



ISI Independent
Schools
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports
For Schools with Residential Provision**

Lucton School

March 2019



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School's Details

School	Lucton School			
DfE number	884/6007			
Early Years registration number	EY389937			
Registered charity number	518076			
Address	Lucton School Lucton Leominster HR6 9PN			
Telephone number	01568 782000			
Email address	enquiries@luctonschool.org			
Headmistress	Mrs Gill Thorne			
Chair of governors	Dr Tony Paterson			
Age range	0 to 18			
Number of pupils on roll	360			
	Boys	181	Girls	179
	Day pupils	282	Boarders	78
	EYFS	84	Prep School Years 1 to 5	63
	Middle School Years 6 to 8	72	Senior School Years 9 to 11	88
	Sixth Form	53		
Inspection dates	19 to 21 March 2019			

1. Background Information

About the school

- 1.1 Lucton School, founded in 1708, is an independent co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged from six months to 18 years. It is set in the Herefordshire countryside north west of Leominster. The school is a charitable trust, overseen by a board of governors. It is divided into four sections: the Early Years Foundation Stage; the prep school for pupils in Years 1 to 5; the middle school for Years 6 to 8; the senior school for Years 9 to 11; and the sixth form. Boarding is available from the age of seven. Junior boarders are accommodated in School Cottage, senior boarders in Croft House, which offers largely single rooms in separate corridors for boys and girls.

What the school seeks to do

- 1.2 Founded on Christian principles to which it still adheres, the school welcomes pupils of all faiths and none. In line with its founding principles, it seeks to cherish what is good, wholesome, honest, worthwhile and true. It aims to bring out the best in every individual, to recognise each person's unique gifts, talents and abilities and to promote a secure and happy environment in which pupils can flourish academically, socially, intellectually and physically.

About the pupils

- 1.3 Day pupils come from a range of socially diverse backgrounds, mostly from white British families living within a 15-mile radius of the school. Boarders come from the UK and a wide range of countries, in Europe, the Middle and Far East and from Africa. Around one-third of boarders come from families serving with the armed forces. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicate that the ability of the pupils is broadly average. The school has identified 41 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), most of whom receive additional specialist help. No pupil in the school has an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 48 pupils, whose needs are largely supported by their classroom teachers and specialist EAL teachers.

2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

This inspection also contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools ('boarding NMS'). It also comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and it judges the extent to which the school currently meets the boarding NMS. It identifies any standards which the school does not meet and requires action to meet them. Findings are distributed across sections relating to the eight Parts of the standards.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards, including the boarding NMS, may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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

This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards, including the boarding NMS. The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management, together with the NMS covering the same areas. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

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

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

PART 1 – Quality of education provided

- 2.2 In the preparatory school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2015 to 2017, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 In the sixth form, A-level results in the years 2015 to 2017 have been in line with the national average for sixth formers in maintained schools.
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens. Boarders' views are actively encouraged, and their opinions and concerns are appropriately considered by staff. Any prefect system operating in the school is suitably managed.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] and NMS 17 and 19 are met.**

PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils

- 2.9 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 An appropriate induction process for pupils new to boarding is implemented, and suitable provision is made for boarders' medical and health care, their food and drink and for managing boarders' laundry and possessions. Boarders have suitable contact with friends and family and access to a programme of activities. Boarding staff are appropriately trained and deployed.
- 2.11 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996, and NMS 2–4, 6–12, 15 and 16 are met.**

PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors

- 2.12 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required. Visitors to boarding accommodation are appropriately supervised and the school's arrangements for guardianship are suitably managed.
- 2.13 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] and NMS 14 are met.**

PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools

- 2.14 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play. Boarding accommodation is adequate for the needs of all boarders, and safeguards and promotes their welfare.
- 2.15 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] and NMS 5 are met.**

PART 6 – Provision of information

- 2.16 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website. A suitable statement of boarding principles and practice is published by the school.
- 2.17 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] and NMS 1 are met.**

PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled

- 2.18 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful, and identifying those relating to the boarding provision.
- 2.19 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] and NMS 18 are met.**

PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools

- 2.20 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils. Appropriate leadership and management of boarding ensure that the required policies and records are maintained and effectively monitored.
- 2.21 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] and NMS 13 are met.**

The quality and standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision

- 2.22 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is good.
- 2.23 Children under the age of two progress rapidly from carefully documented starting points, which are informed by initial meetings with parents and focused observations by key people. Staff know the children for whom they take key responsibility exceptionally well and enable them to gain confidence and skills to prepare them for the next stage in their learning. Systems to identify children with additional needs are effective and supported by well-qualified staff. Carefully planned activities throughout the setting ensure that children's individual needs are met well and reflect their interests. Staff make very good use of the setting's resources. Recent modifications made to the provision have served to create free flow to the outdoor environment in which all children enjoy their learning.
- 2.24 Children's personal and emotional development is outstanding, and well-being is given high priority. Consequently, the children forge excellent relationships with staff and feel happy and secure in their environment. Children separate quickly from their parents and settle easily with their key person. Each child benefits from high-quality individual time with adults who ensure that they are safe, happy and secure.
- 2.25 The requirements for children's safeguarding and welfare are fully met. All staff have up-to-date safeguarding training and paediatric first-aid training and are aware of their responsibilities in ensuring the safety of the children.
- 2.26 Leaders and managers ensure good-quality provision. All policies are implemented well and all necessary checks on staff have been undertaken, thus ensuring that all children receive the best possible support and care.
- 2.27 All staff are involved in evaluating the effectiveness of the provision to ensure that the learning environment leads to children making good progress and enjoying their learning.

Effectiveness of leadership and management

- 2.28 The effectiveness of leadership and management is good.
- 2.29 All staff work well together, demonstrate a strong desire to provide high-quality provision and care for children, and have a clear vision for future development. A regular cycle of appraisal and supervision meetings for staff helps to identify further training needs to enable practitioners to develop their skills and understanding of the age group with which they work. Staff share good practice and are committed to working together to provide a welcoming, safe environment where children are happy. Well-established routines ensure that children are well cared for.
- 2.30 Leaders seek the views of staff and parents when evaluating the effectiveness of the provision. These views are taken into consideration when devising the action plan for the EYFS. In discussions with inspectors, and in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were very positive about the care that their children receive.
- 2.31 The curriculum is well planned and meets the relevant statutory requirements of the EYFS as well as the needs and interests of the children. Staff use day-to-day assessment of children's learning effectively to identify the next steps in their learning and development. Children's individual achievements, monitored against age-related expectations, ensure that they are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. However, the sharing of this information with parents is very limited and, consequently, they are not yet fully engaged with their children's learning and development.

- 2.32 Staff show high expectations of children's behaviour. They gently distract them where necessary and encourage them to share toys and to be kind to one another.
- 2.33 Diversity is promoted through the celebration of different cultural and religious festivals. However, there is little evidence that endorses individual uniqueness and cultural differences within the setting. British values are actively embraced through everyday routines. Children are encouraged to share, to listen to one another and make some choices.
- 2.34 Leaders ensure all children are kept safe through the effective implementation of comprehensive policies and procedures for the safeguarding of children. Staff undertake regular safeguarding training, and they are highly aware of the actions to be followed if there is cause for concern. The school's arrangements meet all statutory and other government requirements, promote children's welfare and prevent radicalisation and extremism.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

- 2.35 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- 2.36 Staff have high expectations of what children under two can achieve and respond well to the differing needs of each child, including the more-able and the disadvantaged. Highly qualified staff have the appropriate training and are well attuned to the needs of the age group. They have in-depth knowledge of the key children for whom they are responsible. Appropriate activities are planned which reflect the children's interests and stages of development. Weekly planning sheets reflect staff's understanding of the types of activities that engage and interest the children. For example, recent observations of an individual child highlighted its keen interest in wheels. Activities incorporating wheels were planned and used to stimulate the child's interest and take its learning forward.
- 2.37 Staff provide positive feedback to the children through the good use of praise and encouragement, helping them to acquire the skills to learn effectively. During a large-scale painting activity, staff modelled and encouraged toddlers to hold and use a variety of mark-making implements effectively, developing their motor skills and instilling a sense of achievement. Members of staff engage positively with children during routine daily activities, such as at meal times and when attending to personal needs. As a result, children's social and language abilities develop well.
- 2.38 Assessment data are gathered continually through photographs and written observations and are kept carefully in each child's record of learning. Staff track individual children's progress against age-related expectations. This alerts staff to any emerging needs or gaps in learning which are then addressed. This ensures readiness for their next stage in learning.
- 2.39 Staff work in partnership with parents. Information about each child's daily routines and their likes and dislikes is gathered from parents on entry to the setting. This is used effectively by key people as a starting point to enable children to settle quickly and make good progress.
- 2.40 Parents are kept fully informed about their children's day by means of a daily communication book and verbal feedback at the end of the day. At present, parents can contribute to their children's learning informally through 'wow' moments from home. The practice of seeking more formal information from parents regarding their children's next steps is not yet fully established. Information for parents does not always help them understand how their children are doing in relation to their ages and stages of development across the areas of learning.
- 2.41 Teaching supports the development of children's personal, social, communication and physical skills. It reflects a commitment to the promotion of equality through the recognition of individual needs. The celebration of cultural festivals reflects diversity. However, resources which reflect cultural diversity are not used routinely, thus narrowing children's understanding of the wider world.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

- 2.42 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are outstanding.
- 2.43 Staff create a calm, nurturing atmosphere and show an excellent understanding of how to support the development of children's confidence and well-being. They provide opportunities for them to persevere with ideas and activities. For example, the warm and timely interactions from an adult allowed a toddler to sustain interest and enjoyment when sharing a familiar book. Effective questioning of the text contributed to its understanding and provided opportunities to develop its speaking and listening skills.
- 2.44 Children display high levels of confidence and independence as toddlers attempt to put their shoes on and babies learn to feed themselves, developing skills for the future. They are happy to explore the range of learning opportunities provided. They relish opportunities to use their imagination, for example when a toddler pretended to rock a doll to sleep in a pram modelling previous experiences. The layout of the room serves to encourage even the youngest children to begin to explore their surroundings.
- 2.45 Children's excellent relationships with the adults around them are built on strong, secure attachments. The key person system ensures warm relationships and close bonds with children and their families. Well-established routines and procedures enable children to feel safe and secure emotionally and physically.
- 2.46 Introductory taster visits help new children settle smoothly into the setting's routines, and careful consideration is given to preparing children both socially and emotionally for the move to their next class. A photo board helps parents identify the adults who care for their children. Children attend promptly and regularly.
- 2.47 Key workers model good behaviour, kindness and good manners. Children are supported in beginning to understand clear and consistent boundaries, for example remaining seated at the table when eating their snack together.
- 2.48 Nutritious food, including fresh fruit, ensures that children have a balanced and healthy diet tailored to their needs. Staff discuss healthy foods and the children gain an awareness of healthy eating. Regular time is spent outdoors in the adjacent play area or on walks through the school grounds ensuring that children develop an understanding of the importance of fresh air and exercise. Children show confidence and enjoyment when exploring the outdoors. They use their developing mobility to manage risk effectively as they negotiate a range of different levels and uneven surfaces.
- 2.49 High standards of care and hygiene support the children's personal needs.
- 2.50 The children's excellent personal development at this young age ensures that they respect others, which lays the foundations for their contribution to wider society and life in Britain.

Outcomes for children

- 2.51 Outcomes for children are good.
- 2.52 All children including those with additional needs progress well from their starting points and in line with expectations for their age. Children are on course to meet or exceed the level of development that is typical for their age. This enables them to be ready for the next stage in their learning.
- 2.53 Children make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development due to the nurturing interactions with staff. Many group social occasions, such as snack times, mealtimes and when participating in stories and songs, promote the development of good relationships and early communication skills.

- 2.54 Children under two display high levels of engagement in their environment. Babies press buttons on the telephone, and toddlers roll and throw balls with increasing accuracy, developing their physical skills and self-confidence. They listen and respond to ideas expressed by others in conversation and discussions, such as when responding to questions about a book, developing their confidence and communication skills. However, staff sometimes miss opportunities to use effective questioning to extend and develop children's thinking and learning. All children demonstrate high levels of independence when eating, using cutlery and cups with increasing competency and communicating their needs effectively. Babies make their needs known with gestures, and toddlers use words as they increase their ability to communicate.
- 2.55 All children enjoy their learning, and their growing concentration spans demonstrate enjoyment and perseverance. They persist at activities, developing the key skills needed for their next stage of learning well.

Compliance with statutory requirements

- 2.56 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.**

Recommendations for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvements to its provision for children in the early years.

- Develop strategies to engage parents fully to improve their understanding of the age-related stages of children's development and enable them to take a more active role in their children's learning.
- Strengthen children's awareness of other cultures and diversity through the regular provision and use of appropriate resources.

3. Educational Quality Inspection

Preface

The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work. It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- For the majority of pupils, the school is successful in fulfilling its aim to bring out the best in pupils and to enable them to flourish academically, intellectually and physically.
- Pupils make good and, in some cases, excellent progress, although the teaching does not consistently offer sufficient challenge or encouragement for them to develop independence or higher-order skills in their learning.
- Pupils develop good skills in communication, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT).
- Pupils' achievements outside the formal curriculum are excellent; pupils are heavily involved in a wide range of sports, drama, music, outdoor and other activities.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.

- Pupils' self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and resilience develop strongly as a result of public performance and the wide-ranging extra-curricular and outdoor activities programme.
- Pupils do not always have a clear understanding of how to improve their own learning.
- Pupils show great respect for and value the diversity of cultures represented within the school, demonstrating sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and to be physically and mentally healthy; many pupils in the senior school are trained in first aid.

Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that the teaching consistently challenges pupils, encourages them to use their initiative and helps them to develop their independence and higher-order learning skills.
- Ensure that sufficient support is provided to meet the needs of pupils with SEND and to enable those with EAL to acquire a good enough grasp of English to understand what is being taught in other subjects.
- Ensure that teaching develops pupils' understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance.

The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

- 3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.
- 3.5 For the majority of pupils, the school is successful in fulfilling its aim to bring out the best in pupils, recognising their unique gifts, talents and abilities and enabling them to flourish academically, intellectually and physically. A minority of pupils, however, do not progress as rapidly as their peers, reflecting variability in the quality of teaching and the level of individual support available to them. By the end of the EYFS, most children reach the level of development expected for their age. The picture is similar at the end of the prep school, where scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that pupils make good progress from Years 1 to 5, although not in all aspects of their work. In the period 2015 to 2017, the latest for which comparative data are available, results in GCSE examinations for pupils at the end of Year 11 have been just above the national average. Results in 2018 were similar to those in preceding years, with around 14 per cent of passes at the highest level (the equivalent of Grades A* or A, or Grades 7, 8 or 9) and three-quarters at the nationally expected level (the equivalent of Grade C or Grades 4 or 5). In the same period, results in A-level examinations have been in line with the national average for pupils in maintained schools. Results in 2018 were similar to those in previous years, with around half of passes at grades A* to C. Standardised data indicate that the large majority of pupils are of broadly average ability and so these results and internal assessments of pupils' attainment in other year groups indicate that, overall, pupils make good progress.
- 3.6 Observation of lessons from the EYFS through to Year 13 and scrutiny of their work in different year groups show that pupils generally develop their knowledge, skills and understanding well across most areas of learning. Most pupils display positive attitudes in lessons and are keen to learn. Their books show that they complete a good volume of work over the course of the year. Whilst the norm is for pupils to make good progress in line with their prior attainment, the school offers just the right environment for some pupils enabling them to make excellent progress. For example, inspectors spoke to a number of pupils who had experienced difficulties in their previous schools or who had come from troubled backgrounds, but who were keen to improve. They have found that the supportive atmosphere within the school and the care and attention of their teachers have enabled them to flourish. Evidence shows that such pupils have made enormous strides both in their attitudes and their commitment to work, and in their academic achievements. However, internal assessments indicate that a small minority of pupils do not always achieve the standards of which they are capable because of their lack of motivation or variability in the quality of the teaching they receive. Most teaching is characterised by a good variety of learning tasks and strong relationships between staff and pupils which encourage good involvement and participation. Pupils appreciate the small class sizes which afford them a good level of individual attention. The pupils who make the greatest progress invariably attribute their success to the supportiveness of the staff who, they say, have helped them both academically and socially. However, not all of the teaching is of a similarly high quality. In some lessons throughout the school, the teaching offers insufficient challenge, and tasks are structured too rigidly, offering little scope for pupils to develop their independence, to take risks or to use their own initiative. In these lessons, unchallenging questioning inhibits the development of higher-order skills and, occasionally, low-level disruption impedes learning. The feedback offered to pupils when their work is marked often promotes progress, as observed in carefully and helpfully marked work in English in Year 11. However, in some subjects and some year groups, the marking does not always help them to identify what they need to do to improve. Whilst the school's leaders have implemented a system to monitor the quality of teaching, it is not yet fully effective in identifying and supporting areas for improvement.

- 3.7 The progress of pupils with SEND, those with EAL and the more able pupils reflects that of their peers. The majority make good progress, some make excellent progress, but a few do not always fulfil their potential. The needs of pupils with SEND and those with EAL are generally identified clearly, their progress is monitored carefully, and a good deal of additional support is provided, particularly in the prep school. At times however, the support is insufficient to meet the individual's specific needs. Whilst additional English sessions are provided for pupils with EAL, and some make excellent strides in learning English, a few attend lessons in other subjects without sufficient grasp of English to be able to understand fully what is being taught. More able pupils say that their teachers are always willing to help if asked, but some of the teaching does not always offer them sufficient challenge.
- 3.8 Most pupils develop good skills in communication, numeracy and ICT. Skills in numeracy are generally stronger than those in English, as reflected in higher GCSE examination results in mathematics compared to English, and a larger proportion of pupils proceeding to study mathematics at A level. Most pupils listen well and are confident speakers. For example, children in the EYFS showed great confidence in explaining to the inspector what they had been doing during their outdoor session in the woods, whilst pupils in an economics lesson engaged in healthy debate about world trade. Drama a timetabled subject for all pupils up to Year 9, many pupils take speech and drama lessons and pupils have opportunities to give presentations in assemblies. These all contribute strongly to the development of their confident speaking skills. Pupils apply their mathematical skills well when required in other subjects such as geography or science. For example, in a physics lesson pupils used mathematical formulae successfully to complete calculations of electrical energy. Pupils' ICT skills develop well through discrete ICT lessons and a number of extra-curricular activities, and they show competence in using standard computer software to write, present findings and carry out research on the internet. Outside their formal ICT lessons, however, the lack of access to laptops and tablet computers means there are few opportunities for them to develop a broader range of skills or to discover more adventurous ways of using ICT to enhance their learning.
- 3.9 Whilst there is variability in pupils' academic achievement, their achievements outside the formal curriculum are excellent, reflecting the emphasis the school's leaders place on the importance of extra-curricular activities. Pupils enjoy taking part in a wide range of sports, music, drama, art, outdoor and other activities and meet with a great deal of success. All pupils in Years 5 and 6 learn to play a musical instrument, and many gain merits and distinctions in external speech and drama examinations. Individuals and teams are successful in equestrian events, swimming, triathlon and aquathlon. Successes burgeon in the middle and senior school. In the current school year, over 50 pupils have achieved success at county, regional and national level in aquathlon, swimming, cross country, cricket, equestrian events, netball, lacrosse, hockey, rugby and shooting. Throughout the middle school and the early part of the senior school, almost every pupil represents the school at some team sport. Many pupils achieve success in external speech, drama and music examinations. Pupils have gained places in the national youth orchestra, become chemistry Olympians and gained gold medals in the senior maths challenge. A large majority of pupils in the senior school gain a wide range of skills, including first-aid qualifications, through their participation in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. Many pupils participate in the school's drama productions or contribute to the school's many musical events.
- 3.10 Throughout the school, a large majority of pupils demonstrate positive attitudes to their life at school; they are willing to learn, cooperate with their teachers and show a good level of motivation. For those who choose to leave the school at the end of Year 11, the school provides a good foundation for their future studies. For those who stay on into the sixth form, the school enables almost all to proceed to higher education, the majority gaining places at their first-choice university.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 3.11 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good.
- 3.12 In many respects, the large majority of pupils develop high levels of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-discipline and resilience and are well prepared for the next stage of their lives. The support structures within boarding, the care provided by key workers in the EYFS, the input of form teachers in the prep school, and the tutorial system in the rest of the school all contribute strongly to the development of the pupils' positive mental attitudes. From an early age, pupils are expected to give presentations or participate in assemblies in front of large audiences and do so with growing levels of confidence. For example, pupils in Year 5 were asked at short notice to read passages of Scripture in a prep school assembly and did so with aplomb. Most pupils participate in some form of musical performance or one of the school's regular drama productions and gain significantly in self-confidence as a result. Drama is also used effectively to boost pupils' confidence. Throughout the school, the leadership's emphasis on the importance of sport and the wide-ranging programme of sports activities are major contributory factors in the development of self-discipline and resilience, as is the involvement of most senior pupils in the CCF and DofE scheme. However, in their academic work, their levels of self-knowledge, self-confidence, resilience and their understanding of how to improve their own learning and performance are not as high. This is because the level of questioning in some lessons, the limited feedback provided and the marking of pupils' work are not always incisive or challenging enough to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve. For example, in one year group in the prep school, pupils are given a clear indication of the next steps they should take to improve their learning whilst in another the marking only reiterates what pupils have achieved and gives no guidance on how to progress. In the senior school, some of the teaching provides easy answers rather than developing deeper understanding. In discussion with inspectors, pupils in Year 11 were critical of the fact that guidance on preparing for examinations had been given too late to have a significant impact on their self-confidence and preparation for their forthcoming examinations.
- 3.13 Similar contradictions exist with regard to the development of pupils' decision-making skills and their ability to work effectively with others to solve problems and achieve common goals. Such skills develop strongly through the extra-curricular programme, but not as well in their academic work. When working towards their DofE awards, pupils make rapid progress in making important decisions with regard to outdoor survival. When they lead an assembly, pupils work together effectively to decide what they should do. The senior school has appropriate structures to guide pupils in their choice of subject options and places of higher education. Pupils appreciate this advice and are clear that the decisions they make will have an important impact on their future. Boarders feel they have had influence in making decisions which have had a positive impact on boarding provision. In some lessons, tasks are carefully designed to develop pupils' decision-making abilities. For example, in a design and technology lesson in the prep school, pupils worked together well to make decisions on how to design and build a simple bridge, carefully considering alternatives and discussing together before implementing their chosen decision. In other lessons, however, the teaching misses opportunities to develop pupils' ability to make decisions and to collaborate with each other or exercise their own initiative.

- 3.14 Pupils' moral and social understanding and their willingness to take responsibility for their own behaviour generally develop well throughout the school. In lessons and around the school, pupils behaved well throughout the inspection. They were polite, courteous and considerate. In discussions with pupils from various year groups, they indicated that good behaviour is the norm, but that this is not the case in some lessons where the inappropriate behaviour of a small minority interrupts learning for others. Pupils understand the school's recently revised system for rewards and sanctions, and both staff and pupils feel that this has had a positive impact on improving behaviour within the school. Within boarding, pupils value the friendship of others and get on well together. They support each other and enjoy the family environment which is nurtured by boarding staff. Social skills develop well as pupils work together on drama productions and within the sporting arena. When given the opportunity in lessons, most pupils are keen to collaborate with their classmates.
- 3.15 Pupils show great respect for and value the diversity of different cultures within the school, demonstrating sensitivity and tolerance to those from different backgrounds. This is particularly evident within boarding where pupils from many different countries integrate well and demonstrate strong mutual support. These positive attitudes are also evident throughout the school, where pupils are seen to be patient and helpful to others, are eager to learn from each other and enjoy exploring differences in cultural traditions and celebrations. Pupils also show a willingness to contribute positively to the lives of others within the school and, when opportunity arises, to those in the local community and wider society. Throughout the school, pupils willingly fulfil roles of responsibility, such as corridor representatives in boarding, team captains, members of different councils, house captains and prefects. In the prep school, reading buddies contribute willingly and positively to the development of reading skills in younger pupils. Participants in the DofE scheme carry out voluntary activities either within school or within the local community for the service part of their award. When the school hosts major tournaments with other schools, many pupils act as volunteers to look after guests, register results and interact with adult visitors. At various times in the year, pupils contribute to others through charitable giving and fund-raising activities, and the choir brings joy through its performances to those in a home for old people.
- 3.16 Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe and to be physically and mentally healthy. They understand the significance of maintaining a balanced and healthy lifestyle, identifying the importance of diet, sleep and exercise. The school's full programme of sporting activities ensures that all pupils have the opportunity for regular physical activity. Although responses to the questionnaire indicate that a minority of boarders have negative opinions of the choice and quantity of food at mealtimes, the inspection found that a good range and choice of healthy food is available at all mealtimes. Topics covered in personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) lessons throughout the school contribute positively to pupils' understanding of health and safety. The vast majority of pupils in the senior school are trained in first aid, and the school has won a number of national awards for the quality and breadth of its first-aid training over the last five years. Pupils have a good understanding of how to stay safe online and of the dangers of mobile technology. Although initially greeted with horror, pupils acknowledge that the school leadership's decision to ban mobile phones during the day has had a positive impact on their health and well-being, encouraging better communication with each other during the day and improving mental health through the reduction of anxiety caused through frequent use of social media. Pupils are fully aware of who is available to help should they have any safeguarding concerns.

4. Inspection Evidence

4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Graham Sims	Reporting inspector
Dr Jonathan Ewington	Compliance team inspector (Assistant head, SofH school)
Mrs Clare-Anne Bruce	Team inspector (Head of infant and junior school, IAPS school)
Mrs Bethan Kerr	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Dr Antony Johns	Team inspector for boarding (Director of sixth form, HMC School)
Mrs Valerie Holloway	Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Former head of early years, IAPS school)
Mrs Anne Oliver	Team inspector for EYFS (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school)