



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**ST ALBANS SCHOOL**

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## St Albans School

Full Name of School	<b>St Albans School</b>
DfE Number	<b>919/6220</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1092932</b>
Address	<b>St Albans School Abbey Gateway St Albans Hertfordshire AL3 4HB</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01727 855521</b>
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Email Address	<b>hm@st-albans-school.org.uk</b>
Head	<b>Mr Jonathan Gillespie</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Stephen P Eames</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>826</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (Boys aged 11-18 – 762); Girls aged 16-18 – 64)</b>
Numbers by Age	11-18: <b>826</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>826</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>14 Oct 2014 to 17 Oct 2014</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

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

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

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

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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 Maureen Bradley	Reporting Inspector
Ms Deborah Duncan	Team Inspector (Head of an International school)
Mrs Cathy Williamson	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA school)
Dr Michael Yates	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Richard Barr	Team Inspector (Former Head of Sixth Form, HMC school)
Mr Julian Johnson-Munday	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Alun Jones	Team Inspector (Principal, GSA School)
Mrs Sue Sowden	Team Inspector (Former Head, GSA school)

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Albans School is an academically selective day school for boys aged 11 to 18 and girls 16 to 18. Sited in the historic centre of St Albans, opposite the Cathedral and Abbey Church of St Alban, with which it has had a long association, the school traces its foundation to the year 948, being under monastic control until the dissolution of the Abbey in 1539. In 1553 a royal charter established it as a grammar school, since when its governance has been independent of the established Church. The school is a secular foundation, welcoming pupils of all faiths or none and is administered by a governing body. The school also owns playing fields, and a field centre in Wales. It aims to provide an excellent education with a broad curriculum, whereby pupils achieve the highest standard of academic success according to ability and develop their character and personality to become caring and self-disciplined adults. The school strives to know each pupil as an individual.
- 1.2 Pupils travel to school from St Albans and the surrounding area of north London and Hertfordshire and come from a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities. The school is organised into three sections, consisting of the lower school for Years 7 and 8, the middle school for Years 9 to 11 and the sixth form. At the time of the inspection there were 826 pupils in the school including 291 in the sixth form, of whom 64 were girls. The school has identified 93 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 54 receive learning support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. No pupils have been identified as having English as an additional language (EAL). The ability of all pupils is above the national average with around half of all pupils being of well above average ability. There is a slightly wider spread of abilities in the sixth form with a quarter of pupils having well above average ability.
- 1.3 In September 2014 a new headmaster and second master took up their respective posts. Changes have also been made to the senior management team (SMT) and governance structures since the previous inspection. A new swimming pool and sports hall have been opened and the existing gymnasium rebuilt as a refectory and a modern foreign language facility. An adjacent office building has been purchased and converted into a sixth form centre, which also houses art, politics, economics and classics, along with the school shop.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

### **Senior School**

School	NC name
First Form	Year 7
Second Form	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10
Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

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

- 2.1 The achievement of pupils across all ages is exceptional. The school fully meets its aims to enable pupils to achieve the highest standard of academic success according to ability and similarly in their extra-curricular interests. Pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND, make good and, by the end of the sixth form, excellent progress as a result of the high expectations of teachers whose exceptional subject knowledge and varied methodology ensures strong intellectual development and high levels of success in public examinations. Motivated by a broad-based curriculum, high quality speakers and challenging extension work, pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They demonstrate resilience and perseverance. The previous inspection recommended that the school provide more consistent challenge for the most able and this has been successfully achieved. Consistency across subject areas, especially with regard to marking, has also improved. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of pupils expressed dissatisfaction regarding the amount of homework they receive; inspection evidence shows that appropriate homework is set but the homework timetable is not always followed by staff.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils are highly appreciative of the excellent individual pastoral care and guidance they receive which helps them to grow into mature, caring and self-disciplined adults. The many opportunities provided for them to make valuable contributions to their school, the local community and charity work allows them to develop strong social, moral and cultural awareness and an understanding of the value of service to others. There are excellent arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Almost all pupils and parents reported in the pre-inspection questionnaire that the school provides a happy and safe environment. A minority of pupils who responded to questionnaires were dissatisfied with the fairness of sanctions, and a small minority with the equitable distribution of rewards. Inspection evidence shows that sanctions are not always equally applied by staff. The rewards system is fairly operated. The majority of pupils expressed dissatisfaction with opportunities for them to express their views. Inspection evidence shows that opportunities for pupils to discuss their views and concerns are limited.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are good. The exceptional achievement and excellent personal development of pupils are the result of strong leadership and effective management at all levels. The governors have been successful in improving the buildings, facilities and resources since the previous inspection and their expertise and skill is an important source of support and guidance. The senior management has successfully appointed high quality staff and, combined with strong middle management, the standards of teaching and learning have improved. The school maintains good links with parents. The review of policies by both governors and senior management has not always been robust although policies and procedures for child protection and the recruitment of staff are always secure and thorough. The self-review of academic standards is consistent but self-evaluation of whole-school effectiveness has been less strong. A small minority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction about the way their concerns have been handled. Inspection evidence shows that minor concerns are satisfactorily resolved but procedures to record more formal concerns have been less robust in the past. Newly appointed

senior managers and the governors have a strong vision for the school's successful future. Current measures to review the schools' policies and procedures and the school development plan are good.

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

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

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure the governing body reviews school policies robustly and monitors the efficiency with which they are implemented.
2. Implement whole-school evaluation to review the effectiveness of all aspects of school life.
3. Ensure that pupils have a forum to express their views and concerns and that effective feedback is provided.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is exceptional.
- 3.2 The overall achievement of pupils across all ages is exceptional and represents a most successful fulfilment of the school's aims. Achievement of pupils with SEND is in line with their peers and the most able pupils reach exceptional levels of achievement across a broad range of educational experience.
- 3.3 In all subject areas pupils demonstrate high levels of knowledge, understanding and skill. Their oral skills and use of technical terminology in discussion and debate demonstrate excellent understanding of advanced concepts and highlight their exceptional powers of reasoning. Pupils are knowledgeable and articulate and their written work is presented with flair and imagination. They are highly numerate and logical thinkers. Pupils combine their advanced scientific knowledge with these skills and apply them to excellent effect; they produce highly analytical and evaluative work. In the physical, creative and performing arts pupils perform at outstanding levels. They achieve at the highest levels in creative work and sport. Pupils are competent in the use of information communication technology (ICT) which they use imaginatively in creative subjects and to excellent effect in their independent work.
- 3.4 Pupils enjoy excellent levels of success in a wide range of extra-curricular pursuits. They excel in academic competitions such as national mathematics, science and language Olympiads. Pupils of all ages reach the highest levels of county, national and international representation in a variety of sports, including rugby, cricket, tennis and cross country. This includes individual and team competitions. Music flourishes across the school. Pupils participate at county level in orchestras and ensembles and achieve high grades in individual instrumental examinations. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and Duke of Edinburgh Award (DofE) enable pupils to develop strong leadership and team-building skills; many pupils achieve silver and gold award in DofE.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE overall have been exceptional in relation to the national average for boys in maintained schools, and above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. Over four-fifths of results were achieved at A\* or A grades. Results in IGCSE have been higher than worldwide norms and in English language, mathematics, physics have been higher than UK norms. A-level results for both boys and girls have been well above the national average for maintained schools, and in 2011 were exceptional. Results have also been above the national average for maintained selective schools. Boys' results have been exceptional overall. Over two-thirds of all A level results have been at A\* or A grades. The school maintained similar attainment standards in the public examinations in 2014. Almost all sixth form pupils are successful in gaining places on highly competitive courses in their first choice of university.
- 3.6 These levels of attainment, taken in conjunction with other inspection evidence and nationally standardised progress data, indicate that progress is good, and excellent by the end of the sixth form in relation to the national average for pupils of similar ability. In the sixth form, boys and girls make similar, high levels of progress. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND, make rapid progress

during lessons and this is confirmed by scrutiny of their work books and responses in curriculum interviews. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses almost all pupils and parents were pleased with the progress they make.

- 3.7 Pupils across all ages demonstrate exemplary attitudes to learning. They are eager to learn and respond confidently to intellectual challenge and rigour. The pupils' excellent behaviour in lessons allows them to develop high levels of concentration and perseverance when work is particularly challenging. Motivated and ambitious for their future success, they are co-operative learners. They show resilience and are prepared to take risks in their learning and deal well with any failure which occurs. They strive for excellence in all aspects of their school life.

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

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 In keeping with the school's aims the broadly-based and integrated curriculum enables pupils to enjoy a comprehensive educational experience. The curriculum is effectively designed and provides excellent coverage of mathematical, scientific, creative, aesthetic and practical fields of study.
- 3.10 In the lower and middle schools pupils benefit from studying a broad range of subjects. They receive opportunities to extend their learning in a wide range of languages including Greek and Latin and a generous provision of creative, technical and performing arts courses. This broad experience allows pupils the widest possible choice when selecting their subject options in GCSE and IGCSE. The pupils' health and developmental needs are well met through a well-structured personal, health and social education (PHSE) syllabus and a comprehensive physical education (PE) programme. In all areas of learning, work which stimulates and challenges the most able pupils extends their learning. The curriculum is constantly under review to ensure public examination opportunities are sufficiently challenging. The provision of early examination entry, IGCSE examinations and pre-A level courses allows pupils to study more demanding syllabus content and extend their learning.
- 3.11 An extremely flexible choice of options in the sixth form allows pupils to choose almost any combination of subjects at AS and A level. Compulsory games, PE and PHSE continue to encourage healthy and balanced lifestyles. Netball and lacrosse are provided additionally as team sports. With the addition of critical thinking and general studies, and the opportunity to do an assessed extended project, the curriculum continues to expand learning. Pupils receive appropriate careers guidance, enabling them to know their strengths through self-evaluation and relate this to the world of work. The pupils' experience is broadened by their involvement in a partnership scheme with local primary schools to give subject master classes.
- 3.12 The curriculum is appropriate for pupils of all abilities and aptitudes including those with SEND. Pupils are screened most effectively for learning difficulties and teachers and tutors are advised of their needs. Such pupils have full access to the curriculum with support given within lessons and in subject clinics. The school provides exceptional opportunities for more able pupils. A wide range of outstanding academic extension activities is provided by all subjects. Outside speakers, pupil-led seminars and debates inspire the pupils' interest and are open to all. Pupils appreciate the high quality of these events. The school's lecture societies attract exceptional speakers such as a Nobel prize-winner speaking on stem cell research.

- 3.13 The provision of extra-curricular activities is a strength of the school. Pupils of all ages speak positively about the many clubs and activities available. Almost all pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that there is a good range of activities they can join. Pupils have good opportunities to develop leadership skills in the sixth form, organising activities such as small music groups and helping staff with clubs. Music, drama and sports activities involve large numbers of pupils and high quality performances and competitions take place in school and in the local community. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop a sense of service and concern for others and pupils raise considerable amounts of money for local charities and for the school's link with communities in Tanzania.

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

- 3.14 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.15 The high expectations and the challenging learning environment that pupils of all ages encounter enables their exceptional achievement and learning. A variety of teaching strategies, combined with encouragement for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, ensures strong intellectual development. The majority of teaching demonstrates exceptional subject knowledge. This reflects the school's aim to appoint the highest quality staff, who are an inspirational force both in and beyond the classroom.
- 3.16 Most teaching enables rapid progress, characterised by the effort, enjoyment and interest shown by pupils across the school. The overwhelming majority of those who responded to the pupil questionnaire reported that they feel encouraged to work independently. Strong independent learning skills are stimulated in most teaching, which creates opportunities to explore topics in further depth. Teaching is well-planned, fast-paced and has clear targets. Classroom discipline is excellent and the strong confidence and respect pupils show for their teachers encourages innovation and risk taking in lessons. For example, in a GCSE science lesson where a very demanding task allowed for the possibility of failure, pupils relished the challenge of solving the problem and did so successfully. In a small amount of less successful teaching, the challenges posed are insufficient to match the potential of the pupils and resources used inadequate, leading to a lack of pupil interest.
- 3.17 In the sixth form, outstanding relationships exist between staff and pupils. Most teaching demonstrates subject expertise and passion through skilful questioning, which encourages scholarly performance to prevail. For example, pupils debated, discussed and analysed complex political issues in a foreign language, using humour and irony. In most cases, high expectations of pupils are exceeded.
- 3.18 Teachers know their pupils well and understand their differing needs and they adapt their teaching accordingly. In almost all teaching, those pupils requiring extra support are given the attention they require. Pupils with SEND are supported by extra specialised tuition and further support in the classroom. As recommended in the previous inspection the most able pupils are known to staff and they have extension tasks built into lesson plans and schemes of work.
- 3.19 Teaching is very well supported by a wide range of excellent facilities and resources and digital technology is used effectively in many lessons. Pupils have access to good ICT resources and libraries around the school both centrally and within some subject departments. They benefit from a stimulating learning environment including

the school's historic setting, and interest is enhanced by vibrant and imaginatively designed wall displays.

- 3.20 Since the previous inspection marking across departments has improved and is generally consistent with helpful and encouraging comments given to increase understanding. In a few subjects marking is more variable and less helpful. The excellent supportive relationships between teachers and pupils encourage detailed oral feedback on work which is particularly valued by pupils. The school evaluates and analyses academic attainment and progress thoroughly. Standardised assessment and tracking data are made available and used very carefully by departments to inform planning and to track pupil progress. Pupils and subject teachers regularly discuss and agree individual learning targets. In most teaching the pupils' learning is monitored constantly and is especially significant in promoting rapid progress in sixth-form work.
- 3.21 In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of pupils raised concerns about the amount of homework. Inspectors found that, whilst most homework is set in suitable amounts, there is some inconsistency as to when it is issued, which disrupts consistent learning. Some staff check carefully the work and other commitments of pupils for whom they are responsible, particularly in the sixth form.

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

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 As pupils progress through the school they grow into confident and independent people who demonstrate a high standard of personal development ready to contribute to society by the time they leave. They are mature and responsible citizens well prepared for the next stage of their education or working life. The school fulfils its aim to develop the pupils' character and personality so as to become caring and self-disciplined adults.
- 4.3 The pupils develop a strong spiritual awareness and value all faiths within the multi-cultural environment of the school. The supportive culture encourages high levels of self-esteem and self-awareness. Pupils appreciate the school's focus on their development as mature and responsible adults and respond well to the encouragement they are given to pursue their particular area of academic, creative or aesthetic interest. They are reflective and thoughtful young people who understand the importance of strong values in their life and in society. Their appreciation of creativity is evident in their response to the music and drama performed in the school and the art displayed. They respond thoughtfully to the opportunities to be silent and reflective in Abbey services and non-religious assemblies.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is excellent. Through lively discussion and debate on moral issues facing young people today, pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong. Their clear understanding of the importance of fair play was especially evident in conversations with pupils. They understand that life chances are not equal for other young people around the world and support a wide range of charities. For example, Year 8 pupils have sold their own art at auction and pupils organised a charity concert to support three orphanages in Tanzania. Mutual respect and co-operation are common throughout the school. Year 9 pupils were highly supportive of each other when appraising and evaluating each other's work. The majority of parents who answered the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that pupils demonstrate high standards of behaviour.
- 4.5 Throughout the school, pupils have excellent social awareness and are polite, courteous and enjoy convivial relationships with staff and with each other. Pupils appreciate the house system and enjoy the friendly competitive spirit that it fosters. From Year 7 pupils have regular opportunities to visit the school's field centre in Wales which develop a strong sense of community spirit and shared experiences. They show a strong commitment of service to the local community in the partnership scheme with local primary schools. Pupils of all ages show initiative and commitment in helping local community conservation work to restore natural habitats for wildlife. Service to others continues as older pupils become engaged in helping the elderly and visiting local hospitals. The curriculum and the many visits within the country to a variety of British institutions promote the pupils' understanding and appreciation of British democratic values.
- 4.6 Pupils enjoy and celebrate the variety and diversity of different cultures within the school resulting in strong cultural awareness. They demonstrate mutual respect and tolerance for each other and in conversations with pupils they said that everyone can

be themselves. Numerous trips abroad and visits to galleries and concerts provide a variety of opportunities for further cultural development.

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

- 4.7 The school's arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.8 The staff provide highly effective support and guidance for the pupils in accordance with the school's aim that each pupil be well-known and valued as an individual. Almost all parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported that their children are happy and feel safe in school.
- 4.9 Pupils greatly appreciate the high level of individual care and support they receive. Staff know their pupils extremely well and foster an excellent atmosphere of trust and safety, leading to strong and positive relationships. The pastoral management structure, focused on form tutors, is highly effective. Pupils are happy to take any issue to their tutor knowing that matters will be taken seriously and handled well. Serious matters are referred to heads of section or senior management if necessary. Induction procedures are thorough, including those for girls on entering the sixth form who have regular and ongoing meetings with their Year 13 'buddy'.
- 4.10 A few parents and pupils commented in the pre-inspection questionnaires that some incidents of bullying are not handled well by the school. Inspection evidence does not support this view. At interview and in informal discussions, pupils reported that on the few occasions when unkindness or anti-social behaviour occurs, they know who to inform and that matters are handled thoroughly by staff. The school implements policies to guard against harassment and bullying, including cyber-bullying, effectively. The school has excellent systems in place to promote good behaviour and the rewards system is effective and appreciated by the majority of pupils. The SMT recognise that sometimes sanctions are not always applied consistently by staff and they are monitoring this to improve the fairness for pupils. Good procedures for monitoring serious incidents of poor pupil behaviour have recently been introduced. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, the majority of pupils commented that the school does not provide satisfactory opportunities for them to express their views, or respond to them. Pupils comment that the school council lacks effectiveness and feedback to pupils is inconsistent. The inspection evidence shows that the school is aware of this concern and has already made good arrangements to strengthen the way in which it seeks and responds to the pupils' views.
- 4.11 The PHSE curriculum promotes healthy eating and the importance of exercise; staff are particularly aware of any potential for welfare concerns about eating and carefully monitor any patterns that might indicate a problem. Staff are also alert to the potential for stress in the highly academic environment. There are excellent processes in place to identify and support pupils with SEND, who are highly appreciative of the help they receive. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of pupils who may require special physical or learning needs and an accessibility plan is in place to improve the physical access of the site.

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

- 4.12 The quality of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.13 The school maintains excellent oversight of the welfare, health and safety of the pupils and provides a safe and secure environment in which pupils can thrive, in line with its aims. An effective health and safety policy is implemented thoroughly and a committee ensures areas of risk are assessed frequently across the school. The committee reports each term to the governing body and any areas of concern are closely monitored. A suitable policy is implemented for external visits and trips which are also assessed for risk. Maintenance management is particularly strong and the site provides attractive and safe grounds where pupils can relax in outdoor spaces. Arrangements to prevent the risk of fire are effective, and drills are held regularly and fully evaluated. The maintenance of fire equipment is completed by outside contractors and staff have received appropriate fire training.
- 4.14 Safeguarding policies and procedures are thorough and suitable induction training in child protection is updated for staff regularly, including for staff with designated responsibilities. The school maintains close links with the local welfare agencies. All welfare concerns are closely monitored and fully documented. Pupils who feel unwell during the day have access to qualified nurses in a suitable medical centre. There is a comprehensive first aid policy which outlines clear procedures for staff, many of whom have first aid training. Registration of the pupils is undertaken appropriately and any absence is followed up correctly; registers are stored appropriately. The school maintains a detailed electronic admissions register, which is backed up daily and stored indefinitely.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing board provides effective oversight of the school in line with its aims and is successful in maintaining the ethos of a strong academic school with a caring and supportive atmosphere. Many governors have a long and personal connection to the school. Whilst building on the school's current strengths and success, governors have a clear vision for the school's development. Since the previous inspection they have improved the accommodation, facilities and resources especially through the provision of new sports facilities, classroom accommodation and a sixth-form centre. A sound financial and strategic development plan is supported by close liaison between the finance committee and senior managers. School development planning is kept under constant review. The restructuring of delegated committees in recent years has increased their effectiveness. The experience and skills represented in areas such as education, property, business, finance and law provide valuable support to the SMT.
- 5.3 Through regular meetings and visits to the school and reports provided by senior managers, the governors gain a good understanding of the school. Members of staff are invited to give presentations to the governing body on their subject areas and current educational issues, including the induction process for the younger pupils and information on learning support. Evaluation of academic achievement is given a high priority in governors' meetings.
- 5.4 Acting as a corporate body, governors understand their legal responsibilities and maintain careful oversight of child protection and health and safety procedures. An appointed governor for child protection maintains close contact with the school and a report is presented to the governing body each term. Governors have received child protection training. The board fulfils its responsibilities for reviewing the safeguarding policy annually and they maintain careful oversight of the safe recruitment of staff. Review of other key policies and procedures such as those for anti-bullying and behaviour has been less rigorous in ensuring they continue to be suitable and that pastoral care is fully evaluated for effectiveness. Minutes of governing body meetings do not always record the relevant discussion regarding policies and their implementation.
- 5.5 The governors have successfully responded to the recommendations of the previous report.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.7 The success of the school in achieving exceptional academic standards and excellent personal development for the pupils is supported by strong leadership and management throughout all sections of the school. The academic results and teaching quality have improved since the previous inspection and high standards of pastoral care have been maintained. With the support of the governing body, and enabled by a clear vision of the school's needs for the future, leaders have

effectively managed extensive building projects and investment in new facilities and resources. The success of leadership and management is evident throughout the school in the confident demeanour of the pupils, their academic success and their levels of involvement in the broader education the school offers.

- 5.8 The school successfully appoints highly qualified and committed teachers and dedicated support staff who enjoy working in a school community which provides a high quality educational experience for the pupils. The recent changes in senior leadership have been carefully managed to ensure a smooth transition and the school community is positive about the future direction of the school. The roles of senior leaders are clearly defined and the current SMT work well together. Communication with senior leaders has recently improved and a more collaborative style of management has been initiated.
- 5.9 Middle managers, such as heads of department, make a strong contribution to the excellent standards of teaching and learning. Departments work collegiately and with a clear sense of purpose; they demonstrate a willingness to be reflective about their practice. Middle managers maintain thorough monitoring of academic standards, provide effective support for staff and encourage innovation which results in much exciting and often inspirational teaching. A teaching, learning and assessment group has been formed to explore further new ideas and methodology.
- 5.10 There is a well-established system of appraisal which includes peer review and the sharing of good practice. Staff speak positively of its impact in terms of the support they receive and its impact on their professional development. Staff training needs are identified effectively and high quality in-service training is provided.
- 5.11 Welfare, health and safety procedures are efficiently managed and the checks to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are secure. In recent years the review of school policy has not always been sufficiently robust to monitor its effectiveness. Evaluation of academic standards is of consistently high priority but self-evaluation of whole-school effectiveness has hitherto been weak. This has been recognised by the present SMT who are conducting reviews into policies and procedures for pastoral care such as those for sanctions. Senior leaders are currently reviewing the school development plan in this context to good effect.
- 5.12 Links with parents are good. There is an active parents association which organises a number of social events and has recently also become involved in helping with the induction of new pupils in Year 9. Parents are encouraged to attend events in school such as music and drama performances, and sports fixtures. They also offer their services to the school at careers evenings and in an annual business and communications conference as part of the careers programme.
- 5.13 In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, parents show strong satisfaction with the quality of education and support provided by the school. The required amount of provisional information about the school is available on the school website and in other publications. The safeguarding policy and other required information is on the school website and school policies can be obtained by contacting the school. In addition, there are a number of informative handbooks available from different departments which help parents to understand the processes and practices in the school. An attractive annual school magazine and newsletters throughout the year communicate the highlights of the year effectively.

- 5.14 Parents are kept informed about their children's progress through detailed written reports issued at least twice a year; these outline required areas for improvement. Pupil progress is communicated through information on pupil grades throughout the term and an annual parents' evening for each year group.
- 5.15 In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of parents indicated dissatisfaction with the way the school handles their concerns. Some commented that the reporting of concerns to senior management is not encouraged and concerns are not always responded to. The school has an appropriate complaints policy. The inspection found that day-to-day concerns are handled appropriately by staff and evidence does not show that formal complaints are not handled according to school policy.

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