



# *Inspection Report*

*“The clear vision and sense of direction set high expectations and achieve high standards”*

## 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 February 2008.

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. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and disability).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning corporal punishment.

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

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in March 2011 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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.

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', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**



## Inspection Evidence

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

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# 1. The characteristics of the School

- 1.1** Ardingly College was founded as St Saviour's College, Shoreham in 1858, by the priest and educationalist Canon Nathaniel Woodard, to teach 'sound principle and sound knowledge, firmly grounded in the Christian faith.' It moved in 1870 to its present location outside Haywards Heath in rural Sussex. It now occupies an estate of just over 260 acres close to the village of Ardingly. It is part of the Woodard Corporation and has a strong Anglo-Catholic tradition, although pupils of all faiths or none are welcome. The spiritual life of the school is supported by the provost of the southern division of Woodard Schools, to whom the chaplain is responsible. The school has been fully co-educational since 1982. The preparatory school was founded in 1912 and the pre-preparatory department in 1993. The school has an independent governing body known as the School Council, within the Woodard group of 46 schools.
- 1.2** The school aims to enable boys and girls to develop their love of learning, academic potential and individual talents in a caring community that fosters sensitivity, confidence, a sense of service and enthusiasm for life.
- 1.3** At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 521 pupils aged between 13 and 18, of whom 322 were boys and 199 girls. There were 248 day pupils and 273 boarders. The school has a sixth-form house that provides for boys and girls, both boarding and day. In addition, there are two boarding houses for younger boys and two for younger girls, as well as one day house for younger girls and two for younger boys. Day pupils come from the surrounding area, mainly from Surrey, East Sussex, West Sussex and Kent. Boarders come from the UK, from mainland Europe and from further afield, with 25 countries represented. Pupils are from a mixture of professional and business backgrounds. The great majority are of white British origin, with a wide range of other cultures represented.
- 1.4** Pupils are selected through Common Entrance and other entrance tests. The profile of pupils' abilities is above the national average. Of the 172 pupils who have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 107 require support. There are 113 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 46 require support.
- 1.5** Since the previous inspection, the school has engaged in significant improvements of its buildings and facilities. All the boarding houses have been refurbished, and there is a new business and economics block, modern languages centre, fitness studio, drama studio, and information and communication technology (ICT) suite. A new sixth-form boarding house was under construction at the time of the inspection.
- 1.6** National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Shell	Year 9
Remove	Year 10
Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13



## 2. The success of the School

### 2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1** Ardingly College is a community of faith, service and learning, in which excellent achievement takes place throughout the school. The high quality of extended writing, creativity and research shows the pupils' growing love of learning; this is stimulated by excellent teaching that almost always involves pupils fully in discussion and debate. Pupils achieve results in examinations that are above the national average for those in maintained schools and in line with the average for those in selective schools; International Baccalaureate (IB) results are excellent in relation to worldwide averages. Pupils make excellent progress overall, because success in examinations is complemented by extensive achievement not only across the broad and challenging curriculum, but also in the considerable range of activities and opportunities for enhancement. Pupils with SEND or EAL are extremely well supported and progress well. Throughout the school, pupils are well motivated, fully engaged in their work and often keen to pursue their studies outside the taught curriculum.
- 2.2** The pupils' personal development is excellent across the school. They grow into courteous, welcoming and open members of the community, for whom the exploration of faith, ethics and issues of responsibility become second nature. Chapel worship lies at the heart of the school's Christian life, with keen participation by pupils, whatever their level of personal commitment. Pupils show respect for those of different beliefs, nationalities and cultures. They value opportunities, such as projects in Africa, to work alongside people from a much less privileged background. Pupils make a considerable contribution to the running of the school and feel that their concerns and suggestions are taken seriously. Their growing maturity is underpinned by

excellent pastoral care and boarding provision. The fortnightly individual tutor meetings and the open relationships between pupils and staff, in both school and house, do much to support pupils in their life and work. Arrangements for safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety are robust.

- 2.3** This high quality of education and personal development is supported by excellent arrangements for governance and by excellent leadership and management. Governors take suitable responsibility for areas of welfare, health and safety, as do senior staff. Through links with areas of school life, meetings shared with a good range of senior staff and informal contact, governors have a good insight into the school and oversee strategy and performance well. Within the school, the clear vision and sense of direction set high expectations and achieve high standards. Many aspects of school life are considerably improved since the previous inspection and all the recommendations of that report have been addressed, as well as the action necessary for regulatory compliance. Links with parents are excellent.

### 2.(b) Action points

#### (i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

- 2.4** The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5** The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

#### (ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.6** The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Extend opportunities for pupils to play a full and active part in all lessons.



### 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' overall achievements and learning is excellent.

**3.2** The pupils' outstanding achievement is demonstrated widely. They show an excellent depth of knowledge and understanding in language and literature and outstanding creativity in art, explain theoretical concepts in science, synthesise ideas in geography and manipulate numerical data well. They analyse sophisticated musical compositions successfully. They are confident in conversation and challenge teachers' views, thinking independently. In extended projects, pupils develop ideas over a broader canvas, testing hypotheses and drawing on extensive research, for example on the performance of triode valves in guitar amplification. They show originality, whether writing about eternal issues in the school's divinity and philosophy journal, or developing a solar powered car to cross Australia. They use ICT well. Pupils gain places at a wide range of selective universities. They succeed in an extremely broad variety of national academic competitions and challenges, ranging from mathematics and science, to engineering and English. Published work in astronomy shows that their scientific achievement is recognised beyond school.

**3.3** Pupils attain high standards at team and individual level in a wide range of sports, with many representing county or national sides. Similarly, school teams achieve success in county or national competitions. The chapel choir sings regularly in cathedral services. Pupils participate in a large number of dramatic and musical events. A large number of pupils qualify for the silver and gold levels of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. Many pupils have won first places in local music festivals, and individual pupils have achieved at the highest level in the Woodard Musician of the Year competition in 2011. Pupils are also members of the National Youth Theatre.

**3.4** The following analysis uses GCSE and A-level data from 2008 to 2010, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available, and later data for the IB. Results at GCSE and at A level are good in relation to the national average for maintained secondary schools, and similar to the average for maintained selective schools. Results in International GCSE (IGCSE) in English as a second language are above worldwide averages. Results in the IB were excellent in comparison with the international average over the years 2009 to 2011, with exceptional results in 2010. In 2010 and 2011 over 50 per cent of grades at GCSE were A\* or A. In 2010 nearly 60 per cent of pupils' A-level grades were A\* to B, and in 2011 the proportion of A\* or B grades was just over 65 per cent.

**3.5** These results show that pupils make good progress in examinations throughout the school in relation to pupils of similar ability. Taking into account achievements in academic and other pursuits outside the taught curriculum, and the quality of teaching and learning, pupils make excellent progress overall. Excellent support enables pupils with SEND or EAL to make good progress with language skills. Pupils of high ability make excellent use of the exceptional opportunities that extend the curriculum. Provision for the pupils' differing needs is stronger than at the previous inspection, but girls still gain a higher proportion of high grades at GCSE, as the school is aware, though performance is now more even in the sixth form.

**3.6** In almost all classes, pupils are well-motivated learners who work independently and collaboratively. They take an active part in discussion, asking and answering questions. They participate in peer assessment, respecting each other as fellow students. They show enjoyment and perseverance. These attitudes reflect the school's aim for pupils to develop a love of learning.



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

- 3.7** The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8** The curriculum reflects the school's aims and philosophy, promoting high standards and providing well for the pupils' ages, abilities and needs. It is broad and balanced, covering the required areas of learning. Since the previous inspection, access to creative and expressive subjects in Year 9 has been improved. In Years 10 and 11, pupils have a good choice of languages and alternative routes in the sciences. Pupils take IGCSE examinations in core subjects, reflecting the school's view that these provide more challenge. A non-examined core of physical education, Learning for Life and Eudaemonia, the school's personal development programme, significantly enriches the pupils' experience. Following a recent review of how the 11 to 14 curriculum can straddle the transition from preparatory to senior schools, plans are well advanced for the 'Inquiring Curriculum', to be introduced in September and designed to develop pupils' research and thinking skills further. In the sixth form, the outstanding curriculum includes both A levels and the IB, offering a wide and varied range of subjects that meet the pupils' interests and abilities well. Their general education is enhanced by a wide range of additional non-examination opportunities and courses. Further challenge is provided for A-level pupils through the Ardingly Extended Project.
- 3.9** Throughout, the curriculum is extended by exceptional educational visits and lectures. For example, some physics pupils visit the European Organization for Nuclear Research in Geneva and meet the Keeper of Meteorites at the Vatican Observatory in Rome. Extensive use of the school's intranet allows pupils to access curricular materials. A very well-resourced library, library workshops and reading lists encourage independent study.

- 3.10** The excellent, structured support for pupils with SEND or EAL targets their needs well and is much valued by pupils and parents; good use is made of testing to identify the pupils' individual needs. Provision for gifted and talented pupils is also excellent, involving an exceptional range of opportunities for extension activities, as shown through the quality of pupils' work, well beyond the core requirements.
- 3.11** The school's provision of extra-curricular activities is outstanding. Experienced and enthusiastic coaches provide many opportunities, both in a wide range of major sports and in many other sports, as diverse as skiing, sailing, fencing and yoga. Pupils appreciate the high standard of coaching, which enables the highest achievers to reach national standards, while equal emphasis is given to sport for all so that every pupil, whatever their ability, gets good opportunities to take part in sporting activity. Notably, 13 football teams recently represented the school in a single fixture. Pupils respond to these opportunities well.
- 3.12** Since the previous inspection, the structure of the school day has improved access to the activities programme. As many as 85 activities are now offered each week. For example, Monday afternoon activities range from the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) to bee keeping, and from horse riding to batik. Pupils appreciate the diverse provision, which allows them to take part in a wide range of sport and activities. International outreach programmes take many pupils abroad each year to work in schools built as a result of their fund raising and hard work.

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

- 3.13** The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.14** Teaching promotes the pupils' learning and academic potential very well, thus fulfilling the school's aims. The great majority of teaching is at least good, with a substantial proportion that is of excellent quality, reflecting



significant improvement since the previous inspection. This high quality is spread across the curriculum. The best teaching involves pupils fully in their learning, creating many opportunities for them to put forward their own ideas, either to the whole class or in discussion in pairs and groups. A lively academic atmosphere is thus created in which pupils feel safe to explore ideas and develop their thinking. Teachers know pupils extremely well and address areas of weakness. Work is carefully matched to the pupils' differing needs, with individual support provided for those with SEND or EAL, and extra challenge for the most able, enabling all to progress well. Questioning is carefully focused on individual pupils, challenging their preconceptions and stimulating new ideas. These lessons are carefully planned with effective use of a wide range of resources and methods. The lessons are based, most significantly, on excellent working relationships, in which teachers and pupils respect each other, good humour is evident and the pace is productive. This high quality teaching is based on excellent subject knowledge and enthusiasm, which are communicated very effectively and instil in pupils a true sense of scholarship.

**3.15** The small minority of teaching which, whilst sound, is less effective, usually gives too much prominence to exposition from the teacher and results in insufficient participation by pupils. As a result, pupils do not think enough for themselves, the pace is sometimes slow and the pupils' progress is consequently hindered. The considerable amount of additional support given to pupils, both informally and through subject 'clinics', reflects the commitment and hard work that teachers bring to their teaching and contributes much to the progress that pupils make. These opportunities are much appreciated by pupils.

**3.16** The quality of marking and assessment is improved since the previous inspection. Work is generally marked regularly and meticulously. Errors are identified and corrected,

and in many cases a range of constructive comments is added to suggest ways that pupils can improve. Marking is further supported by good quality oral feedback in class. Opportunities for praise and rewards are prevalent and pupils feel encouraged.

**3.17** Progress is monitored effectively through an extensive structure of assessment processes, including regular and detailed reports and individual tutorials. Pupils write reflective reports based on their understanding of how they are developing essential skills in scholarship and learning, on self- and peer- assessment, and on individual target grades underpinned by nationally standardised data. This range of tracking and target setting programmes stimulates the pupils' efforts and motivation, and raises achievement across the ability range; it is carefully monitored by senior staff.



## 4. The quality of the pupils' personal development

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

- 4.1** The quality of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2** Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Their intuitive support for the school's ethos is in large part due to this strong spiritual sense. Pupils show considerable confidence and self esteem, combined with maturity and without arrogance. They respond well to strong spiritual leadership and support. Their excellent participation in chapel, for instance, contributes much to the ethos that is present in, and influences, all that happens at school. A number of pupils were confirmed during the inspection visit.
- 4.3** Pupils are courteous, well behaved and co-operative. The school achieves its aim to produce well-rounded, compassionate, modest pupils, with a distinct sense of humility and acceptance, and an international mindedness. Pupils fully appreciate the faiths and cultures of those around them as a result of their immersion in a mutually respectful cosmopolitan environment. There are a large number of cultures and nationalities represented in the school, and pupils freely teach and learn from each other. They also participate in a wide range of cultural activities; for example, the wide variety of music in which they take part ranges from classical to jazz and popular music. Pupils' cultural development is exceptionally strong.
- 4.4** Pupils have a keen sense of ethics and morality. They show that they understand the difficulties faced by those less fortunate than themselves and actively work, both financially and practically, to improve the plight of others. They gain much from the extensive range of links the school has both nationally and internationally, which have recently included projects in both Kenya and The Gambia.

These enhance the pupils' educational experience but also give them opportunities to provide a service to the community. As a result, pupils grow in humility and develop a more sympathetic and understanding approach to life. They say that they experience highly personal emotions, remembering the welcome they receive and the gratitude of staff, children and their families. They understand and express key ethical issues.

- 4.5** The pupils' social development is outstanding. They take responsibility well and demonstrate they can bring about real change by making their voices heard; since the previous inspection, the school has further improved in this area. Prefects complete a comprehensive training programme, whilst the Community, Action and Service element of the IB programme enables those pupils who take the IB to gain additional experience. Heads of house take their responsibilities seriously. They meet with house staff on a weekly basis and, together with their teams, make a significant personal contribution within their houses. Pupils can be seen helping and supporting each other throughout the day. The Learning for Life programme is the primary vehicle for teaching personal, social and health education, but this is well supported through tutorial and other activities. Pupils have a good sense of social, political and economic awareness.
- 4.6** The pupils' personal development is outstanding by the time they leave the school as confident, thoughtful and caring citizens. Their knowledge of the world around them and of its cultures has been extended by numerous opportunities to be actively involved outside the school. The strong moral lead provided by the Christian ethos and leadership that runs through the centre of life at the school enable them to develop a personal moral code, awareness of self, sensitivity to others and spiritual sense.



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

**4.7** The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.

**4.8** Since the previous inspection, the school has built on existing good practice. Strong pastoral care is provided by house teams led by house staff. Communication between these groups is excellent. Teachers know pupils extremely well and help them to take advantage of the extensive opportunities the school provides. This enables pupils to feel safe and secure in the knowledge that they have a network of support, which they may call upon at any time. The excellent tutorial programme, in which tutors have weekly meetings with their tutor groups and fortnightly meetings with individual tutees, means that difficulties are dealt with swiftly, and communication between pupils and staff maintained. Parents commented positively on the care provided by staff. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a small number of pupils criticised some aspects of school life but these criticisms were not borne out during the inspection. Annual house audits check regulatory compliance across both day and boarding houses. The pastoral committee, which includes prefects, also monitors all pupils' welfare, health and safety.

**4.9** Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves are outstanding. Teaching staff are devoted to helping pupils, and a strong ethos of mutual respect exists throughout the community; both staff and pupils say how welcoming they find it. Peer support in houses and tutor groups, which include pupils from different year groups, create a strong sense of co-operation; for example, older pupils help younger pupils with prep and in 'clinics'. Similarly, the 'student ambassadors' in the sixth form ensure that prospective pupils have a point of contact within the school prior to their arrival.

**4.10** The school has a very positive ethos in which pupils readily recognise that bullying and harassment are not tolerated, and these occur very rarely. Clear guidance is provided to pupils on what to do if they feel bullied. Surveys are carried out to

check for any occurrence. The pupils' behaviour is supported by appropriate sanctions and rewards, which are generally considered fair.

**4.11** Pupils are offered a well-balanced choice of food, including healthy options. They propose menu suggestions through the food committee. The varied sports programme helps to maintain fitness. The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

**4.12** Pupils have a wide range of opportunities to express views about the school through a variety of committees and their own council. Welfare questionnaires allow pupils to comment on pastoral care in an anonymous and open way.

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

**4.13** The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.

**4.14** Safeguarding and recruitment arrangements are robust. All staff and sixth-form prefects have received child protection training, and training for those with specific responsibilities is appropriate. In addition, the designated officer has good relationships with the local area designated officer and any concerns, however minor, are taken very seriously. The safeguarding policy is supported by a whistleblowing policy.

**4.15** Pupils are well protected from fire and other hazards. All systems are run and overseen with considerable expertise. The health and safety committee has pupil representatives, as well as an appropriate range of staff. All fire logs are well maintained and fire drills take place regularly in the boarding houses and elsewhere. House staff are trained as fire marshals and all teaching staff have extinguisher training. Subjects such as design and technology, and chemistry, are taught in safe learning environments. Machinery has all the necessary safety measures and the chemicals are safely and securely stored.



**4.16** The health centre is a valuable haven for sick pupils and for those looking for support and guidance when the need arises. The centre is staffed around the clock by qualified nurses, who also develop medical or welfare care plans for pupils with particular needs. The school doctors and counsellors also see pupils in the centre. In addition, there are a first-aid policy and a high number of well-trained first aiders. The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored. All recommendations from the previous inspection have been met.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

**4.17** The quality of boarding is excellent.

**4.18** The school complies with all the National Minimum Standards, and both recommendations from the previous Ofsted inspection, related to medical consent forms and child protection records, have been met. Results from the boarders' and parents' questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive. In both cases a range of issues was raised in a small number of responses, but the inspectors found no evidence to support these concerns.

**4.19** The boarders' personal development is excellent and they leave the school with a high level of self-confidence and self reliance. They speak enthusiastically about their houses and value the positive relationships they develop with their friends, including those of different cultures. The boarding houses accommodate pupils from a very wide range of nationalities and backgrounds; the supportive and cohesive nature of these communities means that boarders develop respect for one another. Distinctive cultural characteristics are celebrated in school through themed days in meals, and in houses through evening events organised and run by the international boarders.

**4.20** Boarders have a range of opportunities to take responsibility for others, whether as mentors for younger pupils or as prefects. Boarders feel strongly supported by all the staff.

**4.21** In Year 13, boarders all live in one house and the boarding experience allows them to become increasingly independent. These boarders are encouraged, though not obliged, to do their own personal laundry and they have well-equipped kitchens to cook simple meals for one another, thus preparing them for life as students. The senior prefects have a school-wide role and are clearly respected by the younger pupils.

**4.22** The school operates a number of pupil councils and committees, thereby enabling boarders to contribute to the day to-day management of the houses and the school. House councils contain representatives from each year and appropriate recommendations are adopted. The boarders reported that they feel they can raise any issue with the housemistresses and housemasters.

**4.23** Boarders have excellent relationships with one another and with boarding staff. Each boarder has a personal tutor and the houses are staffed by a wide range of adults. Senior house staff know their boarders very well and demonstrate true care and concern.

**4.24** House staff set high standards to ensure that the quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. There is a good induction process for new boarders, who are quickly integrated into the boarding system. Good quality handbooks are updated regularly. Boarders feel that there are many members of staff to whom they can turn for help. Two counsellors and an additional independent listener provide extra support should it be needed. The medical provision is excellent. Male and female boarders too ill to attend school have 24-hour care in separate suites of rooms. Pupils much appreciate the service provided. Doctors from a local practice visit the school three times a week and boarders have access to other health professionals. Medicines are administered and stored appropriately. Fire evacuation drills are held regularly and appropriate logs are kept.



- 4.25** Boarders take all their meals in the dining hall. The choice and quality of the food provided are excellent and an active pupils' food committee, attended by the head chef, makes suggestions that are often adopted. Menus are sent by email to all pupils at the start of term. The catering department is aware of those with food allergies and provides alternative dishes. Boarding houses each have a number of kitchens where boarders may supplement their diet with snacks, some of which are provided by the school.
- 4.26** The laundry service is good. Matrons are integral members of each boarding house, providing care and firm parameters on tidiness. Boarders are provided with lockable storage and keys for their rooms.
- 4.27** The activities programme available to boarders during the week is extensive. There is a varied choice of sporting, creative, musical and artistic opportunities, in addition to the DofE scheme and the CCF. On Saturdays, there is a plethora of sporting fixtures. Those boarders not selected have a suitable choice of activities from which to choose. On Sundays, trips are organised to a variety of venues. These are mostly activity based but some are more cerebral.
- 4.28** Each boarding house has at least one common room in which boarders may relax. These common rooms are well equipped with a range of facilities. It is a feature of the school that pupils across the year groups are often found in discussion together.
- 4.29** Accommodation for boarders is excellent. Year 13 boarders enjoy the fact that Woodard House is of mixed gender, with girls in one wing and boys in another. Girls in Year 12 see a benefit in being together in Toynbee House, whilst the boys' houses, Mertens and Hilton, reflect a more traditional vertical boarding system, which affords those in Year 12 good leadership opportunities. Since the previous inspection, the girls' houses have been refurbished and the improved environments are bright and cosy. The majority of boarders either share with one other or enjoy their own rooms. A new sixth-form house was under construction during the inspection.
- 4.30** Boarders mostly use mobile telephones to contact parents and friends, but landlines are also available. Video calling is used by both boarders from the UK and from overseas, and recent upgrades to the wireless network enable quick, multiple connections. Parents value the swift responses to their communications from house staff and feel part of the extended boarding community.
- 4.31** The school ensures the safeguarding of boarders through highly effective implementation of robust policies, including for safer recruitment, and promotes positive behaviour and relationships, including the prevention of bullying.
- 4.32** Boarding is extremely well led by eager and committed house staff. The college has a suitable statement of boarding principles and practice, which is available to parents and pupils. In discussion, the boarders were unanimously enthusiastic about the house staff. They have genuine affection for all the adults involved with their care, including those ancillary staff with whom they come into contact. Likewise, parents acknowledge the care and attention their children receive.
- 4.33** Communication between the academic and boarding sides of college life is excellent. An efficient management information system gives house staff feedback that enables them to support boarders with their academic work. Senior managers routinely monitor the records kept by house staff; these two groups meet every week and value this regular link. Recently appointed senior house staff have all completed relevant boarding training courses, and house staff have initiated individual house development plans.
- 4.34** Governors and senior management are committed to the development of boarding within the school and to the continuation of the programme of recent improvements.



## 5. The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

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

- 5.1** The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2** The excellent oversight, challenge and stimulus provided by governors enable the school to achieve its wide-ranging aims for both the pupils' academic and personal development. Governors bring a broad range of experience and expertise to the school, though their experience in education is more limited. Close working relationships between governors and senior staff are complemented by the growing role of link governors as they gain a detailed knowledge of specific areas of school life. Senior staff feel that they know governors well and value opportunities to work with them regularly; they express confidence in the oversight and support governors provide. Governors meet staff at a wide range of school and social events. School Council discussions are well informed by frank reports from the headmaster. Governors thus have a good insight into all aspects of school life, enabling them to provide support.
- 5.3** The role of provost provides a valuable link with the corporation and additional support and counsel for senior staff. Such links ensure that the college's core values of faith, unity and vision are nurtured, and that the central place of faith in the school community is maintained.
- 5.4** The governors oversee school finances prudently, enabling them to invest in new and improved accommodation and facilities, including in boarding, and high quality staff. They are rigorous in discharging their responsibilities for the annual review of child protection and safeguarding arrangements, and for overseeing welfare and health and safety. These matters are examined in detail by individual governors and committees, and then reviewed at board level. The school's compliance with other regulations is considered on a rolling programme. These aspects of

the governors' work are amongst a number of areas of governance which are much improved since the previous inspection and have ensured that the recommendations of the report from that time have been met.

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

- 5.5** The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6** Excellent leadership at all levels enables the school to fulfil its aims of developing the pupils' academic and personal potential, within the context of an active and nurturing Christian community. In this community, the Christian faith is lived out in an open way, whilst respect is maintained towards those of other backgrounds. Lively and innovative senior leadership underpins much of the school's success and its search for further improvement. Senior staff form an effective and open team, with strong working relationships and in whom other staff express confidence. This team has been further strengthened through recent appointments. A clear vision and educational direction run through the school, inspiring considerable commitment and hard work from the staff, who give fully of their time in the support and care of the pupils; expectations of both staff and pupils are high. The chaplaincy, whilst enjoying considerable support from the headmaster and other senior staff, enjoys a carefully designed independence from management structures, enabling it to offer valuable religious and personal support to all in the community. The operations of the school are extremely well supported by the hard work of all employed there, including teaching and non-teaching staff.
- 5.7** The academic work of the school enjoys strong leadership at both senior and departmental level. Standards are monitored



carefully and those with subject responsibilities know that they are accountable for the work of their departments. A programme of monitoring, departmental and other meetings, through which the quality of teaching and of the curriculum are kept under review, supports academic standards. This meets the recommendations of the previous report very well. Pupils benefit from the considerable vision within departments of enhancing the curriculum beyond examination requirements. Similarly, the extensive programme of activities is very well organised and fully supported by staff.

- 5.8** Leadership is also strong in the pastoral and boarding life of the school, where the complementary teams of house staff and tutors provide a carefully crafted blend of support. An exceptionally busy programme runs smoothly from day to day, and pupils say that they experience few clashes. The pupils' safety is supported well through careful implementation of pastoral, safeguarding and welfare policies, areas in which staff are appropriately trained.
- 5.9** Throughout the school, the questioning and review of practice support continual improvement. The structure of rolling programme reviews enables progress towards agreed goals to be monitored regularly across the various departments and sections of the school.
- 5.10** Pupils contribute much to school leadership, playing a key role in many aspects of school life, and feeling that their views are valued. With staff, they set an example that is a key part of the school community, contributing much to its open, welcoming and supportive nature.
- 5.11** Suitable care is taken over staff appointment and induction. Procedures for induction of new staff are thorough. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, and the prevention of bullying. A mentor is provided for all new members of staff to guide them through the complexities of a busy working day.

**5.12** The rigorous biennial system of appraisal includes a self-review and feedback by pupils. Staff interviewed during the inspection said they find that it makes a valuable contribution to their professional development.

**5.13** Links with parents are excellent. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were overwhelmingly positive about the school. There was no evidence to support the small number of concerns raised in the pre-inspection questionnaires. Parents spoke very positively of much improved communications since the introduction of the new email and school management systems, and said that there is good access to relevant and up-to-date information through the parents' portal on the school website. Parents of current and prospective pupils receive all the required information. The reporting system is clearly understood and considered by parents to be excellent. Parents say that reports are carefully tailored to individuals. The move to focus the varied activities of the three Friends Committees in the different sections of the college on a more social and supportive basis rather than on fund raising is seen as an enlightened approach to harnessing the considerable energy and support of parents. Parents are invited to a wide range of events at school and are extremely happy with the variety and quality of their involvement. Any concerns are appropriately investigated and the school has a suitable complaints policy, to which it adheres.





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