with the attitudes and views which the school promotes. Some concern was expressed about the quality and level of support for the small number of children with SEN and EAL and this has been borne out by the inspection. The school acknowledged this need by the appointment of a special education needs coordinator but some parents want more early testing and subsequent remedial work to increase access to the curriculum for these children. Teachers need more information and training to be effective in this area.
- 3.14 While most parents stated their satisfaction with the opportunities which the school provides for them to be involved in the activities and in the work and progress of their children, a small proportion did not agree. Most parents accepted that this goal is not easily achieved

when all students are boarders and families live at some distance from the school and a significant number are from overseas.

- 3.15 Parents are satisfied with the frequency and quality of the communications which keep them informed about their children's progress, especially since the introduction of three weekly assessments and an electronic report writing system, which comments on all aspects of a pupil's education. However, some would like even more recognition of extra-curricular achievements in the reports from tutors. The quality of report writing is at least satisfactory and the best reports offer valuable guidance to pupils. Housemasters/mistresses work hard to keep in touch with parents and to deal with their worries, though some parents would like more use of email and the website for more regular contact. Parents can visit the school at any time to review their children's progress and to discuss any academic or social problems. The head of EAL travels to the Far East each year and meets with parents from the region.
- 3.16 The headmaster's termly newsletters now focus on significant developments, like the introduction of day pupils, though some parents say they are not sufficiently consulted before major changes. The information contained in such other publications as the prospectus, notes for parents and curriculum leaflets, is good, but examination results are not routinely sent to parents. The school magazine has recently been complemented by the introduction of an irreverent bi-weekly in-house newspaper.
- 3.17 The school meets the requirements for dealing with complaints. The necessary policies and procedures are in place and a complaints book is kept up to date. The very few recent complaints have been dealt with according to this policy. Most parents comment favourably on the way the school deals with their concerns.
- 3.18 The highly positive links which the school maintains with the wider community derive from the outstanding extra-curricular activities programme. By any standards this aspect of RHS is providing educational experience of the highest order. The RHS provides excellent service to the local and wider community; particularly notable in this respect is the work of the school's unit, which acts as the official coastguard for their stretch of the coast and has been involved in some notable rescue work. Pupils are expected to participate in some voluntary work with the community action team; they look after pensioners in local residential homes and bring them to school events like the many informal concerts and plays. Members of the community are invited to sing with the choral society and to attend the programme of concerts by professional artists organised by the music department. Further afield, RHS has endeavoured to bring relief from some of the effects of the tsunami in Sri Lanka, raising £25,000 and sending a team to work on the school building for which it is paying.
- 3.19 The school also develops links through performances outside the school. The outstanding music department prepares its choir, bands and orchestra for tours and external concerts. The marching band has played at both Twickenham and Lords in one year. The whole school parades in full uniform bi-weekly through the warmer months and the honour guard marches to the highest standard. The CCF is recognised to be one of the strongest units in the country and, as with the Duke of Edinburgh Award, emphasis is placed on the importance of service to the community; at least 20 pupils achieve the gold award each year.
- 3.20 The programme of sports is also extensive and provides further links with the wider community. Teams play against local teams. RHS coaches and pupils are involved in playing for local teams and coaching them. The school makes its excellent playing facilities available to others. RHS is reasonably successful at first team level in the major games and some individuals and some teams compete effectively at county or even national level, especially in sailing and the Devizes to Westminster canoe race. Performance in hockey is steadily improving.

- 3.21 Many other, often successful, activities supplement the above in catering for a wide range of different interests but such a programme does not come without a cost. It is made possible by the selfless work of a devoted staff and the efforts of the pupils who follow their lead with such enthusiasm. This work, along with the considerable pastoral duties expected in a full boarding school, impinges heavily on the time and energy needed for teaching and marking duties. Careful management of time and staffing is needed to maintain the excellence of the activities while raising academic standards.
- 3.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.23 The school provides a good quality of boarding experience. The house system adds to the quality of education and pupils have a strong allegiance to their house. Relationships within houses are positive and supportive. Parents comment that their children are happy in their houses and the inspection confirmed this. The ethos of the houses has moved a long way from the harder, more military atmosphere of the past. Now they are caring communities with an emphasis on pupils' enjoyment of the boarding experience. The houses are well supported by enthusiastic and hard-working staff: housemasters and housemistresses, their deputies, tutors and matrons.
- 3.24 Anti-bullying measures are firmly in place. ABC counsellors from Year 11 are trained by a team lead by the senior mistress and report any occurrence to the housemaster/mistress and, if necessary, to the senior master/mistress. Counsellors would welcome better links across houses. Pupils are aware of the telephone numbers for the independent listener and Childline. Pupils have good opportunities to take on responsibilities within the houses and elsewhere; house prefects are chosen from Years 11 and 12 and learn their role by understudying their seniors.
- 3.25 Housemasters/mistresses meet weekly, alternately on their own and with the senior management team (SMT). In spite of this intercommunication, pupils report inconsistency of practice across houses, particularly in regard to rewards and sanctions; some are much tougher than others. This perceived unfairness was mentioned in pupils' questionnaires. Differences also exist in the progress achieved by pupils by houses: middle and senior managers are seeking remedies.
- 3.26 Boarders enjoy an outstanding range of activities in out-of-school time, including Saturdays, which accommodate a wide variety of pupil interests. Housemasters/mistresses and tutors keep an eye on pupils' loads to ensure they are not doing too much. Saturday evening activities include films, social events, concerts and debates. Pupils are happy that fewer activities occur on Sundays, indeed, the level of provision is judged to be acceptable. Sunday activities include debates, swimming sports and a mini-marathon, with divisions (parade) every other week during the autumn and summer and chapel service every week.
- 3.27 The present standard of boarding accommodation is adequate but with the planned refurbishment of boarding houses, which has already taken place in Nelson and has commenced in Anson, the accommodation will be of high quality. House common rooms have not been divided into smaller units, as recommended in the last inspection report, but this will happen in the refurbishment. The concurrent CSCI team confirms that the boarding accommodation meets the regulatory standards.
- 3.28 Each house has a number of computers and the new houses will have wireless systems to allow pupils to link their own laptops to the network. The pupils have satisfactory space in

which to do their work. Prep is conducted in a very disciplined and quiet way. Some pupils are allowed out of prep for sporting and cultural activities but they are expected to catch up in their free time and this is monitored by house staff. This practice is questioned by some staff who want academic work to take priority.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 RHS has an unusual governing structure but it is working well and the level of commitment is high. The influence of GH, which owns the school, is highly beneficial. The links with the Royal Navy, HRH Duke of York, as patron, and the Second Sea Lord, have helped in the successful development of the school. Proper thought is given to ensuring succession by recruiting new governors, with suitable knowledge and expertise, and to choosing the next chairman, though all appointments have to be agreed with the Admiralty Board. In partnership with the Chairman, the Director of GH fulfils a major role, and their relationship with the headmaster is strong and supportive. The governors are supportive of the unique traditions and aims of RHS but are willing to be flexible in order to ensure the prosperity of the school. GH wants the school to develop financial independence but expects it to retain its close links and seafaring traditions.
- 4.2 Governors take a keen interest in the school's educational progress mainly through the education committee, which benefits from the wide experience and knowledge of its members. The headmaster, deputy and director of studies keep the committee well informed on the main issues and on progress towards higher standards. The finance and property committees are advised by the bursar, and efficiently administer the considerable estate and financial resources of the school. With their help the governors ensure the school is generously resourced and has the facilities to support the aims and to meet the needs of the pupils. While GH is reducing its financial commitment, it has made a major capital grant towards the refurbishment of boarding houses. The governors have appointed marketing and admissions directors to help with the recruitment of day as well as boarding fee-paying pupils.
- 4.3 The governors know the senior management team well and relations with the staff are good; a member of staff is appointed as a governor. Governors visit the school regularly and attend special functions whilst staff help in the production of policies and plans. The headmaster provides comprehensive and informative reports. All this helps to give governors a good insight into the working of the school. The governors ensure that staff have very good working and living conditions. They want the school to do well and to achieve wider recognition.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The direction and leadership of RHS are clear and strong, even though several important appointments – headmaster, bursar, deputy, and director of studies – have only recently been made. The strong naval traditions support an ethos which is unique and a powerful influence for good. The headmaster and the chaplain, a former Chaplain of the Fleet, lead the efforts to achieve the aim of a Christian, caring community. Aspirations towards greater academic success are driven by the senior team, especially its newer members, and attended by some early success. More effective communication to all members of the school and wider involvement in development planning would help in the achievement of these aspirations.
- 4.5 Members of the SMT work well together and have a considerable profile around the school, exerting a valuable influence on most aspects of school life. Each senior manager has a clear job description but roles are evolving and some overlap occurs. Data, including that for assessing pupils' progress, from several sources is increasingly well used to analyse needs and to set priorities.

- 4.6 The quality of middle management is mostly good and developing well, not least in responding to differences in performance in departments or houses. Boarding needs are discussed and some suggestions disseminated. Good practice is being identified along with strategies for improvement. Effective implementation depends upon better communication and cooperation, however. Some heads of department need and request more support, particularly in raising the performance of teachers and pupils in their department; arrangements for all to meet regularly with the director of studies are to be encouraged.
- 4.7 Senior and middle managers are committed to the valuable biennial process of appraisal and the new system is beginning to work well. The importance of good assessment as an aid to improvement is recognised along with realisation that marking would be more effective if it included more comments. Middle managers set targets but do not monitor the outcomes. The staff handbook is a valuable and comprehensive document and up-dating is a continuous process. Some departmental handbooks are useful but no single compendium covers the activities programme.
- 4.8 Policies and practices are regularly reviewed at SMT meetings but more effort is needed to bring departmental plans and policies into line with the new school development plan. All staff should be invited to contribute to the ongoing development planning. Ways are being sought to help pupils with learning needs, including the stimulation of more able pupils.
- 4.9 The headmaster and his senior staff lead by example a hardworking and dedicated staff. All staff are provided with housing and the excellent working and living conditions contribute to stability of staffing and recruitment of good teachers and support staff. A suitable system for the induction of new staff is in place. Appropriate opportunities, through in-service training and external courses, for professional development and promotion are being developed and motivation is generally high. Given the demands on teachers' time, senior managers must instil a proper sense of the priority of academic work.
- 4.10 The bursar and his staff, with the support of the governors' finance committee, ensure that financial resources are well managed and the requirements for educational provision are secured. An appraisal scheme for support staff is in preparation. In the past budgets have been generous and even in the changing financial climate are at least adequate. Funding has been found for large capital items like computer assisted design technology equipment. Pupils benefit from high quality facilities and good equipment. However the boarding houses are in need of refurbishment and this major project is underway. Given the funding role of GH, financial management in the past may have had less need for rigour. Given the naval traditions, the school rightly prides itself on a most efficient system of administration and this efficiency extends to many of the departments.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school is on course to meet almost all its aims and aspirations, providing a good full boarding experience, maintaining seafaring links and traditions and promoting an outstanding programme of activities. RHS develops a strong sense of service to the community, providing a Christian and caring experience supported by the chapel, all of which promotes good spiritual and moral development. Cultural and social development is also strong, which makes for the outstanding personal development of the pupils. Pupils are friendly, open and pleasant, and good relationships are established between pupils and with teachers. Personal appearance and discipline is very good. While the learning environment is generally good the academic side is under pressure from extra curricular activities. Clear, specific reference is needed to academic aspirations. Pastoral care and boarding are strong; parents are highly satisfied with the education provided and pupils are proud of their school.
- 5.2 The school has responded successfully to almost all the recommendations made in the 2000 inspection report. However, best practice in the use of ICT needs to be better communicated so that it becomes more widely used. More needs to be done to promote independent learning and to encourage pupils to make effective use of learning resources, including the library.
- 5.3 The school complies with almost all of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 3, (welfare, health and safety).

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses but, in order to become even better, it should implement the following recommendations for improvement.
1. Raise the academic expectations of teachers and pupils and the priority given to academic matters within a very crowded but valuable educational programme.
 2. Prioritisation of academic matters will help in finding time for:
 - improving the quality of teaching, including preparation and marking;
 - giving more attention to the individual needs of pupils;
 - planning better use of ICT and other resources;
 - communicating and sharing best practice.
 3. Encourage more independent learning and better use of the library.
 4. Continue the development of curriculum support for pupils with SEN, EAL and the G&T.
 5. Improve the effectiveness of procedures for considering the views of pupils, ensuring consistency across houses and promoting a sense of fairness over use of sanctions.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) update the child protection policy to ensure it complies with all aspects of Safeguarding Children in Education [Regulation 3(2)(b)];
 - (2) complete the action steps identified by the Fire Service in December 2005 including ensuring that staff do not wedge open fire doors [Regulation 3(5)(b)];
 - (3) complete the writing of a policy in response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 20th to 23rd March 2006. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews and informal discussions with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a wide sample of the extra curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended chapel and congregational practice. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the health centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of 5 Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspectors over 3 days.

List of Inspectors

Dr Vivian Anthony	Reporting Inspector, former Secretary of HMC, Headmaster of HMC school
Mr Magnus Cowie	Deputy Head, HMC school
Mr Robert Dillow	Headmaster HMC school
Mr Frank Harriss	Former director of studies, HMC school
Miss Theresa Homewood	Deputy Head, HMC school
Mr Julian Johnson-Munday	Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Geoffrey Link	Headmaster, SHMIS school
Mrs Alison Rhodes	Head of Department, HMC School