



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

## **INTEGRATED INSPECTION CROYDON HIGH SCHOOL GDST**

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## Croydon High School GDST

Full Name of School	<b>Croydon High School GDST</b>		
DfE Number	<b>306/6081</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>306983</b>		
Address	<b>Croydon High School GDST Old Farleigh Road Selsdon South Croydon Surrey CR2 8YB</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>020 8260 7500</b>		
Fax Number	<b>020 8260 7461</b>		
Email Address	<b>info2@cry.gdst.net</b>		
Head	<b>Mrs Debbie Leonard</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Anthony Spiro</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>593</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>37</b>	5-11: <b>182</b>
	11-18:	<b>374</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>593</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Miss Alison Cordingley</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Girls</b>		
Inspection Dates	<b>11 Mar 2014 to 14 Mar 2014</b>		

## 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 January 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://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.

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.

## 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 chair 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 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 Julia Burns	Reporting Inspector
Mr Bill Burn	Team Inspector (Former Second Master, HMC school)
Mrs Susan Clifford	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Ian Edwards	Team Inspector (Assistant Head, GSA school)
Mr Paul Lunn	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Isabel Tobias	Team Inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Miss Karen Tuckwell	Team Inspector (Head of Junior School, IAPS/COBIS school)
Mrs Deborah Buckenham	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Croydon High School is an independent selective day school for girls aged from 3 to 18 years. It is one of the 26 schools of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). Founded in the centre of Croydon in 1874, it moved into purpose-built accommodation on its present 20-acre site in South Croydon in 1966. The junior school occupies self-contained accommodation but shares some facilities with the senior school, for example the games pitches and tennis courts, dining room, sports hall, swimming pool, science laboratories and main hall. The Council of the GDST has overall responsibility for the school, but a separate body of governors is a source of advice and support at local level.
- 1.2 The school aims to be a forward-looking community where all girls: achieve their personal best; are nurtured within a safe, happy and supportive environment; grasp opportunities at every stage; learn respect for themselves and others and accept their responsibilities as global citizens and are encouraged to develop into confident, well-balanced, intellectually curious young women ready to face the challenges of the 21st century with relish.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection in 2008, a new headmistress was appointed in May 2010, a new junior head in January 2012, the director of finance and operations in September 2012 and a new local chair of governors in September 2013. The senior leadership team has been extended with the addition of two assistant heads. A major refurbishment of the junior school has been undertaken, together with increased investment in information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school.
- 1.4 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is attended by 37 children. The junior school, for pupils in Years 1 to 6, is attended by 182 pupils. The senior school, for pupils in Years 7 to 11, is attended by 280 pupils and there are 94 pupils in the sixth form. The ability profile of the school is above the national average overall, although with a fairly wide spread of abilities represented and variations in average ability between cohorts.
- 1.5 The school has identified 16 pupils in the senior school and 10 in the junior school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The school provides learning support for all these pupils. There are no pupils who have a statement of educational needs. There are 47 pupils in the junior school and 35 pupils in the senior school who have English as an additional language (EAL); 7 receive extra support to help them with their studies. The majority of pupils live within a 15-mile radius of the school and come from a wide range of family backgrounds. Just under a half come from minority ethnic backgrounds.
- 1.6 The majority of pupils transfer to the senior school at the end of Year 6 and two-thirds of Year 11 continue into the sixth form after GCSE. Those who leave mostly continue their education in local grammar schools or other independent schools. It is usual for pupils to go on to higher education at the end of their sixth-form studies, taking up places at a variety of universities and colleges.
- 1.7 National Curriculum (NC) 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 Croydon High School is successful in achieving its aims to be a forward-looking community where all girls achieve their personal best and are nurtured within a safe, happy and supportive environment. Pupils achieve highly and make good progress in their learning due to their very positive attitudes and the good teaching they receive. The teachers' strong subject knowledge and careful lesson planning enable pupils, including those with SEND and EAL, to make good progress in relation to their abilities. More able pupils achieve well when they are challenged, but opportunities for independent and collaborative learning in lessons are inconsistent. Pupils enjoy excellent relationships with one another and with the staff. A broad curriculum, supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and trips, and an outstanding personal, social and health and economic education programme (PSHEE) also enable pupils to gain a broad base of knowledge, understanding and skills.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. They are polite, respectful and mature in their dealings with one another and with adults. They display a keen sense of responsibility for others less fortunate than themselves, demonstrated by their regular fund-raising activities for a wide range of charities. Pupils of all ages willingly take on positions of responsibility and are keen to contribute both to the life of the school and to the wider community. The care given by all staff throughout the school is of a very high quality. Pupils' spiritual development is very strong and their moral awareness highly developed. They demonstrate excellent social development and have a very clear appreciation of cultural matters. The arrangements for welfare, health and safety, including safeguarding, are excellent; they make a highly effective contribution to pupils' well-being and personal development.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is excellent. The GDST's committee structure enables it to discharge effectively its responsibilities for health and safety, monitoring educational standards and investment in human and material resources and accommodation. They have robust procedures to ensure regulatory compliance. At local level, the eight members of the School Governing Body (SGB) are a source of advice and support to the school. They have also contributed to the formulation of the school's strategic plan, a recommendation at the time of the previous inspection. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. Since the previous inspection, the school's management structure has been strengthened. Middle managers now take more responsibility for implementing, monitoring, evaluation and development and are very effectively overseen by senior staff. The school promotes excellent links with parents, who are overwhelmingly positive about all areas of school life.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school meets 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. Ensure that the existing examples of excellent teaching are extended throughout the junior and senior schools to increase opportunities for independent and collaborative learning.
2. Increase the variety of activities in lessons, including greater use of ICT by pupils, in order to provide appropriate challenge for all pupils.
3. Improve access to play resources for the Reception class at playtimes.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is successful in educating its pupils in line with its aim to be a forward-looking community where all girls achieve their personal best. Throughout the school, all pupils develop a breadth of skills, knowledge and understanding through both curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- 3.3 In the EYFS children are confident and extremely articulate; they have excellent reading and listening skills. For example, they demonstrated excellent hand writing and spelling skills when attempting to write a nursery rhyme independently. They can name colours, know the days of the week and can accurately describe the weather. The children regularly use a variety of ICT equipment and can count to 20 and often beyond. They demonstrate an excellent ability to self-choose activities and undertake purposeful play. They are keen to explore and engage in critical thinking with their friends; creativity is fostered through a range of activities, including role play. Overall, the children in both Nursery and Reception, including those with SEND and EAL, make excellent progress relative to their starting points.
- 3.4 Throughout the school, skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing and in the application of logic, ICT, creativity and mathematics are well developed by all pupils. Regular success in international mathematics challenges from Year 7 to 13 and successful outcomes for older pupils in biology and chemistry competitions enhance achievement beyond the curriculum. In 2013 17 pupils were entered for the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ); three-quarters of these obtained either an A\* or an A grade.
- 3.5 Many pupils in the senior and junior schools achieve success in external speech, drama and music examinations. A successful entry in a national art competition in 2014 and regular involvement in debating further widens the scope of achievement. Participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) at bronze and silver level provides opportunities for many pupils to succeed. A variety of sports have a record of achievement at a range of levels of performance, notably at county level in gymnastics, netball and tennis. Individual pupils have been successful nationally in tennis, diving, gymnastics, ice skating and trampolining. Extra-curricular achievement in the junior school is good.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 to 2012. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Results in national tests at age 11 in 2010 were exceptional in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. The level of attainment in National Curriculum tests at age 11 indicates that pupils made a high rate of progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Inspection evidence, including lesson observations and interviews with pupils, supports this assessment. Results at GCSE have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Results in 2010 were higher than in subsequent years, being well above the national average for girls in maintained schools. IGCSE results for modern languages, mathematics and chemistry have been above, and physics similar to, worldwide norms. Mathematics results have also been similar to the UK norm. This performance at GCSE and IGCSE has been sustained in 2013. The level of attainment at GCSE,

and nationally standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities, a finding confirmed by inspection evidence. Over the same period A-level results have been well above the national average for maintained schools, and above the average for maintained selective schools. The level of attainment at A level, and the nationally standardised progress data that is available, together with inspection evidence drawn from lesson observations and curriculum interviews indicate that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. A-level results in 2013 showed progress which was higher than that achieved in previous years, with over four-fifths of grades being A\* to B.

- 3.7 It is usual for pupils to go on to higher education at the end of their sixth-form studies, taking up places at a variety of universities and colleges.
- 3.8 Pupils with SEND and EAL also achieve well in examinations and make good progress in lessons because of the high-quality individual sessions that they attend. The achievement of more able pupils is excellent when teachers have high expectations and appropriate challenge is provided in lessons.
- 3.9 Good quality teaching makes an effective contribution to pupils' learning and achievement, as do their very positive and enthusiastic attitudes, their excellent behaviour and the relationships they enjoy with the staff and each other.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 Throughout the school, the curriculum covers the linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative areas of learning well. It is consistent with the school's aim to be a forward-looking community where all girls achieve their personal best and develop into confident, well-balanced global citizens who have respect for themselves and others.
- 3.12 In the EYFS the broad and balanced educational programmes and activities, planned across the seven areas of learning, provide many opportunities for children to express themselves clearly, confidently and with evident enjoyment. Most children, including those with SEND, reach expected levels of development, while the more able exceed expectations.
- 3.13 The junior school curriculum covers National Curriculum subjects with the addition of PSHEE and religious education (RE); linguistic skills are enhanced by the teaching of modern foreign languages from a young age with pupils having the opportunity to study French, Spanish and German. Latin is introduced in Year 6. In the senior school a wide range of subjects is studied from Year 7 to 9 and pupils can choose from a broad range of options at GCSE. All pupils study separate sciences to GCSE. The A-level curriculum provides sixth formers with a wide choice of academic subjects suited to their individual capabilities and interests. In addition, there are many opportunities for the pupils to extend and enrich their learning by participation in the Go Beyond and Go On programmes, from Year 6 to Year 13, and in academic enrichment in Year 11 to Year 13. Sixth-form pupils can complete the EPQ. Provision for many sports, including swimming, is excellent.
- 3.14 The curriculum provision for pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent. Valuable support is also provided for pupils who need extra help. In the junior school,

additional sessions allow pupils to consolidate phonic knowledge and in the senior school, subject clinics offer help to pupils who require reinforcement of recent work.

- 3.15 The comprehensive PSHEE programme, which includes citizenship, provides an excellent basis for the pupils' personal development. In the senior school, the quality of careers education is outstanding. Information and advice are provided within the curriculum and at a series of special events. Year 9 pupils enjoy a valuable opportunity to experience a work shadowing day. The school organises a successful Croydon High Careers Master Class evening and an annual careers convention. The school also provides high-quality opportunities for the development of life skills, such as managing money, as well as advice on further education.
- 3.16 The curriculum is strengthened by a programme of evening, day and residential trips, visits and workshops. Year 6 pupils recently visited the War Cabinet rooms as part of their study of World War Two, whilst senior pupils enjoy residential trips to locations further afield, including an art trip to Venice and a classics trip to Pompeii. The curriculum is well supported in the sixth form with age-appropriate use of mobile devices and in the EYFS children used the interactive whiteboard with a word game on phonemes. The use of ICT is less well integrated into learning in other parts of the school.
- 3.17 There is a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities available for pupils of all ages. In the junior school, well-attended clubs include gymnastics, soft toy making and running club. In the senior school the establishment of the school's Crail Service Award encourages pupils to gain a breadth of experience in physical and creative activities. Sixth-form pupils run clubs for younger pupils. The house systems also provide further opportunities for extra-curricular participation.
- 3.18 Links within the local community are excellent. The junior school choir sings at the Royal Marsden Hospital and senior school 'silver surfers' help the elderly in their use of ICT. The school is also involved in the Whitgift SNAP project to support children with special needs and has links with the Croydon floating shelter and the Croydon food bank. The junior school has a link with a primary school in Uganda.

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

- 3.19 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.20 Most teaching is characterised by clear expectations, strong subject knowledge, and careful planning. All of these factors reflect the school's aim that all girls achieve their personal best.
- 3.21 In the EYFS, teacher-led activities successfully promote children's learning alongside many opportunities for children to initiate activities for themselves. An enthusiastic team, including specialist teachers for drama, music and swimming, engage and motivate the children, instilling a love of learning. Thorough systems are in place for observation and assessment of the individual child. Standards of planning are high. The accommodation is spacious, light and airy with exemplary displays of the children's work throughout the setting, providing a stimulating learning environment.
- 3.22 Throughout the school, teachers know their pupils well, and have some appreciation of their different needs. The system by which those needs are identified and communicated is robust. In some subject areas, where practice is best, there is a standing bank of additional challenges available to pupils who finish tasks early and

extension tasks are an occasional feature of some lessons. Pupils' learning benefits from a range of enrichment opportunities. Specialist support for pupils with SEND or EAL is excellent, but specific provision to help such pupils in lessons is infrequent.

- 3.23 Assessment procedures and marking in Years 1 to 9 are variable. Where they are most effective, they lead to constructive dialogue between teacher and pupil, so that when pupils reach Year 10, they are well equipped to manage effectively the required processes of self-assessment. A new assessment policy has been introduced since the previous inspection; data is used to evaluate progress and inform planning. Schemes of work are detailed and readily accessible on the school website.
- 3.24 Pupils particularly relish using the Learning Resources Centre and the ICT suites where they can develop the skills and attitudes to be active, independent and collaborative learners, but such opportunities are inconsistent. Classrooms are well resourced and teachers make effective use of laptop computers and digital projectors to enliven their lessons. Pupils, however, have few opportunities to use ICT in lessons.
- 3.25 Teaching fosters interest in pupils, as in a Year 7 geography lesson on different applications for mapping the local area, and in sixth-form classes discussing themes and style in classical and modern literature. Often this interest was intensified when pupils were closely involved in leading the learning process, by making presentations, directing discussion, or undertaking independent research. The school has gone some way to address the recommendation at the time of the previous inspection to develop independent learning skills. In the senior school girls can be rewarded for demonstrating thinking skills and weekly questions to inspire thinking, 'thunks', are available for consideration, at home, over the weekend. However, these skills are not seen in all lessons. Where lessons are predominantly teacher-led, they did not always offer sufficient challenge, particularly for the more able.
- 3.26 In the pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of pupils expressed the view that teachers did not ensure that they had the right amount of work to do, and that their homework did not always help them to learn. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The school monitors the amount and quality of homework on a regular basis.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 It supports the school's aim for girls to learn respect for themselves and others, and accept their responsibilities as global citizens. At all ages pupils are well prepared, through their personal development, for the next stage of their education.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They engage well with the non-material aspects of life and are emotionally mature for their age. In the EYFS, children co-operate and share, respect and tolerate each other's differences and are encouraged to initiate activities for themselves. They are keen to explore their surroundings and use their imaginations. During the inspection the Nursery children accessed the new sensory room in the junior school. Here they saw daffodils dancing in the breeze, birds singing and frogspawn on the sensory mat, which grew into a frog, much to their delight. Older pupils in Year 3 were inspired to write poems about volcanoes after their multi-sensory experience. Pupils in the senior school, including the sixth form, celebrate creativity through the staging of music concerts and visits to art galleries and to see theatrical productions.
- 4.4 Pupils have a highly-developed sense of right and wrong. They hold strong values, and rules are explored as a theme, throughout the school, within the curriculum, in tutor time and in assemblies. A thorough and comprehensive PSHEE programme, which includes citizenship and Sex and Relationship Education (SRE), underpins the pupils' moral and social education and inculcates a sense of self-worth and great respect for the rights of others.
- 4.5 Pupils take on age-appropriate responsibilities with enthusiasm. Pupils in Year 6 are reading buddies with Year 3 pupils. A pupil in Year 8 runs the NOAH club for Year 4 girls, which raises awareness of animal conservation. Senior pupils act as role models to younger girls through the 'Big Sister' programme, peer listening and subject mentoring. The sixth-form prefect team contributes significantly to the running of the school, including arranging tours for prospective parents and organising the sixth-form open event.
- 4.6 All pupils are aware of those less fortunate than themselves. They take the initiative in organising charity fund-raising events such as the 'Crazy Hats' day in the junior school to raise money for the Philippines appeal. The senior school fashion show raised substantial amount of money for the Sophie Hayes Foundation. An annual conference, organised by the school's prefects, and attended by large numbers of local sixth formers, has raised awareness of topical issues such as human trafficking and female genital mutilation. Pupils engage in voluntary work through the DofE and with disadvantaged children through the SHINE initiative. An Amnesty International Youth group is active within the school.
- 4.7 The cultural awareness of the pupils is very strong. Tolerance and harmony are noticeable features of the whole school community; pupils appreciate their own cultural traditions and the diversity of others. Awareness of different faiths is addressed throughout the curriculum and reinforced throughout the school in assemblies, tutor time, through visits by external speakers and the celebration of religious festivals such as Eid and Diwali.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 Excellent pastoral care makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development. The school fully meets its aim to nurture pupils within a safe, happy and supportive environment. Although the pupils' questionnaire results indicated that a small minority of pupils thought that teachers did not show concern for them as individuals, the inspection team judged that all staff exercise their responsibility for pastoral care conscientiously and sympathetically. In the EYFS, key persons ensure that the children are happy and feel secure in a warm and welcoming environment. Pupils throughout the school are extremely well cared for, supported and guided. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, as are those among the pupils themselves.
- 4.10 The school promotes healthy living extremely well. Children in the EYFS enjoy healthy snacks in the form of fruit or vegetables and look forward to a hot, nutritious lunch. They like playing outside whatever the weather. The Reception class shares break times with Years 1 and 2 but there is no access to the toys and trikes in the larger adventure area. Pupils in both the junior and senior schools benefit from a range of physical activities and through the comprehensive PSHEE programme gain a secure understanding of what is required for a healthy lifestyle. Pupils contribute to the lunch-time menu choices through the food committee and careful arrangements are implemented to check whether they are making appropriate choices.
- 4.11 The school is extremely successful in nurturing good behaviour. Pupils say that instances of bullying are very rare and are dealt with swiftly. Effective arrangements are in place to deal with unacceptable behaviour. Disciplinary boundaries are clearly understood and pupils feel that they are fair. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses a minority of pupils considered that rewards and sanctions were not always applied consistently. Evidence from discussions with pupils did not support this view.
- 4.12 A minority of pupils who completed the pre-inspection questionnaires felt that the school does not ask for or respond to their opinions. Discussion with pupils showed that their views are regularly sought through pupils' questionnaires, the school councils, eco-committee, food committee and charities committee. Those elected as representatives are proud of this honour and responsibility. In consultation with senior leadership pupils are able to influence the school's actions and effect change.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 Throughout the school, including the EYFS, highly effective policies and procedures for promoting the welfare of the pupils, including child protection, contribute to their personal development and the fulfilment of the school's aims.
- 4.15 Safeguarding arrangements are systematic, thorough and well implemented. All staff receive regular training in child protection and the designated child protection officers are additionally trained in inter-agency working. Recruitment checks on new staff adhere to safer recruitment guidance and they all have an appropriate induction in relevant procedures.

- 4.16 The health and safety policy and its implementation are reviewed regularly. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Regular fire drills are held and members of staff receive appropriate fire awareness training. Thorough risk assessments are carried out for buildings, curriculum activities and school trips, and there are effective accident reporting procedures. Suitable arrangements ensure pupils' safety on site.
- 4.17 First-aid kits are suitably placed in all areas of the school and the two medical rooms provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are injured or fall ill during the school day. Medicines are stored and administered safely. All staff are trained in first aid, including those in the EYFS, who have relevant paediatric training. Staff and pupils are well supported by the school nurse. Appropriate action is taken to record and report incidents.
- 4.18 Registers accurately record pupils' admission to, and attendance at, the school and these are suitably maintained and stored as required for three years.

## **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 Council of the GDST has overall responsibility for governance and fully supports the school in meeting its aims. The Trust's committee structure enables it to discharge effectively its responsibilities for health and safety, monitoring educational standards, auditing, and investment in human and material resources and accommodation. Evidence of strong financial planning is seen in the refurbishment of large areas of the school since the previous inspection. The GDST provides excellent support and guidance in areas such as ICT, training and in all regulatory matters, including its annual review of the school's safeguarding policy and procedures.
- 5.3 The Trust has a detailed knowledge of the school, including the EYFS, through its regular contact with the senior leadership. An annual review of the school's performance is undertaken by the GDST; this includes appraisal of the head and the setting of targets to ensure that the school continues to innovate and improve.
- 5.4 At local level, there is a group of eight governors who comprise the SGB. They bring a wide variety of expertise to the board and are a source of advice and support to the school. The Chair of the SGB meets regularly with the senior leadership. Local governors are kept fully informed of key aspects of school life through reports by the headmistress, through meetings with new staff and sixth-form prefects and through attendance at school functions. They have also contributed to the formulation of the school's strategic plan, a recommendation at the time of the previous inspection.

### **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 At all levels of responsibility, the leadership and management fulfil the aims of the school and discharge their delegated responsibilities, particularly those for policy implementation and the safeguarding of children, highly effectively. Since the previous inspection, the school's management structure has been strengthened; the leadership teams in all parts of the school work very closely together to realise whole-school strategic aims.
- 5.7 Senior leadership has a strong vision for the school which is communicated successfully. Strategic planning is now a major priority. The school development plan was prepared, as recommended at the time of the previous inspection, with considerable input from parents, pupils, staff and governors. It identified the school's needs very clearly and has been very effective in helping to drive up standards and achieve success. Since 2012, the process of annual review and target-setting has created a strong culture of regular self-assessment and much progress has been made. In the EYFS, staff meet regularly to discuss individual children, their strengths and needs and, as a result, have created a detailed development plan. They constantly self-evaluate to identify areas for development.



- 5.8 Staff training days and meetings focus upon development priorities such as teaching and learning and strategies for the most able. Independent learning and thinking skills have been incorporated into all schemes of work, although they are not yet evident in all classroom practice. The new value added steering group is developing methods to improve pupils' performance and ideas are shared with all staff. This is increasingly reflected in the quality of the pupils' achievements and the standard of their personal development.
- 5.9 Middle managers throughout the school are aware of development priorities and fully committed to achieving them. A very comprehensive system of annual review ensures the thorough consideration by departments of their own performance. Middle managers now take much more responsibility for implementing, monitoring, evaluation and development and are very effectively overseen by senior staff. This is a marked improvement since the previous inspection. A new system of quality assurance, which is being trialled in the senior school, is even more comprehensive and extends self-review and monitoring to the outcomes of departmental work scrutiny, lesson observations and feedback from pupils. High-quality systems of appraisal are in place for all staff, including those in the EYFS.
- 5.10 The school appoints staff of a high quality. Newly appointed teachers are required to undergo a thorough process of induction into the policies and practices of the school. Background checks on new staff are carried out and recorded promptly and all aspects of recruitment procedures are robust. All staff, including those in the EYFS, receive appropriate training in safeguarding and welfare, health and safety.
- 5.11 The school benefits from the excellent contribution made by non-teaching staff involved in catering, cleaning, premises and administration. They provide high-quality support to pupils and enable the school to run very efficiently.
- 5.12 Continuous professional development is driven by whole-school and individual priorities and the courses attended are wide ranging. A very good initiative is the in-house Growing Own Aspiring Leaders programme (GOAL) provided by the school for current and aspiring leaders. Informal evaluation has identified the value of this course for participants.
- 5.13 Throughout the school links with parents are excellent. Parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the education and support provided for their children, as reflected in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. There is a strong partnership between parents and school. Senior staff in all parts of the school promote an open and accessible environment where parents feel most welcome.
- 5.14 Parents are provided with a range of information about the school through a prospectus, handbooks, open days, open weeks, and tours of the school. A wide range of useful material, including all regulatory information and information about the life and work of the school, is available to parents of both prospective and current pupils through the school website. The weekly newsletter includes reports and photographs of school activities and achievements and keeps parents fully up to date with forthcoming events. The recently introduced email system provides a further source of communication. Parents may email staff; they appreciate the quick response this produces.
- 5.15 Parents are provided with numerous opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children, including invitations to concerts, plays, gymnastic and dance displays, sporting events and the school's annual speech day. In addition, the strongly-supported parents' and teachers' association (PTA) organise social and

fund-raising events both for the school and local charities, such as a summer ball and quiz night. There is a class representative for each year group who disseminates information and meets termly with the junior school leadership team. Monthly informal coffee mornings are run by the PTA for all parents.

- 5.16 In response to the recommendation made at the time of the previous inspection, reports are now much more detailed and include targets for improvement, and effort and achievement grades. Consultation evenings held twice a year for most year groups ensure that parents are kept well informed about their child's work and progress. After such evenings in the senior school, parents are invited to comment on their daughter's academic progress; responses are extremely positive. In addition, parents are encouraged to contact school at any time should they have any queries or concerns.
- 5.17 The school's complaints policy is clear and detailed, and available to parents on the school's website. The very small number of complaints have been dealt with quickly and efficiently, and with due regard to the policy.

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