

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Lucton School

Full Name of the School	Lucton School
DCSF Number	884/6007
Registered Charity Number	518076
Address	Lucton, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 9PN.
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Headmistress	Mrs Gill Thorne
Chair of governors	Mr Mike Hodgson
Age Range	6 months to 18 years
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	21st to 24th January 2008

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 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 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Lucton School aims to celebrate the unique abilities and talents of each individual, to raise standards and expectations in every area and to maximise each pupil's potential. It exists to educate boys and girls in a caring community based on Christian moral values. The school has an extensive, compulsory after-school programme of activities and aims to produce well-rounded young adults ready to face the demands and challenges of a rapidly changing world.
- 1.2 Lucton is a small co-educational boarding and day school. It comprises a listed Queen Anne building and a range of Victorian and modern buildings set in about twenty acres of remote and beautiful Herefordshire countryside. Lucton School was founded by John Pierrepont in 1708. The school closed in 1984 but the site was acquired by the Lucton Pierrepont Educational Trust and the school re-established as a secondary school in 1989. Since then a Nursery and Preparatory School have been developed and the school is now celebrating its tercentenary year.
- 1.3 The school has changed significantly in both size and nature since the last inspection in 2000. Pupil numbers have almost doubled and the Nursery has increased fourfold. There were four boarders at the time of the last inspection and now there are seventy-one; about half are international students. A sixth form was introduced in 2005. The library, sixth-form centre, computer suite and indoor swimming pool are all new.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 221 pupils on roll, and a further 70 (ages 6 months to 4 years) in the Nursery. The prep school (ages 5 to 11) has 76 pupils and the senior school (ages 11 to 18) has 145, of whom 27 are in the sixth form, almost all in Year 12.
- 1.5 The ability profile of the school is in line with the national average and covers a wide range. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in national tests at the age of 11 and in GCSE will be broadly similar to the national average for all maintained primary and secondary schools. In the prep school girls outnumber boys, whereas further up the school the reverse is the case. Pupils come from professional, farming and service families and day pupils come from Herefordshire, Shropshire, Worcestershire and Powys. Only about one-tenth of the pupils are from ethnic minorities, mostly from other European countries and China.
- 1.6 The school has identified fifteen pupils as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), and one has a statement of special educational needs, funded through charitable trusts. A further twenty-five pupils benefit from optional extra support in study and organisational skills. Thirty-six pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and all of these receive support from the school.
- 1.7 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

Nursery and Preparatory School

- 2.1 The educational experience provided in the prep school is satisfactory, and consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy. It offers a range of educational opportunities suited to the interests and aptitudes of its pupils. Since the last inspection both the Nursery and prep school have grown considerably. The growth of independence, which begins in the Nursery, leads to more systematic subject study in the Reception class, continuing active learning through play which is at the heart of the Foundation Stage. Continuity of learning between the different stages of the school has been strengthened, as was recommended in the last inspection report, and literacy and numeracy hours are gradually incorporated into the daily structure.
- 2.2 Across the prep school pupils are provided with activities that contribute to their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, and human and social development and allow them to acquire the skills of speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy. At the main prep school assemblies take place each day and on Friday large numbers of pupils are encouraged to take part, developing not only speaking skills but confidence and self-esteem. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is provided for all and French, taught by a senior school specialist, is part of the curriculum throughout the school from Reception onwards. Pupils also benefit from two timetabled swimming lessons each week.
- 2.3 A wide range of activities is offered in the afternoons, including ballet, horse riding, swimming and other sports. At other times, after school or in the lunch hour, many pupils take part in choir and classes in drama, mime and verse speaking. Year 6 pupils run a dance club at lunchtime and violin and cello lessons are given without charge for Years 5 and 6. Year 6 also have the opportunity to go on a one week outward-bound adventure course.
- 2.4 Foundation Stage curriculum planning is effective and all pupils are able to learn and make progress. Any learning difficulty receives effective additional support. The different elements of the school day involve all children in the six areas of learning.
- 2.5 Planning in the rest of the prep school varies from useful and detailed work, which takes account of the pupils' differing abilities, to simple weekly planning sheets. Overall, provision for the less able and those identified as gifted and talented is at an early stage of formal development.

Senior School

- 2.6 The education provided is sound and is mainly consistent with the school's declared aims to celebrate the talents and abilities of each individual and to maximise each pupil's potential. The school also aims to raise expectations and standards, and is generally successful in doing this. The programme of extra-curricular activities provides stimulating and enriching opportunities.
- 2.7 The school has built upon the balanced curriculum that was in place at the last inspection with the inclusion of several additional subjects, a compulsory GCSE short course in citizenship and a significantly expanded programme for PSHE, including careers education. Music, religious education (RE), and drama are now offered as options at GCSE. The education contributes to linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development, and to the acquisition of skills of speaking,

listening, literacy and numeracy. The curriculum offers appropriate teaching allocations to most subjects although the generous time allocated to science teaching restricts other subject areas. All pupils have the opportunity to study up to two modern foreign languages to GCSE level, although at present many choose not to do so. The number and range of A-level subjects on offer are a strong feature, and meet the needs of all the pupils, as they themselves agree.

- 2.8 Extra-curricular provision is an important element of the education offered, with a programme of activities each school day. The activities afford valuable opportunities for sport and music, and practice for reading, speaking, poetry and drama competitions for example, but some pupils spend activity time on academic work. There is an extensive list of sports fixtures and pupils participate in various festivals – particularly the Hereford Festival – often with conspicuous success. There are voluntary service opportunities within the Cadets, and all Year 11 pupils do a week of work experience that is a valuable part of the school’s careers guidance programme and which they fully appreciate.
- 2.9 The school provides good preparation for the next stage of pupils’ education, training, employment and for adult life. Careers education is an important strand of the PSHE programme and advice on option choices at GCSE, sixth-form choices, university entrance and career opportunities is readily available to pupils and appreciated by them. As they grow older, pupils show increasing self-confidence and maturity of outlook.
- 2.10 The curriculum policy is thorough and detailed. Curriculum planning at departmental level is more varied, ranging from detailed schemes of work that provide a secure basis for lesson planning to cursory plans that lack focus and make inadequate reference to meeting the needs of the full ability range.
- 2.11 In each of Years 7 to 11, pupils are grouped by ability into two bands for all subjects and then further set by ability for English and mathematics. All pupils, on entering the school, are screened to identify potential learning difficulties and, in addition, pupils in Years 7 to 9 have an annual assessment. Individual support is organised for a significant minority, either at parental behest or as a result of the school’s testing. Those requiring help in mathematics or English, for example, attend lunchtime or activity sessions for extra support. All teachers are provided with detailed information on the particular needs of pupils identified as requiring extra support, whether for specific learning or language difficulties. However, in mainstream classes, pupils with LDD and those who do not have English as their first language do not always find their individual needs are sufficiently met to enable them to benefit fully from their lessons. The school is aware that some of its international pupils enter with less command of English than expected, and it is considering a number of options to deal with this, such as a three-year sixth-form course. The particular needs of gifted, talented and more able pupils have been recognised through, for example, the introduction of early entry for examinations, and further provision for them is being developed.

Whole School

- 2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

Nursery and Preparatory School

- 2.13 The quality of achievement in the prep school is satisfactory; learning is good overall. Pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skill and understanding in the subjects and activities provided and are able to think and act critically and creatively. Their attainment is sound for their ability in all areas and they achieve particularly well in music and drama, both within the school curriculum and as a result of their extra-curricular lessons.
- 2.14 In the Foundation Stage, most pupils attain the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception year, and some begin to work on appropriate study programmes from the next stage. Activities are well planned to ensure that even the youngest children learn the basic skills successfully. They learn the beginnings of reading and writing to a level that is appropriate to their age and ability. For example, after re-enacting the story of Cinderella, a group of Reception pupils were able to sequence the story successfully in a literary exercise.
- 2.15 Solid foundations for children's mathematical development are also laid in the Foundation Stage and they show a growing facility with numbers. Their knowledge and understanding of the world around them are developing successfully. Encouraged by their teachers, pupils use their imagination and creativity, and apply these to other activities.
- 2.16 From Year 1, the pupils make satisfactory progress through the prep school. In Year 6, results in national tests over the past three years have been in line with the national average for maintained primary schools.
- 2.17 Many pupils enter the Hereford Festival. Prep school pupils were entered for the choir and choral speaking competitions and were successful in both. A large number of pupils take external examinations in drama and related activities and their results in these are very good.
- 2.18 Pupils develop the essential skills for work and study as they move up the school. Their writing skills are enhanced by the work they do in English, history and geography. They become increasingly able to think for themselves and Year 6 pupils worked co-operatively to prepare a balanced argument for debate. In mathematics lessons they become more confident in their use of numbers. They can use their information and communication technology (ICT) skills competently, using the recently installed interactive whiteboards confidently. They demonstrate high levels of creativity in music, art and drama, and apply their skills and knowledge to different subjects and a variety of situations. They apply themselves diligently and work with obvious enjoyment. Almost all pupils progress to the senior school with sound independent learning skills and by then, have well-developed speaking and listening skills.

Senior School

- 2.19 The quality of pupils' learning and achievements in the senior school is good, contributing to fulfilling the school's aim to maximise pupils' potential. The school is aware that attainment, as measured by public examination results, is improving. Most pupils have a solid grounding in knowledge, skills and understanding in subjects and activities. Many can apply these and think and act critically and creatively, as was observed, for example, in a drama lesson where pupils were constructing sophisticated mimes in pairs.
- 2.20 Attainment in national tests at the age of 14 has been good overall in relation to pupils' abilities, but with significant variation between subjects. English and mathematics results have been in line with the averages for all maintained schools, though in science the results

have been well above the corresponding average. Pupils make good progress to GCSE in their knowledge and understanding. Overall results at GCSE, for the three years 2004 to 2006 have been above the average for all maintained schools. The pupils are thus obtaining results above those to be expected of pupils of their ability and this is consistent with the level of performance seen in the majority of lessons. Results for 2007 are in line with the average for all maintained secondary schools. A-level results so far are too few in number for comparisons with maintained school averages to be meaningful. The school has begun to use standardised measures of progress but has not yet had the time to gather sufficient data to provide helpful comparisons.

- 2.21 Pupils achieve well in extra-curricular activities which range from the Cadets to public speaking competitions and from varied sporting opportunities to participation in the Hereford Festival and the national maths challenge, where a gold award was achieved this year.
- 2.22 Pupils develop successful skills and attitudes for study. Pupils of all ages listen and speak effectively. They put forward their ideas confidently and listen to each other's opinions with respect. This was seen in discussions in a Year 10 EAL lesson and in the wide range of interviews conducted with pupils of all ages. High-level speaking and listening skills were also observed in Year 12 discussions in history and English. More able pupils write fluently and effectively and show good awareness of writing for different purposes and audiences.
- 2.23 Pupils can apply mathematics and mathematical concepts not only in mathematics lessons but also in subjects such as business studies, where pupils were making calculations from balance sheets. The use of ICT by pupils as a learning tool remains underdeveloped despite an enhanced level of resources. In many areas it is used only for word processing and occasional internet research. A few good examples of other usage were observed, however, such as the intranet resource for GCSE and A-level chemistry.
- 2.24 Pupils can reason and argue cogently and, as they mature, think increasingly for themselves. Good examples of reasoning skills were noted, for instance, in a Year 7 biology lesson where pupils were asked to put the stages of fertilisation into the correct sequence. Effective note taking was seen in several A-level lessons, whilst most pupils develop well in their ability to work independently and co-operatively. Pupils are usually tolerant of one another, listening with respect to each other in class without interrupting. Good co-operative working was noted in a Year 7 English lesson and effective independent thinking was observed in a discussion of moral issues in religious education.
- 2.25 Pupils show good levels of application and perseverance. They concentrate well when interested, though they become chatty and restless on the few occasions when lessons are not sufficiently challenging or engaging. At interview, many spoke positively about their work. They enjoy good working relationships with their teachers. The attitudes and behaviour of most are clearly conducive to learning. Sixth formers are particularly well motivated.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.26 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is good. Provision for spiritual and moral development is to be found in many different aspects of school life and pupils respond well. They show pride in themselves and their achievements, and their self-confidence and self-esteem are high. They are articulate and friendly.
- 2.27 Pupils show high self-esteem, reading confidently or standing up proudly to acknowledge their achievements and the applause of the others. Daily assemblies with well-chosen and explicit moral themes contribute to pupils' self-awareness and the sharing of a warm, supportive sense of community, in line with the school's aims. In assembly, achievements are rewarded, applauded and celebrated. Pupils' spiritual development is encouraged through a range of activities and subjects. The school promotes Christian values and all pupils including those with beliefs other than Christian also take opportunities within assemblies, and in some lessons, to reflect upon wider issues and spiritual themes. Regular monthly Sunday services, services for special events such as Remembrance Day and pupil/staff confirmation groups all enable pupils to develop their own sense of spirituality and a sense of respect for others. In RE lessons pupils discuss world faiths and their impact on the way different groups view spiritual life. In art, portraying and expressing memories encourages reflection and promotes self-knowledge. In the Nursery, children experience awe and wonder when they visit a farm at lambing time.
- 2.28 The school's approach to moral development and its code of conduct help pupils to have a clear understanding of right and wrong. They have a good sense of what is fair and unfair and respect the law. Younger pupils could clearly explain the school rules and why they exist. In class they are co-operative; around the school they communicate easily and are courteous, holding doors open and answering questions politely. The curriculum provides opportunities to explore moral issues in a range of subjects, and pupils do this enthusiastically. In Year 9 an English group explored the morality of master/servant relationships in a discussion of the treatment of Caliban in *The Tempest*, and in an extra-curricular debating session, pupils spoke clearly and confidently about the ethical issues of current conflicts.
- 2.29 Pupils' social awareness develops well as they grow up, and they contribute towards community life. Pupils are able to communicate their ideas and aspirations clearly, with increasing skill as they grow older. A house system allows pupils of all ages to enter into the spirit of friendly competition and exists mainly for sporting and other competitions and the collation of merits. Trophies are awarded weekly in the prep school to the groups that line up best, or are best behaved at lunch. Major house events include drama, music, poetry and mime, sports day and the swimming gala. Pupils value the opportunities they have to hold positions of responsibility, as heads of school and house prefects and as team captains. They also contribute to reviews of the anti-bullying policy. Sixth formers carry out duties around the school and the younger pupils look up to them.
- 2.30 Social issues are discussed in lessons, notably in PSHE and citizenship, where pupils have a good understanding of the difference between rules and laws, and they demonstrate knowledge of public institutions and services in England. Pupils also represent their year group on the senior school council, gaining an insight into practical citizenship, but the prep school council has not met for almost a year. Nevertheless, whilst a minority of pupils reported that they did not feel listened to, most in the prep school felt that their views were represented.

- 2.31 Pupils enjoy a range of cultural experiences throughout the school. Music and drama play an important role in the cultural development of pupils, many of whom perform in choirs, musical concerts and ensembles. They take part in reading and poetry competitions, mime and dance. Pupils also learn about their own heritage and culture in visits to galleries, museums, theatres, local festivals and other places of interest. Effective displays of their own drawings and paintings are on show in school brochures and pupils also benefit culturally through their own involvement in school productions such as ‘Oliver’ and ‘Alice’. Several nationalities are represented in the school and all bring distinctive cultures which are appreciated and valued by others. Displays around the school, for example in Year 4 on India, enable both the pupils who have created them, and those who look at them, to appreciate and respect other cultures. Through activities in school, many charity collections and occasional visits overseas, pupils strengthen their own sense of identity by understanding and learning about other cultures and beliefs.
- 2.32 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

Nursery and Preparatory School

- 2.33 The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with good teaching observed in more than a third of the lessons, and very little unsatisfactory teaching seen. Teaching ensures that the majority of pupils, including those with LDD, acquire new knowledge and make progress according to their ability, increasing their understanding and developing their skills.
- 2.34 Teaching mostly fosters the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, as well as the pupils’ interest in their work. In lessons where teachers challenge the pupils to apply prior understanding they are able to think and learn for themselves. In one science lesson pupils were enthusiastically engaged in a question and answer session, but in others pupils were told exactly what to do rather than being encouraged to work it out. In response to pupils’ pre-inspection questionnaires, some pupils from Year 3 upwards felt that the work they did was not interesting enough. In a number of lessons observed during inspection, the same task was set for all pupils regardless of ability, which led to some restless behaviour from those who needed greater challenge.
- 2.35 Teachers know their subjects well and use appropriate vocabulary. Very small classes and constant interaction with the pupils mean that teachers understand their needs well, but formal lesson planning is under-emphasised and the pace is sometimes too slow for the more able pupils in classes with a wide ability range. The quality of marking is inconsistent and it is not commonly used for detailed future lesson planning. Some staff from the senior school teach in the prep school and this is an improvement from the last inspection, when there was not enough connection between different parts of the school. Resources are much better than at the last inspection and good use is made of the recently installed interactive whiteboards. In some subjects there is over-reliance on photocopied worksheets which constrain pupils’ progress.
- 2.36 Teachers evaluate performance through regular meetings and a review of assessment results, and this information is communicated to parents in the twice-yearly reports. Full details are passed to the senior school when pupils move up.

Senior School

- 2.37 The quality of teaching is satisfactory, with many lessons that are good or better and only a few that are unsatisfactory. Marking of pupils' work has improved since the last inspection.
- 2.38 Very small classes enable the teachers to give individual attention to each pupil. The best lessons are characterised by brisk pace and careful planning, with varied activities and pupils' involvement in their own learning. As a result, pupils make good progress in understanding and skills, and their progress is reinforced by planned summaries and appropriate homework. In the minority of lessons where teaching is less successful, all pupils are set the same task rather than one expressly suited to their ability or level of English, and there is too much use of photocopied worksheets. Sometimes, the pace of working is slow and learning objectives are not shared with pupils, so that they are not actively involved in debate or directly engaged in their own learning. To an extent the level of personal attention compensates for this, but occasionally this leads to over supportive approaches.
- 2.39 Teachers know their subjects well and show good understanding, enabling them to respond effectively when pupils ask questions to extend their knowledge, especially in the sixth form. Teaching encourages intellectual effort, particularly at sixth-form level, where in drama and art for example, creative thinking and effort were fostered. Teaching in the practical subjects, especially art, drama and design and technology, usually enables pupils to think and learn for themselves. However, in some science lessons teaching does not place sufficient emphasis on developing pupils' independent investigative skills through their practical work.
- 2.40 Teachers have good relationships with their pupils and this encourages responsible behaviour. Conspicuous enjoyment of learning was seen in many sixth-form classes, and in art and English lessons among others. Responses to the pupils' questionnaire showed that some of the pupils do not find the work they are asked to do interesting, and in some lessons insufficiently challenging work explains why this was so.
- 2.41 Most lessons are planned in terms of the content and written or board exercises. What is often missing from the planning is provision for pupils' differing capabilities.
- 2.42 Teachers mark pupils' work regularly according to the guidelines for each subject. Examples of excellent, thorough marking containing suggestions for improvement were seen in English and Year 12 history. Most work is graded by marks out of ten or in relation to public examination standards, but it does not often contain advice on how to improve. In some cases spelling and other corrections were required and checked by the teacher, but comments such as 'Finish this' were not always followed up.
- 2.43 The school regularly evaluates pupils' performance against its own system of effort and achievement grades, and sends out half-termly grade sheets showing how they are progressing. A pilot scheme to log all grades and to set target grades for Year 10 pupils is underway.

Whole School

- 2.44 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care and provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is good. The previous inspection report noted the lack of an anti-bullying policy and unsatisfactory provision for PSHE. Both of these shortcomings have been successfully remedied. The school cares well for its pupils, fulfilling its aim of creating a caring community. It makes effective arrangements for pastoral care, guidance and welfare.
- 3.2 Pupils value the accessibility of the matron and trusted teachers, and generally relationships between pupils and staff are positive and supportive. In the pupil questionnaire and in interviews, some senior pupils commented that the school did not always listen to them. A school council has recently been set up to give pupils a stronger say, and this is a valuable and constructive initiative. Throughout the school most pupils appreciate the friendly, supportive and empathetic attitudes of staff.
- 3.3 Careers guidance is valued, with good advice being given in PSHE lessons and through individual pupil interviews as well as informal discussion with subject staff. University entrance guidance is of high quality, and sixth formers who were not planning to go to university also said they had had very helpful advice.
- 3.4 The newly introduced scheme of work for use in tutorial time is helpful for those form tutors who use it, and is being monitored as the school strives for consistency of approach within year groups. The role of the form tutor is clearly understood and the most successful tutors monitor the pupils closely and quickly identify any issues. Registration takes place in tutor groups, and admission and attendance registers are well kept. In Years 7 to 11, the pastoral curriculum is enhanced by the well-planned schemes of work for citizenship and PSHE. The sixth form are registered together by their separate tutors and this makes a strong contribution to integration and cohesiveness in this part of the school.
- 3.5 Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils are good. All pupils interviewed said there was an adult within school whom they could approach for help should they need it. Good working relationships were observed between teachers and pupils in drama and English lessons, demonstrating mutual respect and courtesy.
- 3.6 Sound policies promote good discipline and behaviour; most effectively amongst younger pupils. These should now be updated to take greater account of the growing sixth form. The behaviour of pupils around the school is consistently good.
- 3.7 The meals provided in school are varied and of good quality. The catering company responsible for the food has published guidelines for the school on healthy eating and meals are well balanced. The dining room is large enough for the pupils to eat in comfort and not feel hurried, and they behave well at meal times. The school games afternoon ensures that all pupils, including sixth formers, take regular exercise, and the extra-curricular programme enables those who so wish to take part in some sporting activity every day.
- 3.8 The school has a well-written anti-bullying policy and associated guidance, including a 'bully box.' The policy is periodically reviewed by the pupils themselves. In responding to the pupils' questionnaire and in interviews, some of the senior pupils felt that the school did not deal effectively with bullying and did not intervene quickly enough. However, the inspection found no evidence to support this view.

- 3.9 The appropriate child protection measures are in place and the policy covers the necessary ground. There is good communication between the staff and those responsible for implementing the procedures. Training is regular and has included the government online course in safer recruitment. Form tutors value the guidance and support offered by the designated child protection officer. All adults working with children have received an enhanced disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau.
- 3.10 Recent work by the school means that measures to reduce risk from fire have been successfully taken. Emergency evacuation drills take place regularly and records are kept. The required fire risk assessment has been undertaken and fire extinguishers are regularly checked. Emergency evacuation notices have been updated and fitted to all rooms. Where risks from other hazards have been drawn to the attention of the school, every effort has been taken to assess and minimise risk; for example, the new policy for the control of substances hazardous to health is good.
- 3.11 The school has recently undergone a full audit by a suitably qualified external body in order to ensure that their procedures stay up to date with current regulations and best practice. The school is fully aware of what additional work needs to be done and has set its priorities. The recently formed health and safety committee involves key staff in all areas of the school, and there is now a comprehensive suite of well-written policies covering all aspects of health and safety.
- 3.12 Staff produce effective risk assessments, sufficiently detailed to meet departmental needs, for potentially hazardous activities, but the implementation of these is not yet sufficiently monitored by the committee. The school ensures that school trips are undertaken according to statutory guidance but some risk assessments for these do not make sufficient reference to the particular circumstance of each excursion.
- 3.13 The school has a good policy and procedures in place for first aid. Most of the staff have had basic first-aid training and four are trained at the higher level. A school nurse is on site each day. Good records are kept and information communicated to other staff effectively.
- 3.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.15 The quality of links with parents and the wider community is good. Relationships between the school and the parents are positive and supportive in all sections of the school, as they were at the last inspection. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were highly satisfied with the education and support provided for their children and they feel they are given good opportunities to discuss their children's progress at parent/teacher meetings. Parents especially appreciate the accessibility of senior management if they have concerns.
- 3.16 Good opportunities are available to parents to become involved in the school's activities, and the work and progress of their children. A parent/teacher association (Friends of Lucton) exists in addition to an association of former pupils (Old Luctonians Association), and fund-raising events held by both organisations help to provide much valued extras for the benefit of pupils. The Friends arrange regular social and fund-raising events, which help to raise significant sums of money for the school each year; they are particularly active in this, the school's tercentenary year. Alongside the swimming pool appeal, recent purchases have included string instruments for pupils in Years 5 and 6, staging and lighting, and cooking equipment for the use of the sixth form in the boarding house. Additionally, especially in the prep school, parents help with games and school outings.

- 3.17 The school regularly provides parents with a good quality and quantity of information about its events, pupils' successes, and developments large and small. Parents are supplied with an annual magazine and a weekly newsletter which can also be viewed on the school website. All parents receive full reports twice a year on their children, and in the senior school grade cards are sent twice a term. Curriculum booklets for each year in the senior school are provided to parents, and in the prep school, curriculum sheets are distributed termly. One parents' evening a year is held for each year group, enabling parents to talk regularly to staff about their children's progress. The comprehensive reports indicate that staff members know their pupils' talents and strengths. Helpful suggestions for improvement are included in some subject reports in the senior and prep school but not in all. Parents are invited to the prep school assembly on Friday mornings and the turnout is high. Parents appreciate the quality and range of information they receive about the school, including the school website which contains up-to-date information for current parents as well as those of prospective pupils.
- 3.18 The school has a complaints policy which meets all requirements. No formal written complaints have been recorded in the last year and parents appreciate the ready availability of staff and members of the senior management team, whose presence and approachability make the resolution of most matters of concern both swift and amicable. The inspectors found no convincing evidence to support the view of a small proportion of parents whose questionnaire responses indicated dissatisfaction with the handling of concerns.
- 3.19 The quality of the links between the school and the wider community is good given that Lucton is relatively isolated. Pupils take part in local festivals including the Herefordshire and Lucton art festivals, visit theatre companies, museums and local industries, and visitors are invited into the school. For example, local schools make use of the school's facilities for music, art and drama on selected days, and members of the police force and fire brigade visit to give informative talks. Links are also established with local sports clubs, for example in rugby and cricket, and the school has recently hosted inter-school show jumping events. Music and drama provide opportunities for pupils to be involved in local community events, including performances at Croft Castle and The Priory at Leominster. The swimming pool is used, at no cost, by local primary schools, and the Old Luctonians' rugby teams use the school pitches. The activity hall and grounds are also used without charge by local sports clubs and by the Rugby Football Union for training.
- 3.20 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

- 3.21 Relationships within boarding are positive and supportive, and contribute effectively to the educational experience of the boarders. The most recent report, in 2007, from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), rated relationships outstanding. Boarders are supportive of each other and quite well integrated, and made positive comments about the advantages of their multicultural community. Almost all of the sixth form are boarders and sixth-form boarders' outings include the day pupils; this is conducive to good relationships.
- 3.22 The boarding staff work hard to see that the boarders are constructively occupied during their free time. As at the last CSCI inspection, boarders feel they need more say in the activities provided, the food offered and the rules governing them, for example that which keeps them in school uniform until after prep. On the whole, they are happy with the range of weekend activities and are pleased that some new activities have been introduced, often in response to their suggestions. They would like a greater variety of activities during the week, after prep but before bedtime. Swimming is offered most evenings, as well as in the early mornings and at weekends. The activity hall is also used for football or other sporting activities.
- 3.23 Accommodation is good both in the main boarding house and the smaller one, which houses the youngest girls. Most pupils have single rooms and there are pleasant communal areas with food supplies, cooking facilities and television. A tuck shop has been provided in response to popular demand. In the evenings, boarders have access to ICT suites in the main school, and the sixth form have access within their own common room. The boarding house provides wireless computer access for pupils with their own laptops and those without may use the boarding house computers.
- 3.24 The recent CSCI report made three recommendations and the school has acted promptly to address them all. In response to the recommendations, the school has introduced a boarding house committee to improve consultation with pupils; a lockable cabinet for the medical room has been fitted; and improvements have been made to the hot water supply to the showers.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The structure and management arrangements related to the governing body are well defined and support effective oversight of the school. The skills of the governors are well balanced and they are working to recruit some female governors to replace those who have left over the last year or so. Governors receive full reports from the school and their sub-committees, and this enables effective oversight of finance in particular.
- 4.2 The governors are aware of their responsibilities and a governor with relevant experience has oversight of child protection. Recently the governors have paid much more attention to their responsibility for health and safety, with the setting up of a committee and the commissioning of a professional audit, the conclusions of which were accepted by the governors. This made clear what needed to be done immediately, all of which has been accomplished, and what is desirable in the medium and long terms.
- 4.3 Their financial planning and control is very good, with all governors aware of the finances of the school and involved in planning for the future. To date this has been largely concerned with the successful improvement of staffing, buildings and facilities.
- 4.4 Relationships between governors and staff are good. The governors know the school well and visit frequently; staff speak highly of their help and support. In particular the chairman's programme of lesson observation, and excellent attendance at school events by the governing body as a whole, mean that the staff feel that the governors know the school well and can offer advice and challenge. Many teachers commented favourably on the commitment of the governors to the school, and the headmistress is very appreciative of their support and advice.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Strong, clear leadership has been provided by the headmistress, who with the governors, has expanded and extended the school since the last inspection; most of that change has been within the last four years, since her appointment. The success of these changes is reflected in the school's educational provision, particularly the successful introduction of the sixth form and the completion of an ambitious building programme, as well as in the high quality of pastoral care, and the fulfilment of the school's aims and ethos. As the school enters a period of consolidation, questions of management come to the fore. The management structures that were appropriate for a very small school were not sufficient for the current size and complexity of Lucton. Changes have been made with the appointment of a senior management team and academic committee. Some successful initiatives, such as the development of the sixth form, have resulted, though the impacts of other changes are not yet fully realised.
- 4.6 At middle management level there is some good practice, particularly in the English department, which has regular meetings, discussions of teaching and learning strategies, and comparison of work across the school. In other subject departments management is more variable, and not all heads of department have had sufficient training to fulfil their roles.
- 4.7 The senior management team draws up appropriate policies and procedures but the effectiveness of these in practice has not yet been systematically assured. For instance, the assessment policy does not yet significantly affect teachers' practice.

- 4.8 The staff include well-qualified and committed teachers, some of whom are part time. The school thoroughly checks the suitability of all staff, including volunteers and proprietors, and maintains an accurate centralised register of appointments. It has four newly qualified teachers and participates in the national scheme for their induction. They receive the appropriate reduction in their timetables and benefit from a carefully planned programme, including attendance at externally provided courses. Four newly arrived GAP Year students are also receiving thorough induction and training.
- 4.9 The last inspection report criticised the lack of contracts for part-time staff; this has now been effectively remedied with more full-time members of staff, and better remuneration. These improvements have helped to recruit and retain well-qualified staff. However, they do not yet all have up-to-date job descriptions. The previous inspection report recommended a programme of professional development for staff to extend the variety of teaching styles. The school has increased substantially its investment in this area, although some work remains. An appraisal programme has now been established but it has not yet had a notable impact on the overall quality of teaching within the school. All teachers who were in post in September 2007 are due to be appraised by July 2008.
- 4.10 Non-teaching staff are efficient and helpful. A system for their appraisal has been initiated and is due for completion by July 2008.
- 4.11 Resources are much improved since the last inspection; there is an adequate supply and they are of good quality. However, the budget setting process for departments and different sections of the school is somewhat opaque. A noticeable expansion of computing provision has enabled its introduction into lessons, where it is used mainly for word processing and research. The library is a pleasant space with adequate stocks of fiction but few reference books and little extension material for the newly introduced A-level subjects. However, supplementary texts are available in subject departments. Financial resources have been well managed to secure improved facilities to meet the needs of the pupils. In particular, the refurbished top floor, providing sixth-form seminar rooms, an ICT room and a new library, has the potential to be a great asset to the school. The school is proud of its fine new swimming pool, which is an asset to the school and the wider community. The library is valued as a space for work and revision as well as a lending library.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.13 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 meets most of its aims and aspirations. It is particularly successful in educating its pupils in a caring community based on Christian moral values, and in celebrating pupils' achievements, so raising their self-esteem and self-confidence. The school enables most pupils to develop their full potential, though occasionally weaknesses in some teaching do not make sufficient allowance for the differing needs of pupils. The after-school programme of activities benefits many pupils, who enjoy what is on offer.
- 5.2 The school has taken action to address the recommendations of the last report and has made significant improvement since then. Facilities are much better and all provisions relating to child protection in the boarding house now meet regulatory requirements. Weaknesses in health and safety have been remedied, the school now has a comprehensive PSHE programme, and resources, which were previously described as barely adequate, are now sufficiently plentiful. Co-operation is closer between the prep and senior schools, including some senior school staff teaching in the prep school and a transfer of all records between Years 6 and 7. Improvements have also been made to assessment procedures, in particular testing in Years 7 to 9, piloting of a pupil tracking programme in Year 10, and the introduction of standardised measures of progress in the senior school. Assessment procedures in the prep school still require further refinement.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has improved considerably since the last inspection and has many good qualities. In order to fulfil its highest aspirations it should take the following steps.
1. Improve management by:
 - providing training to develop the skills of those with middle management responsibilities;
 - ensuring that departmental and prep school management have rigorous systems for monitoring performance and the implementation of whole-school policies;
 - ensuring that appraisal and other quality assurance measures are clearly linked to improvements identified in school development planning.
 2. Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that school policies on marking and assessment are implemented in all teachers' practice;
 - employing a greater variety of teaching styles, matched to pupils' differing abilities, and including where appropriate, the use of ICT.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 21st to 24th January 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, 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 medical room. 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.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Anne-Marie Sutcliffe	Reporting Inspector
Mr James Batten	Head, COBIS school
Mrs Lynda Boden	Head of Pre-prep, IAPS school
Mrs Sabine Fellows	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Alison Goodwin	Deputy Head, ISA school
Mr Martin Lloyd	Director, ISA and IAPS school
Mrs Dawn Moore	Head, ISA school