



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

GUILDFORD HIGH SCHOOL STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Guildford High School

Full Name of School	Guildford High School		
DfE Number	936/6046		
Registered Charity Number	1016538		
Address	Guildford High School London Road Guildford Surrey GU1 1SJ		
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Head	Mrs Fiona Boulton		
Chair of Governors	The Rt Revd and Rt Hon The Lord Carey of Clifton		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	985		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 268
	3-5 (EYFS):	32	11-18: 685
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Sue Phillips		
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	29 Mar 2011 to 30 Mar 2011		
	04 May 2011 to 06 May 2011		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspections of the junior and senior schools were in March and May 2005.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

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

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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

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

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Guildford High School is an academically selective day school for girls, founded in 1888 as a member of the Church Schools Company. It moved to its current site in 1893, close to the town centre of Guildford. It is one of eleven schools owned by the United Church Schools Trust (UCST), which holds the legal responsibilities of governance. The local governing body (LGB) has an advisory role. The UCST is a group founded on the principles of respect, service and compassion. The school shares the trust's core values, including its Christian ethos. The school's mission is to provide a first-class education for academically able girls. The school aims to provide a happy environment in which pupils can think and learn creatively, be positive about their own gifts and talents, and maximise their potential.
- 1.2 The school currently has 985 girls on roll. Of these pupils, 32 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 268 are in Years 1 to 6 in the junior school, 507 are in Years 7 to 11 in the senior school and 178 are members of the sixth form. The vast majority of pupils move through from one section of the school to the next. Pupils enter the Reception class from many local nurseries, following two mornings spent in school for informal assessment. Other main entry points are Years 1, 2, 3 and 7, following entrance tests, and Year 12, for pupils who have gained A or A* GCSE grades in the subjects being studied at AS level. Each year, a number of pupils gain scholarships on entry to the senior school.
- 1.3 The ability of pupils is assessed using nationally standardised tests. The ability profile of the junior school is above the national average. The ability profile of the senior school is far above the national average, with over half of pupils having far above average ability. The ability of the sixth form is above the national average, with a slightly wider range of abilities than in the senior school, and over a quarter of pupils having an ability that is far above the national average.
- 1.4 The majority of pupils come from professional, business or academic families and a number of different cultures and faiths are represented. In the junior school, no pupil currently has a statement of special educational needs (SEN). Nineteen pupils have been identified as having a learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD); of these, three receive specialist learning support from the school. In the senior school, one pupil has a statement of special educational needs and receives specific support. Thirty-eight pupils have been identified with LDD: their progress is monitored and they are able to attend lunchtime sessions when necessary to help with their difficulties. Across the school, 43 pupils have English as an additional language and all have been assessed as fluent speakers and users of English who need no support.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report and by the school from Reception to Year 11 to refer to year groups in the school. The nomenclature used by the school for Years 12 and 13 and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence is shown in the following table.

Sixth Form

School	NC name
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Achievement and learning are excellent throughout the school. Pupils are educated in accordance with the aims of the school in a stimulating learning environment that allows them to maximise their potential. Pupils are highly active learners, showing total commitment. They learn to reason and to work both independently and co-operatively. Pupils of all ages support each other in class. The curriculum has been significantly developed since the previous inspection and is broad and stimulating across the school, with a rich experience in languages, creative subjects and sciences. Extra-curricular activities provide opportunities in a considerable range of areas beyond the curriculum, which pupils greatly enjoy and which contribute very well to their achievements. Extremely high quality teaching is very effective in promoting pupils' progress, and excellent use is made of assessment at all levels. However, in the senior school, staff do not always support those pupils with LDD sufficiently well in lessons, and this was a concern raised by parents.
- 2.2 The personal development of pupils of all ages is excellent, fulfilling the aim of the school to develop a caring community in which every member is treated with respect and valued. Pupils are happy and secure, with a sense of their place in the school community. They have a sense of responsibility for themselves and for those less fortunate, and for the world around them. Pupils' personal development is fully supported by excellent pastoral care and comprehensive arrangements for welfare, health and safety. Outstanding relationships between staff and pupils underpin the very positive ethos of the school.
- 2.3 The governance of the school is excellent. The United Church Schools Trust successfully fulfils its duties. The trust, the LGB and the school share the vision of excellence and challenge. Governors fully support the school in realising an aspirational vision. Excellent leadership and management at all levels have ensured that the school has made considerable progress since the previous inspection, particularly in the monitoring and improvement of both teaching and the educational standards achieved by pupils. The senior leadership team has a clear sense of purpose and direction which is shared by staff and pupils. Excellent links have been created and maintained with parents. Responses to the parental pre-inspection questionnaire show high levels of satisfaction with the vast majority of aspects of the school. A significant proportion of parents of pupils in the junior school said that they would like more information about the progress made by their children, and the inspectors agree that written reports are infrequent. Parents of senior school pupils with LDD commented that specific needs are not always fully supported in class. Parents are provided with extensive information about the school and any concerns are dealt with appropriately.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve the policy and practice of reporting to parents of pupils in the junior school.
2. Provide specialist training for staff in the senior school on the provision of support materials for pupils with LDD, and monitor the provision.
3. Create further opportunities for children in the EYFS to use resources to develop independent learning skills through play.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 Overall achievement by the pupils is excellent; they receive an outstanding education fully in accordance with the aims of the school to create a highly stimulating learning environment that allows all pupils to maximise their potential. Pupils of all ages have highly developed levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. From the earliest years, pupils are articulate, both in front of their class and in talking to visitors. Pupils listen exceptionally well and read enthusiastically. They write cogently and creatively, and are able to think logically and independently. Pupils are able to solve mathematical problems with fluency and accuracy, and apply their knowledge very successfully in many contexts. They use information and communication technology (ICT) skilfully, both to present their work and for research purposes. Pupils of all ages achieve excellent standards in music and show considerable talent in other creative and artistic subjects. The poetry and art work on display around the school showcase pupils' talents.
- 3.2 In all age groups, pupils reach excellent levels of individual and team achievement at national, county and regional levels in a wide selection of sports. This ranges from junior school swimming teams achieving success in the Independent Association of Prep Schools championships at national level to senior pupils being selected for the England lacrosse junior squad. In music, pupils frequently achieve merit and distinction at the highest grades, and performances by the many ensembles and orchestras are of an outstanding standard. The majority of older pupils are actively involved in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, with approximately 95 per cent of Year 9 girls participating each year; large numbers progress to silver and gold awards in subsequent years. Other group and individual successes include a national mathematics challenge, the Young Enterprise scheme and a young researchers' project. Sixth-form pupils nearly always achieve places at their chosen university, increasingly at highly selective establishments.
- 3.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at the ages of seven and eleven have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. GCSE performance has also been excellent in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools and good in relation to the national average for maintained selective schools. In the most recent results for 2010, 100 per cent of pupils achieved five or more passes at grades A* to C, including mathematics and English, with over 90 per cent of all grades at A* or A, and over 60 per cent of all grades at A*. Results at International GCSE in mathematics and chemistry have been higher than worldwide norms. A-level results have been excellent in relation to the national average, both for girls in maintained schools and for girls in maintained selective schools. In 2010, just under 90 per cent of all grades were at A* or A, and 44 per cent of all grades were at A*.
- 3.4 These levels of attainment indicate that pupils make exceptional progress relative to the average for pupils of similar abilities, as shown by standardised measures of progress. Excellent progress, including for pupils with LDD, was also seen in lesson observations, in pupils' written work and in curriculum interviews with them.

3.5 Pupils of all ages are highly active learners. They absorb information and many, including the most able, ask probing questions relating to new concepts, from the earliest age. Their attitude to learning shows total commitment, along with a considerable ability to reason and extrapolate information. The pupils support each other in class, listening attentively to the opinions of others and learning co-operatively. In general, pupils with LDD and those with statements of SEN have learned effective strategies to enable them to cope with their difficulties, and the academic monitoring system shows that they maximise their potential. Pupils are not solely examination focused and take full advantage of all the opportunities available. The scholars interviewed all agreed that the range of activities has been of considerable advantage to them, as well as the opportunities provided in their specialist areas. Comments in the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that pupils feel it is a privilege to be in the school.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

3.6 The curricular and extra-curricular provision throughout the school is excellent. It is suitable for all ages, abilities and needs, and accords with the school's aims of providing an environment in which each individual can maximise her potential.

3.7 The innovative curriculum has been significantly developed since the previous inspection and is broad and stimulating across the school, extending far beyond the National Curriculum. Since the previous inspection, the language provision across the school has expanded to six languages. Spanish is taught in the junior school from Year 1 and French from Year 3; in addition, there are five foreign language clubs. Mandarin is taught in Year 7 and Greek is available to those pupils aiming to read classics at university. Creative and expressive subjects have excellent facilities and are strongly represented. Separate sciences are taught from Year 7. In the junior school, the emphasis on the core subjects lays strong foundations for future learning, with excellent provision for pupils who require extra learning support. In the senior school, provision meets the requirements of pupils with statements of SEN, and clear information is provided to staff to help them prepare for the needs of pupils with LDD. However, this information is not always acted upon, meaning that these pupils do not always receive the specific support they need. The school makes excellent provision for more able pupils, who are challenged in many ways, including provocative questioning and opportunities for independent learning in lessons. Thoughtful planning across key stages of learning results in a smooth transition for the pupils from the junior to the senior school. Pupils benefit from a considerably wide range of subjects at GCSE and A level, including extensive combinations and levels of science subjects. After their examinations, Year 12 pupils gain valuable experience and achieve well when working on research projects within university-run courses. The curriculum is supported extensively by ICT provision that includes interactive whiteboards, laptops and, throughout the school, pupil response handsets. Libraries in both the junior and the senior school are well managed and resourced, and are used effectively for independent study. Outings, visits and residential trips greatly enrich the curriculum.

3.8 The range and quality of extra-curricular activities are excellent, with opportunities for further learning in an abundant choice of pursuits that extends well beyond the curriculum to provide the pupils with the best experience possible. It is evident that both pupils and parents fully appreciate the value of this provision. Although some activities are by invitation only, the vast majority are open to all who wish to attend.

Participation is high, and the quality of performance, especially in music and sport, is excellent.

- 3.9 Local and international community links make an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. Year 6 pupils have sung at several local churches, and the junior school recently completed a successful fund-raising venture for a school in South Africa and an orphanage in India. Senior school pupils develop greater self-confidence and independence from their involvement in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. In conjunction with two nearby independent schools, opportunities for girls in Years 12 and 13 extend further through their participation in a joint general studies course that provides a range of over forty activities. The school successfully participates in numerous community ventures, such as Schools Without Walls, where older pupils support local primary schools, and the Music Outreach programme, where pupils perform in local schools and hospital wards.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 Teaching is excellent throughout, very effectively promoting pupils' progress and fulfilling the aim of the school to provide a first-class education for academically able girls. High quality planning ensures that lessons are extremely well paced and that there is a purposeful environment in which learning can take place.
- 3.11 Teachers know their pupils well and, whilst they fully understand their needs, the teaching materials prepared do not provide for the specific needs of pupils with LDD on occasion. However, these pupils are highly motivated, work successfully and are well supported in other ways, so that they develop their knowledge and understanding. For example, in a lesson where the teacher noticed that a point had not been clearly accepted, the problem was re-examined from a different angle. This was typical of lessons observed throughout both the junior and the senior school, and it is clear that assessment of pupils' progress informs the teachers of the next steps in learning. There is widespread use of group and paired work, where responsibility for learning is handed over to the pupils; this is one example of teachers' great efforts to foster pupils' interest and independence. The pupils are engaged in this process and co-operate fully with each other.
- 3.12 Teachers are well qualified and enthusiastic, and have excellent subject knowledge that they convey to pupils using a wide range of innovative teaching methods. Teaching is further enhanced by well-resourced classrooms throughout the school. Since the previous inspection, there have been many initiatives to improve the quality of teaching, including use of the training resources of the UCST and other providers. These initiatives have been well directed and very successful. An effective review scheme ensures that best practice is consistent throughout the school, and within the positive culture, lesson observation is regarded as routine.
- 3.13 There is extensive use of ICT across the school. Interactive whiteboards add to the quality of teaching by providing access to extensive online resources, and an innovative virtual learning environment (VLE) has been developed. This is a valuable source of information for pupils, and in some subjects, allows them to have remote access to set work and feedback from assessment, which they value highly. This is being extended across the curriculum. The quality of the work planned is excellent and ensures that pupils are continually challenged, including the most able pupils in this highly academic school. Pupils are encouraged to learn independently and to think creatively, in keeping with the school's aims.

- 3.14 Methods used for assessing and recording pupils' achievements, progress and needs through their work are very thorough and informative. Marking is regular and helpful in nature, and assists pupils to make progress with their learning; it is well used to inform teachers of the next steps in learning. Pupils are highly appreciative of the detailed responses to their work. Standardised assessment tests are employed well to monitor pupils as they progress through the school and are also used to help teachers plan work.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 Pupils' excellent personal development is a major strength of the school, entirely in keeping with its stated aim of creating a caring community in which every member is treated with respect and valued. From the earliest years, pupils are happy and secure, and, over time, develop confidence in their many talents, responding thoughtfully to the world around them. They take increasing responsibility for their own lives, and willingly play their part as good citizens of the school and of the wider community.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual development is strong. Pupils express themselves through poetry, art, music and drama, creating evocative work of quality. In lessons, they become reflective learners who not only seek academic skills, but who place their learning in a wider context. In support of this, the school provides a rich palette of opportunities for quiet reflection: in church services shared with the local community, in assemblies and through more secular activities that capture a sense of awe and wonder.
- 4.3 The school engenders strong moral awareness and pupils are demonstrably kind and courteous. In lessons, they are co-operative and respectful, listening to the views of others and interacting with staff and peers in a relaxed yet purposeful fashion. This strength is built around mutual trust and respect. The example is set by teachers, whose close collegiate sense creates a supportive atmosphere to which the pupils respond. Relationships are strong, both amongst pupils, and between pupils and staff. In this positive atmosphere, staff establish clear and effective boundaries.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is outstanding. Opportunities to take responsibility abound. For example, the junior school council requested a revision of the behaviour policy, suggesting appropriate sanctions. Younger pupils are given training to act as playground peer mediators. In the senior school, a well-organised 'buddy' system helps new girls to settle in and advises about travel on public transport. Pupils show the courage to make their voice heard, and enthusiastically help those less fortunate than themselves by regularly organising assemblies and presenting the case for the support of chosen charities. During the inspection, pupils were raising money for Project Peru in aid of a refuge for the poor, inspired by poverty witnessed by some on a recreational trip to the country. Junior pupils have raised money for two ten-year academic scholarships for children in Calcutta. Voyages of discovery are organised in which senior pupils travel to remote locations, incorporating social projects as part of their visit. A recent expedition to China saw girls helping in local schools.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural awareness is strongly developed and they enjoy learning about other cultures. This leads to a sensitive understanding of those represented in the immediate and wider community. World topics are developed in many schemes of work and current world events are incorporated into lessons. The recent Japanese earthquake prompted research in a Year 9 geography lesson, and fund-raising efforts followed. Displays around the school track current events. Through personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons, pupils learn about institutions and services in the United Kingdom. In class and assemblies, pupils explore the Christian faith and, to a lesser but significant extent, other major faiths. They are respectful of other faiths and cultures within school and in the wider world.

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

- 4.6 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent and fully meet the school's aim to provide an atmosphere and surroundings in which individuals can be happy, be supported and thrive. They make a very strong contribution to the personal development of the girls. Excellent pastoral care is fully supported by successful pastoral systems and policies. Tutors and heads of year in the senior school and form teachers in the junior school are ably supported by the deputy heads who oversee the provision. The pastoral teams work as a cohesive body, placing the individual pupil at the centre of all that they do. Pupils are known personally, and the very positive relationships forged with staff keep potential difficulties to a minimum. Communication with parents is seen as central to ensuring the welfare of the pupils, and responses to the parental questionnaires confirm a high level of confidence in the school. Pupils have access to the school nurse and doctor, and to a visiting counsellor, which ensures that any concerns are addressed and resolved quickly. A wealth of arrangements is in place to ensure that new pupils are easily integrated; a shadow system allows girls to settle easily into the junior school and similar 'buddy' arrangements operate between Years 7 and 8. The transition from junior to senior school is very carefully prepared, including visits, information evenings and the New Girls' Day. Senior staff also visit prospective entrants to Year 7 from elsewhere at their primary schools.
- 4.7 Relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst pupils themselves, are open, respectful and mutually supportive. The school is proud of its academic record, placing great emphasis on the opportunity to shine for all pupils. This has produced a community whose members truly enjoy celebrating each other's success, through regular awards assemblies, the presentation of school colours, merits or a posting on the 'recognition board'. The school council has been instrumental in the development of codes of conduct, which are clear and well understood by all staff and pupils. The house system further cements relationships within the community, as do activities during form time and PSHE lessons. Girls are caring and courteous towards each other and to staff, and registered their appreciation of all the support that the school provides in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Pupils felt very strongly that teachers are always willing to give them individual help, but that they do not always monitor their workload. During discussions with both pupils and staff, it was clear that pupils' workloads are carefully monitored by form tutors and that tutors are very supportive of their pupils.
- 4.8 The school has highly effective policies and procedures to promote good behaviour, to guard against harassment and bullying, and to deal constructively with any instances of unacceptable behaviour, of which there are very few. The excellent examples set by staff and older pupils, and pupils' generous concern for each other, are well supported by work on the subject of bullying in PSHE. The school's strong safeguarding policy is implemented successfully and all staff have received appropriate safeguarding training. All necessary measures have been taken to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are highly effective, including risk assessments covering all areas of school life and comfortable provision to care for pupils who are ill. The plan to improve educational access for pupils with disabilities in response to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act has been implemented through the use of modern technology, for example in providing large print materials, and in the design of the school's modern buildings.

- 4.9 Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily; a menu which includes healthy choices is offered in the dining room. In the junior school, posters about healthy eating and the importance of drinking lots of water are on display in corridors and classrooms. Pupils are keen sportswomen, benefiting greatly from the excellent sports facilities; games practices, matches, competitions and sports clubs are greatly enjoyed. The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is excellent. The United Church Schools Trust holds the legal responsibilities of governance, with accountabilities clearly set out between the trust, the school and the local governing body. The central office of the trust has well-informed oversight of the school, which enables it to fulfil successfully its legal duties. The trust and the school share the vision of excellence. The trust provides both challenge and support to the school to realise this aspirational vision, partly through the rigorous review procedures that are undertaken. Support includes a wide range of professional services, including staff training opportunities. The head has full responsibility for the educational budget; other financial matters are managed centrally. The trust has provided excellent accommodation and resources, and has enabled the management of the school to recruit expert staff.
- 5.2 The LGB has an advisory role and its members, a number of whom are parents of present or past pupils, bring valuable expertise and knowledge of the local area, and maintain regular contact with the school, for example in their involvement in health and safety, and in safeguarding. Reports are sent from the LGB on these matters to the trust, fulfilling specific legal obligations, also including the requirement for a review of the safeguarding policy and practice within the school. The deputy chief executive of the UCST attends the LGB meetings, creating a direct link and a channel for communication between the two bodies.
- 5.3 This combination of professional expertise from the trust and the local advice and involvement of the LGB members is a key support to the extremely high standards achieved in all areas of the school, but particularly in its educational provision.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Leadership and management are outstanding at all levels and have enabled the school to make considerable progress in all aspects since the previous inspection. The senior leadership team has a clear sense of purpose and direction which is shared by staff and pupils. The aims of the school are fully met, particularly in providing opportunities for maximising every pupil's potential. The school is led with vision, commitment and energy by a strong team that shares a passionate commitment to continual improvement. Whilst each member of the team has a clearly defined role, it is a particular strength of the group that all work together as a cohesive unit. Excellent communications and planning are supported by formal weekly meetings that also maintain high standards of pastoral care. The heads of the junior and senior schools also meet weekly to ensure clear lines of communication, effective planning and monitoring of standards of achievement.
- 5.5 Reflection, analysis and evaluation are hallmarks of the management of the school, and there are extremely effective procedures for setting priorities and ensuring that they are achieved. The increase, since the previous inspection, in the number of girls securing places at universities with a high standard of entry is one example of such focused planning and its effective execution. Improvements in the school are underpinned by an extensive school development plan that is reviewed and updated every six months; this is closely linked to departmental planning and the school's appraisal system.

- 5.6 The school recruits well-qualified and committed teaching and non-teaching staff who contribute much to the level of care central to its ethos. The full staff appraisal system identifies opportunities for professional development and staff training in areas such as the VLE, and this has ensured that the delivery of the curriculum is even further enhanced. All staff are motivated to provide the best for their pupils. Appropriate policies and procedures have been written and implemented, and all staff are suitably trained to fulfil their roles in meeting the needs of pupils with regard to safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The school has thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, including supply staff, volunteers and governors.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.7 The school has created and maintained excellent links with parents, fully consistent with its aims. The responses to the parental questionnaire show high levels of satisfaction with the vast majority of aspects of the school. Parents highlighted their approval of the range of subjects and extra-curricular activities offered to pupils of all ages, the progress pupils make, the high standards of behaviour, and the worthwhile attitudes and values promoted by the school. Parents said that they can communicate easily with the school. In their comments, many noted the helpfulness of direct email contact with teachers, and a high proportion said that they receive timely responses, that information is readily available and that concerns have been dealt with well. These positive views are supported by inspection evidence; for example, complaints are dealt with promptly and in line with the school's published procedure.
- 5.8 Whilst many are happy with the opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school, some parents commented that they would like more of these. However, from the comments of other parents and from inspection findings, it is clear that very good opportunities exist to be involved and that many parents make the most of these, whether through the parents' association, involvement in charitable works, or giving talks and sharing experiences with pupils. A proportion of parents of pupils in the junior school said that they would like more information about the progress made by their children. Information is shared in meetings at the start of the first two terms, when parents have short appointments with teachers; however, no written report is given. A full and informative annual report is sent to parents in the summer term. Parents of pupils in the senior school said that they receive very regular and informative reports and have good opportunities to meet staff at parents' evenings, and that they value the opportunity to contact staff by email whenever they have a query. A small number of parents of pupils across the age range were not satisfied with the help given to gifted and talented pupils. Inspection evidence did not support this concern. Gifted and talented pupils of all ages are stimulated in many ways, both through the very high expectations of staff and through many specific opportunities. A number of parents with daughters in the senior school raised the issue of provision for those with specific LDD. Inspection evidence shows that whilst carefully prepared information is passed on to teaching staff in the senior school about the needs of pupils with LDD, arrangements do not sufficiently help staff to cater for these needs, to monitor provision and to check the outcomes for the pupils.
- 5.9 The school website provides extensive and requisite information about the school for parents of current and prospective pupils. In addition, regular newsletters, school magazines, news and blogs posted on the website, and the use of a text messaging service alongside email contact, all combine to ensure that parents are very well informed about the life of the school. Curriculum material is sent out regularly, supported by information and options evenings as appropriate. Parents are invited

to a considerable range of high quality productions, concerts, festival evenings, matches and sports events, and are able to enjoy the cultural life of the school and to see the achievements of the pupils at first hand.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.1 This is an outstanding setting which meets the needs of each child very well. Children are safeguarded effectively and benefit from a well-resourced environment, with qualified, experienced and specialist staff. They are integrated effectively into the wider school community and make excellent progress. The capacity to improve is strong, as illustrated by the initiatives introduced and changes made to the provision since the previous inspection, such as the development of resources, both inside and out-of-doors, to develop further the opportunities for learning. Other developments, including the introduction of a new mathematics scheme and new ICT provision in the classrooms, have been well targeted to improve learning.

6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.2 The leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. All records, policies and procedures, including those to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, and those for safeguarding children, are in place and implemented well. Staff are appropriately qualified and deployed, and make good use of training opportunities to develop skills and expertise. The quality of self-evaluation is strong and the head of the junior school sets clear priorities for development, with a strong focus on the academic achievement of each child. Detailed and regularly updated development plans also indicate a pro-active capacity to improve. Positive relationships exist with parents, who, in discussion, showed an appreciation of and satisfaction with the provision and their children's progress. Staff work closely with external partners and parents in order to meet the needs of each child. A range of good resources is used to support the implementation of the curriculum, both inside and outdoors.

6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

6.3 Overall, the quality of the provision is outstanding. Schemes of work across all six areas of learning are thoroughly planned, with holistic, cross-curricular links identified. Staff undertake initial and ongoing observational assessment that identifies children's capabilities. Resources are used effectively to support planned activities. On some occasions, however, there are insufficient opportunities for these to be fully utilised to develop independent learning through play. A high priority is given to children's safety and welfare, evidenced by the application of rigorous and effective policies, particularly risk assessment. Children are taught about good health and hygiene, and there are high expectations for behaviour.

6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 6.4 Outcomes for the children are outstanding. They are independent and articulate, and engage effectively and competently in discussion with peers and adults. Literacy and numeracy are strongly promoted, to good effect. In a literacy lesson, children confidently chose words to describe the characters in *Cinderella*, and in a numeracy lesson, they were confidently working on measuring, both in terms of spans and time. Children also demonstrate high levels of competence in ICT. They make excellent progress and generally enter Year 1 with academic levels above average for their age. Children show that they feel safe through good relationships with adults in the setting and mechanisms such as 'bubble time', when they are able to speak confidentially with a member of staff. There is good awareness of the importance of hygiene and safety practices, and the children greatly enjoy the range of physical activities planned into the daily routines of the setting. Children are very well behaved and friendly, and show respect for each other's differences.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Gwen Caddock	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Carole Adler	Former Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Mark Brain	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mrs Julie Bolter	Former Head of Department and Head of Sixth Form, SHMIS school
Dr Martin Boulton	Deputy Head, HMC school
Mrs Pauline Clark	Deputy Head, GSA school
Ms Teresa Dunbar	Head, IAPS school
Mr George Fisher	Former Head, HMC school
Mrs Gwendoline Randall	Former Head, HMC school
Mrs Jane Short	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector