



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ALDWICKBURY SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Aldwickbury School

Full Name of School	Aldwickbury School
DfE Number	919/6016
Registered Charity Number	311059
Address	Aldwickbury School Wheathampstead Road Harpenden Hertfordshire AL5 1AD
Telephone Number	01582 713022
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Email Address	secretary@aldwickbury.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr Vernon Hales
Chairman of Governors	Mr Stuart Westley
Age Range	4 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	339
Gender of Pupils	Boys
Numbers by Age	4-5 (EYFS): 38 5-11: 245 11-13: 56
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Christine Baynes
EYFS Gender	Boys
Inspection dates	08 Oct 2013 to 11 Oct 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2011.

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

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

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 31 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 Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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

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

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

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

inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mr David Bunkell

Mr Paul Cozens

Mrs Kathleen Hayes

Dr Simon Horbury

Mrs Pamela Leech

Mrs Glynis Holmes

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector

(Director of Teaching and Learning, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Aldwickbury School is a day and boarding preparatory school for boys from the ages of 4 to 13, situated on the outskirts of Harpenden in Hertfordshire. It is housed in a Victorian mansion set within 20 acres of grounds. The school was founded in 1937, taking the name Aldwickbury when it moved to the current site in 1948. Since that time, additional facilities and buildings have been established in the grounds, including a purpose-built pre-preparatory (pre-prep) building in 2001. Until the 1960s the school was privately owned and led. A charitable trust was established in 1969, and the school is administered by a board of 12 governors who are also the trustees.
- 1.2 The aims of the school are to provide high standards of teaching, so that all boys achieve their potential, encouraging them to become independent learners, able to think for themselves, while following a broad and balanced curriculum for all to enjoy and from which they can benefit. The intention is to build self-esteem, respect and a sense of belonging through a wide range of opportunities both in and outside the classroom, and to provide opportunities for the boys to adopt and live out the 'Aldwickbury Values', based broadly in the Christian faith, encouraging them to take full advantage of every opportunity that is presented to them.
- 1.3 Currently, 339 pupils attend the school. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of 38 children in three Reception classes. Their classrooms are within the pre-prep building, and have access to a dedicated outdoor learning area. Years 1 to 6 comprise 245 pupils and 56 are in Years 7 and 8. Boarding is provided on a flexible basis for pupils in Years 5 to 8 from Monday to Thursday. The boarding accommodation is on the upper floors of the main house, and has 5 dormitories, with 33 beds in total. At present there are no regular weekly boarders, but 46 pupils board occasionally, usually for one, two or three nights at a time.
- 1.4 Admission to the school at the age of four is not selective on the grounds of academic ability. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. A fairly wide spread of abilities is represented, but most pupils are of at least above average ability, with some being of well above average ability. On leaving the school, most pupils proceed to academically selective day or boarding independent senior schools, the majority at the age of 13, although a few leave at the age of 11. The school has identified 50 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who receive support as necessary. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. For three pupils, English is an additional language (EAL) and support for their English is provided. The majority of pupils are of white British origin. Most families live within a few miles of the school, and parents mainly have professional occupations.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection, the school has become exempt from the EYFS statutory requirements for learning and development, and a friends organisation has been established. At the time of this inspection, a major building development was nearing completion to provide a hall, music department and further classrooms.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The achievement of the pupils is excellent, substantially due to their highly positive attitudes to learning, as they approach every task with enthusiasm. Pupils with SEND or EAL show equal determination. Pupils who are able, gifted and talented (A, G and T) are enabled to make the most of their abilities. The pupils go on to a number of selective independent senior schools, often achieving scholarships. Good teaching also contributes to this success, although the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is inconsistent in lessons. Marking is very thorough and includes much well-deserved praise and advice for improvement. The curriculum is excellent, and many pupils are successful beyond the classroom, with significant achievement in sport, music and drama. An excellent programme of extra-curricular activities contributes much to school life. Enhancements to the curriculum by trips and visitors also add to the success of the school. The quality of the provision in the EYFS is excellent. All the staff have a thorough knowledge of how young children learn, and use this experience to good effect when planning for the learning, development and care of each individual child.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. Many pupils show great maturity in the way in which they care for each other. Relationships within the school are exemplary, as adults are excellent role models, providing high standards of pastoral care for the pupils. Older pupils have taken on responsibilities within the school, but pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to voice their opinions. Arrangements for health and safety are excellent. Safeguarding the welfare of the pupils is of paramount concern to all staff. The availability of good quality boarding is appreciated by older pupils and their parents, and provides useful preparation for those who may consider boarding at senior school.
- 2.3 The governors provide excellent oversight of the school. They discharge their statutory duties meticulously, and they have clear vision for the school's future development. Excellent leadership and management at all levels enable day-to-day school life to proceed smoothly, as senior staff are fully aware of any measures that may be required to enable further improvements. Links with parents are strong. In responses to their pre-inspection questionnaire, the majority of parents were appreciative of all that the school does for their children. A small minority of parents considered that bullying is not always dealt with effectively. Evidence showed that detailed records are kept of any incidents, and sanctions are appropriate; bullying occurs very rarely. All the recommendations of the previous ISI and Ofsted inspections have been met in their entirety, regarding personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE), ICT skills in the EYFS, parents' involvement and challenge for the more able pupils.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Embed the use of ICT in teaching throughout the school.
 2. Identify further opportunities to seek and respond to the views of pupils.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 This is in accordance with the school's aim to encourage the pupils to take full advantage of every opportunity that is presented to them. In the EYFS, all children make excellent progress, leading to high achievement in their learning and development. They express themselves clearly and show great independence when selecting their own equipment to start a task. They are able to form many letters and numbers correctly, and use their knowledge of sounds to spell simple words. They count confidently, and understand and can make a repeating pattern using both shape and colour. They demonstrate increasing skills in the use of ICT. They understand that an estimate is a sensible guess, and can explain how to write numbers to 110.
- 3.3 Older pupils successfully make links across the curriculum, using their skills in a wide variety of learning circumstances, and are able to recall facts skilfully, employing these successfully in a range of contexts. For example, they showed a mature understanding of the differing religious viewpoints which led to the eleventh century crusades when discussing these in a history lesson. Other pupils carried out mathematical calculations in French. All pupils confidently articulate opinions during lessons and listen very attentively to each other and to their teachers. They read and write fluently and show themselves capable of logical and independent thought, for example when building rockets during a competition. The pupils apply mathematical principles successfully and engage enthusiastically in physical activities. They show high levels of creative skills, for example when creating artefacts and performing music and drama on stage. Pupils are competent in the use of ICT.
- 3.4 The range of significant achievements is broad. They enjoy success in local and national competitions in such areas as general knowledge and chess, and achieve a notable range of academic, musical, drama and sporting awards. Sporting successes include football, hockey, cricket, tennis, skiing, athletics, rugby and swimming. As they progress through the school, pupils with EAL achieve at least in line with their peers; minimal linguistic support is needed. Pupils with SEND sometimes outperform other pupils, as the support they are given enables them to be confident and to persevere.
- 3.5 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. The pupils follow a suitably demanding curriculum and achieve excellent results in Common Entrance and other entrance tests for academically selective independent senior schools; they all gain places at their chosen schools, and often with scholarships. This level of attainment as judged indicates that the pupils make a high rate of progress overall compared with others of similar ability nationally, as evaluated in lesson observation, pupils' written work and curricular interviews with them. Pupils with SEND often make rapid progress, as observed in their participation in lessons and in discussion, largely due to the effective use of short-term targets and careful monitoring of progress. Pupils who are A, G and T make excellent progress, and many effective strategies make sure that they have opportunities to extend their capabilities, especially with individualised learning, for which they take full responsibility.

3.6 The pupils are highly interested and motivated learners, who apply themselves enthusiastically to all aspects of their learning. They are confident in their individual abilities and gain satisfaction from what they do, as illustrated by their eagerness to receive 'plus' rewards, marbles and other awards. They work successfully as individuals and with others, taking initiative for their learning, and they organise their work very well.

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

3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

3.8 For pupils of all ages, the curriculum includes all requisite areas of learning. It fulfils the school's aim to provide a broad and balanced curriculum from which all pupils benefit. This is extremely well supported by a very wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities, highly suitable for all pupils.

3.9 In the EYFS, the curriculum offers a wide variety of indoor and outdoor activities as well as a good balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Excellent provision meets the needs of the children. The educational programme is based on the Early Learning Goals. The EYFS has chosen to become exempt from the learning and development requirements of the statutory framework for the EYFS, and has adapted these goals to enable a very broad, balanced curriculum, better meeting the needs and aims of this setting. Provision now goes beyond the EYFS learning and development requirements, with a very carefully constructed schedule, including some specialist teaching.

3.10 From Year 1, pupils benefit from further specialist teaching in subjects such as music, French, and physical education. The curriculum is considerably enriched by the teaching of languages. The pupils study a range of modern foreign languages (MFL) from Year 5, and in Year 7 choose either Spanish or German as a second MFL for Common Entrance. In addition, all pupils study Latin from Year 6. Pupils make purposeful use of classrooms and the facilities for science, ICT, art, design and technology and the performing arts.

3.11 The balance and content of the curriculum are regularly reviewed, and younger pupils have the opportunity to select some topic areas and enjoy 'Wow!' days, recent examples of which have included celebrations of the royal wedding and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Following a recommendation from the previous inspection, a comprehensive scheme of work for PSHCE has been successfully implemented across the school.

3.12 Information and communication technology has recently been updated, and two dedicated teaching rooms have sets of networked computers, one of which is in the pre-prep building. A set of tablet computers has recently been purchased, as the school has recognised that it has not yet fully embedded the use of ICT within lessons. The library is a well-used resource that supports all areas of the curriculum.

3.13 Provision for pupils with SEND is excellent. They are well supported with individual education plans when assessment shows that these would be beneficial, and effective use of these is evident in lesson planning. Details of A, G and T pupils are recorded in lesson plans and appropriate work and challenge are often identified.

3.14 Pupils take part in a range of educational day trips and residential visits closely linked to the curriculum. Examples include pre-prep pupils enjoying a street

simulation from the Stuart period, and older pupils spending a week in France. Pupils spoke with enthusiasm about their recent trip to a local river. In addition, educational visitors come into the school, and trips take place to senior schools for competitions and quizzes.

- 3.15 The excellent extra-curricular programme is available to all pupils as part of the timetabled day, with sessions before and after school and at lunchtime. It is carefully structured and extremely well organised. The range of activities is particularly wide, to cater for all preferences. Pupils attend these activities with great enthusiasm. Of particular note is the provision for sport, with a daily games programme, both within the timetable and as optional activities. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to compete for their school in a notably broad range of sports, often with all those in a whole year group simultaneously playing in fixtures. Music ensembles and choirs take place throughout the week. Pupils benefit from participation in a significant number of local sporting and musical events and competitions, often hosted at the school. Effective links are promoted with the community, which include the use of the swimming pool by pupils from local primary schools and holiday use of the premises by a local music school. The school regularly hosts workshops for A, G and T pupils with a children's author, attended also by pupils from local primary schools. Funds have been raised to help to regenerate a local forest, and pupils have planted trees there. On occasions, the chapel choir sings with other choirs in local churches.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.17 This contributes towards the excellent levels of pupils' achievement and personal development. It strongly supports the school's aim to encourage pupils to become independent learners, who are able to think for themselves. Whilst a significant proportion of the teaching observed was of an excellent standard, the quality is variable. Teaching is consistently well planned and based upon an understanding of pupils' needs. Teaching often fosters interest, independence and collaboration. The most effective lessons are characterised by lively and engaging teaching, active learning, appropriately demanding tasks, challenging questioning, effective management of time and marking against the learning intentions. Where pupils are given the opportunity to work independently or in small groups, they make excellent progress. In a small number of lessons, learning opportunities were limited by a lack of pace or less challenging tasks. In the majority of lessons, clearly delineated work is provided to enable pupils of all abilities to be sufficiently challenged, and subsequently they make optimum progress.
- 3.18 In the EYFS, all staff are actively engaged in promoting learning; they have high expectations and children are extremely well motivated in response. Initial assessment and regular analysis of children's knowledge and skills are used to guide planning for class activities and for individual children. Tasks are challenging for the more able, and support is offered to those children who need it. Any children not making the expected progress are quickly identified and extra support provided.
- 3.19 Throughout the school, teachers are knowledgeable and committed to helping every pupil make progress. Pupils benefit from specialist teaching in a wide range of subjects, and the teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects is clearly evident. Pupils are confident about asking for help and many express their appreciation for the way that the staff understand any difficulties they may have, and support their learning.

Pupils' behaviour is very well managed in class and this contributes strongly towards their progress.

- 3.20 Marking is carried out efficiently, in accordance with the recently revised school marking policy, which is adapted for individual subjects. In some subjects, marking guidelines are affixed to the front of pupils' exercise books, to serve as a useful reminder. The best marking challenges pupils to improve their work, and it is an expectation of pupils that they make the suggested improvements. In some cases a dialogue takes place, as pupils reply to teachers' written comments, and further notes are then made by the teacher.
- 3.21 Following a recommendation from the previous inspection, teachers consistently plan work into their lessons which is designed to challenge the most able. For example, some pupils in the pre-prep have been identified as being gifted mathematicians and are set their own problem-solving tasks. Further improvements have occurred following the appointment of a member of staff with specific oversight of A, G and T pupils.
- 3.22 Teaching for pupils with SEND is excellent. These pupils' needs are met highly effectively in individual lessons, and with appropriate support in mainstream classes. This consistent and coherent provision, combined with excellent resources, detailed assessment and monitoring, frequently enables them to make rapid progress. Teaching staff are informed about the needs of these pupils through highly informative summary sheets provided by learning support staff, and also about any support needed for pupils with EAL. Regular meetings to discuss these pupils are also effective in enabling staff to share information.
- 3.23 Resources are of excellent quality and are largely used effectively to promote learning, but the use of ICT to assist teaching is inconsistent throughout the school. The oldest pupils were observed completing their geography fieldwork project using relevant software and the internet. Some other subject areas use the facilities occasionally, but not in all curriculum areas or for all age groups.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual awareness. They show detailed understanding of various religious occasions, including Diwali, Advent and Christingle in their religious studies (RS) work. Pupils showed wonder at the patterns and colour in nature during an art lesson. Older pupils demonstrated excellent reflective skills on love and forgiveness in an RS lesson, displaying an awareness of non-material aspects of life. Pupils have high levels of self-esteem and confidence.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is excellent. In the EYFS, children often discuss issues such as unfairness and how to be kind. Since the previous inspection, the implementation of an effective PSHCE policy throughout the school has helped to strengthen the pupils' moral and cultural values. Pupils have a keen sense of right and wrong beyond a simple notion of rules, as demonstrated in a pre-prep assembly where they clearly understood the significance of owning up to mistakes. In interviews, pupils showed that they support each other well and are prepared to offer help when they see someone in difficulty. They discussed the school's code of conduct and sanctions system with strong moral awareness and a desire for fair play.
- 4.4 The pupils' social awareness is extremely well developed. Pupils are valued as individuals and encourage one another, ensuring that the school's aim of building self-esteem, respect and a sense of belonging is fulfilled. A high level of emotional maturity is exhibited by pupils undertaking leadership roles, such as monitors, section leaders or prefects. In the EYFS, the children have learnt to share and work together co-operatively. They are able to express opinions clearly and listen to and discuss the views of others. They particularly enjoy the reward system of collecting marbles to earn a certificate for the highest number at the end of the week. Older pupils share and take turns when playing and in activities both outside and in the classroom. Pupils also contribute to the school community through the Boys' Council. Towards the end of the summer term, Year 7 pupils gain from a leadership programme. Year 8 pupils volunteer to hear younger readers. All pupils in Year 8 benefit from visits to the Houses of Parliament and the Royal Courts of Justice, developing their understanding of British institutions. During the inspection, pupils enthusiastically participated in a 'Jeans for Genes' day in support of the children's charity, wearing section (house) colours and organising a cake sale, for all of which they displayed great pride.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate excellent cultural understanding. Pupils and staff celebrate the diversity within the school and appreciate the contributions of those of other faiths, cultures and nationalities, enabling all pupils to develop an insight into the values and beliefs of others, for example with visits to a cathedral and a mosque. Pupils' studies of life in other countries such as Japan and China enable them to develop social, political and economic awareness. Trips in the UK and abroad increase their appreciation of the cultural variation within the world in which they live.
- 4.6 Children in the EYFS are prepared very well for the next stage of their education. Older pupils show themselves to be confident young individuals, who are well prepared for their next schools, acknowledging a need to contribute to society as a

whole. By the time they reach Year 8, pupils display excellent personal development and maturity.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The high quality of pastoral care fulfils the school's aim to provide opportunities for pupils to live out the 'Aldwickbury Values', broadly based on the Christian faith, developing them as their own, and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires and in interviews, pupils reported that they enjoy being at the school and that they are very proud of it. In the EYFS, the contribution to children's well-being is excellent. Their small class sizes play an integral role in ensuring that the children are able to form secure relationships with adults and peers. Each child has a designated key person to ensure that individual needs are met. The EYFS staff are excellent role models, and use positive reinforcement of behaviour, to which the children respond immediately. In other year groups, form teachers and, for the older pupils, tutors with mixed-age groups, provide excellent support and guidance. Most pupils in the upper part of the school say that the tutor system works extremely well, that they can discuss any concerns they might have and that their tutors are always available for them. Staff meetings allow very effective opportunities to discuss any pupils who may be experiencing difficulties and to put in place any necessary action.
- 4.9 At all ages, staff know the pupils extremely well. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves contribute strongly to pupils' personal development. In questionnaire responses, a small minority of senior pupils felt that teachers are not always fair in the way they give sanctions. No evidence was found to support this view in discussions during the inspection. Pupils were seen to have an excellent rapport with all adults, and to talk freely with them in lessons and less formal places, such as at the lunch table. A small minority of pupils expressed in response to the questionnaire that there are too few opportunities provided for pupils' opinions to be sought and listened to on a more formal basis. Inspection findings support this view.
- 4.10 Lunchtimes are a happy, sociable occasion, with teachers and other members of staff sitting with pupils. The pupils change places at the tables daily, and take turns to serve and clear. The food is excellent, and pupils are introduced to a very wide variety of healthy food, with choice always available. They are very aware of what constitutes a healthy diet, and recognise a need for carbohydrates to provide energy for games. In addition to games sessions, pupils have many opportunities for physical exercise. The extensive grounds and regular breaks provide time for more casual exercise with friends.
- 4.11 The school is highly effective in promoting the exemplary behaviour observed. A small minority of parents perceive that the school does not deal well with cases of bullying. Inspectors found that incidents are rare, that a meticulous and detailed log is kept and that any sanctions imposed are proportionate and effective. In questionnaire responses and interviews, the majority of pupils expressed the view that any bullying is dealt with fairly and constructively. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND, which is monitored and reviewed as required.

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

- 4.12 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.13 Throughout the school, including the EYFS and boarding provision, the school has highly effective procedures in place to safeguard the welfare of pupils. Policies are regularly updated and are well implemented, and teaching and non-teaching staff receive thorough induction training, which includes child protection. Regular safeguarding training is carried out for all staff according to their responsibilities within this aspect. Risk from fire and other hazards has been carefully assessed and minimised, with regular fire drills to help ensure the safety of pupils, staff and visitors. Detailed risk assessments are carried out and fire and electrical equipment periodically checked. All staff have received appropriate fire awareness training.
- 4.14 In the EYFS, the children thrive in a safe and happy environment. The medical provision for all pupils is of a high standard, with care provided at all times by qualified staff. Medical records are up to date and appropriately stored. First-aid kits are suitably maintained throughout the school and taken on school trips. Many staff are routinely trained in first aid, with a high number with paediatric first-aid qualifications, relevant to the younger pupils. Pupils with SEND are well catered for, and day and boarding pupils say that they feel safe and well looked after. A suitably furnished room enables pupils to lie down when they are unwell if necessary.
- 4.15 Attendance and admission registers are scrupulously maintained. The school has recently moved to an entirely electronic system of registration, with necessary back-up copies of registers kept. The previous hard copy registers are suitably archived and stored. Any unexpected absences are followed up promptly.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.16 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.17 Boarders are articulate, confident and polite, and demonstrate pride in their boarding house. Relationships amongst boarders and between boarders and staff are warm and sincere, and the boarders feel well cared for. The boarding staff team works hard to ensure that boarding is an enjoyable part of school life for pupils who often board as well as for those who stay more sporadically. All boarders are encouraged to be fit and healthy, and the pupils are appreciative of the many activities and facilities available to them. Good behaviour is encouraged through the example set by staff, apposite posters and the importance given to the 'Aldwickbury Values'.
- 4.18 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. The pupils board in the main school building, and enjoy the benefit of large dormitories. The house is comfortable, well maintained and welcoming, and laundry provision is suitable. Drinking water from a chilled water dispenser is always available, and the boarders relish their snack before bed. The pupils enjoy watching football matches, age-appropriate television programmes and DVDs in a small common room. Table tennis tables and table football on the ground floor offer alternative indoor recreational facilities. Boarders may work in the library at suitable times during the evening. The staff look after any valuable items such as passports before school trips, and keep pocket money safe for the boarders. Bathroom facilities are adequate, with supplies of hot water. Toilet facilities, whilst adequate, are limited on the top floor. 'Taster' nights allow day pupils to enjoy the experience of boarding, and special activities are organised throughout the year, including end-of-term

celebration evenings, with the award of individual certificates. The boarders have supervised access to the indoor heated swimming pool and to the gymnasium. Boarders staying for a full week may use their own mobile telephones to contact parents and friends, while those staying for a shorter time may use a landline telephone. The staff maintain close communication with parents through email, text messaging and telephone calls.

- 4.19 A group of dedicated and experienced staff comprise the boarding team, and boarders say that they feel safe and well cared for. An induction programme with a handbook, tour and talk by a matron helps new boarders to settle in quickly. House notice boards display appropriate contact details for outside agencies such as ChildLine and the Children's Rights Director, and the many clearly displayed posters help to remind pupils of the wide range of adults to whom they may go with concerns, including an independent listener. Tutors are often available during the evenings. A matron is available overnight, and is easily contactable should any boarders need help. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken.
- 4.20 The catering provision specifically for the boarders is good, with plentiful, well-cooked and nutritious food. A good choice of food is available and all dietary needs are catered for, with staff fully aware of those boarders who have particular dietary requirements. The medical room is always staffed, and boarders may use its day bed if they are ill. Medication is correctly stored and dispensed with parents' consent. All records are suitably maintained and stored. Boarders who are prescribed inhalers may self-medicate when they are assessed as responsible to do so.
- 4.21 Provision for the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of boarders is excellent. The school has responded positively to the previous ISI inspection, and all appropriate checks in respect of each member of staff are carried out and correctly recorded. The single recommendation from the previous Ofsted inspection of boarding welfare, regarding staff training in child protection, has been met. A robust anti-bullying policy and an effective system of rewards and sanctions are well implemented; these are specific to the boarders and do not extend into the academic day. The boarders speak confidently with the staff who look after them and know when and how to report any concerns they may have.
- 4.22 Reliable systems for checking in and out ensure that staff are aware of each boarder's whereabouts. All boarding staff understand the policy to be invoked in the event of a missing pupil. Fire logs are up to date and appropriately stored, and regular fire drills take place in boarding time. Boarders may purchase sweet treats from a tuck shop. Personal and hygiene items are provided by parents. No boarder requires an independent guardian, as all parents live in the UK.
- 4.23 The leadership and management of boarding are good. The boarding mission statement is clearly stated, and underpins the boarding experience, promoting good relationships and enhancing the personal development of the boarders. Policies are detailed and well implemented. New staff participate in an induction programme, and all staff are regularly appraised. External courses allow staff to further their professional development. Key boarding staff meet weekly to review the boarding provision, and the intention to increase boarding numbers is included in the school development plan. The parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire are satisfied with the provision and care their children receive. The boarders' responses also indicated their appreciation, in accordance with other inspection evidence.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governing body provides highly effective oversight of all sections of the school, in line with its long-term vision to ensure that facilities and support are of the highest quality. Responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources are discharged very effectively, as seen in facilitating the substantial new building nearing completion at the time of the inspection. The governors strongly support the EYFS, and a designated governor takes a particular interest in the setting, visiting and attending special occasions.
- 5.3 The governing body has a thorough insight into the working of the school, and is highly effective in exercising a monitoring role, providing support, challenge and stimulus for growth and improvement, with perceptive long-term strategic plans for the future of the school. Governors understand fully the distinction between their strategic role and their delegation to the leadership of the day-to-day running of the school, but through careful liaison with senior staff they remain entirely aware of current management priorities at all times. Governors are carefully selected from a variety of professional backgrounds, and their experience is put to very good use, as an effective source of support and advice to senior staff.
- 5.4 The governing body is very effective in discharging its responsibilities for statutory requirements, including a thorough annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school. A strategy day held each year helps to ensure that all governors are well trained, up to date with any changes and understand fully their responsibilities. Regulatory compliance is considered at the three full governing body meetings each year, and an efficient system of four committees ensures that governance is effectively supplemented between the main meetings.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 Leadership and management at all levels have enabled the school to prioritise areas for development. Senior leaders work very well together and oversee a good curriculum and excellent range of activities, which ensures a high level of success in examinations, and also promotes excellent personal development. Leaders have managed effectively a major building project at the heart of the school, while ensuring that all necessary high standards are maintained. Those with leadership and management responsibilities have a clear vision and the passion and drive to ensure that the school's aims are met. In response to their pre-inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents expressed that the school is led and managed efficiently, and has clearly planned procedures that are understood by all, thus ensuring that it fulfils its aim for pupils to feel secure, cared for and respected. Senior leaders and managers are approachable and have in-depth knowledge of the school and its pupils.

- 5.7 Leadership and management of the EYFS are excellent, with a very strong staff team. All staff receive excellent induction and regular training in child protection and health and safety. They fully understand their responsibilities. The children are extremely well cared for in a welcoming, safe and well-equipped environment. Evaluation of the setting and its needs for development are discussed regularly by the whole team, and staff share a clear vision for the future. All EYFS staff are very effectively appraised and participate in supervision on a regular cycle, and frequent opportunities are provided to meet with senior staff to identify future professional development needs. Following the recommendation from the previous inspection to ensure that EYFS children have greater opportunities to develop their ICT skills, a dedicated ICT suite has been provided in the pre-prep and is used well.
- 5.8 Policies and procedures for many aspects of whole-school life have recently been reviewed and improved. The safeguarding of pupils throughout the school is ensured through the emphasis given to training in child protection, safer recruitment, welfare, health and safety, and risk management. The school is successful in recruiting and retaining suitably qualified staff, and all required checks are undertaken, an improvement since the previous inspection. Thorough induction arrangements ensure that new staff are well informed of school routines and safeguarding arrangements.
- 5.9 School development planning is comprehensive, with a long-term vision and a three-year strategic plan. It is supported through a collegiate approach of an academic committee and the senior management team. The plan identifies clear desired outcomes, actions, timescale and those responsible. The EYFS and pre-prep have plans specific to their departments which also identify success criteria and procedures for monitoring and evaluating outcomes.
- 5.10 Staff with subject responsibilities have carried out thorough audits and reviewed resources, resulting in improved provision. Heads of core academic departments for the older pupils attend termly meetings with relevant prep-prep staff to ensure the continuity of pupils' learning. An effective appraisal system has been implemented, which includes lesson observations to strive for good quality teaching and learning, and effective monitoring of pupils' progress. Staff are encouraged to develop their teaching skills through appropriate training opportunities within and beyond the school.
- 5.11 The review of policies and practice has resulted in effective and consistent support for those pupils who are A, G and T and for those with SEND or EAL. Much informal useful discussion about teaching and learning takes place between senior leaders and other staff, in addition to peer observation, which has had a positive impact on raising the quality of teaching for these pupils by sharing best practice. The school has established effective systems for monitoring all pupils' achievement, providing useful information for middle managers and teaching staff to track pupil progress and to support teachers in assessing pupils' needs in a way that supports their learning. Emphasis is placed on work scrutiny and marking, with departmental leaders making careful evaluations to identify necessary improvements.
- 5.12 The school is keen to enhance its excellent relationship with parents. Parents appreciate the informal contact with staff, who make themselves available at the beginning and end of the day. In questionnaire responses and in discussions, parents of children in the EYFS were extremely positive about the support their children had been given to settle in at the start of the year. They welcomed the opportunities to meet the staff and the information they had been given on

supporting their children at home, including a weekly sheet detailing the topics to be covered. They consider that all staff in the setting are professional, friendly and caring. Their children are very happy and they can see the progress they have already made. Senior pre-prep staff meet with parents to discuss any particular needs their children have, and there is an excellent relationship with external agencies, who visit the EYFS and offer support in setting targets. In questionnaire responses, parents of pupils of all ages were particularly appreciative of the breadth of the curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities, and said that their children feel safe and happy at school, and are well looked after.

- 5.13 The senior management team has developed further links with parents through regular improvements to the school website, and by sending weekly electronic newsletters. Shortcomings identified at the previous inspection regarding links with parents have been resolved by establishing a friends organisation, which organises a range of social events and raises funds for the acquisition of additional resources. Pre-inspection questionnaire responses indicated that a very small minority of parents were not satisfied with the information given to them about their children's progress and that the school does not encourage them to be involved in events and other aspects of its work. Inspection evidence did not support these concerns. Parents are invited to and attend many events in school, including, for example, matches, concerts and drama productions. They may readily meet staff at mutually agreed times, and parents appreciate the many good opportunities to meet staff informally. The vast majority of parents value the two parents' evenings and twice-yearly reports, which provide information about their children's achievements, progress, strengths and areas in need of development. Reports are detailed, honest and clear.
- 5.14 The school has an effective and appropriate procedure to deal with complaints, and parents with a concern may contact the school at any time. Thorough and detailed records of concerns are kept, but formal complaints are very rare. Appropriate procedures are followed. The school prospectus and website include much useful information, with contact details for the chairman of governors and the required policies that must be made available to parents of current and prospective pupils.

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