



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION THE ELMS SCHOOL

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The Elms School

Full Name of School	The Elms School
DfE Number	884/6001
Registered Charity Number	843499
Address	The Elms School Colwall Malvern Worcestershire WR13 6EF
Telephone Number	01684 540344
Fax Number	01684 541174
Email Address	office@elmsschool.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Alastair Thomas
Chair of Governors	Mr Nat Hone
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	188
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (97 boys; 91 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 14 5-11: 116 11-13: 58
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 112
Number of Boarders	Total: 76 Full: 60 Weekly: 16
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Bella Barron
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	16 Jun 2015 to 19 Jun 2015

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous whole-school ISI inspection was in March 2011 and an ISI boarding inspection took place in March 2012.

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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations 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.

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', 'requires improvement' 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 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 boarding houses 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

Dr Alison Primrose	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Anne Jones	Team Inspector (Head of Junior School, GSA school)
Mrs Sally Russell	Team Inspector (Head of Pre-Prep, IAPS school)
Mr Joseph Smith	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Carol Evans	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Gillian Bilbo	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Elms School, founded in 1614, is set in a rural location, four miles from Malvern, Worcestershire. It is a co-educational preparatory school with pupils from the ages of three to thirteen. All pupils from Year 4 have a bed at the school, and most pupils board for at least one night a week. The majority of the older pupils are full-time boarders. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), located within the main building, is an integral part of the school. The school includes pupils in Year 1 within the EYFS setting. The school is a charitable trust, administered by a board of governors who are also the trustees. It is based around a Tudor farmhouse set in its own grounds, with more recent purpose-built premises and facilities including a sports hall, swimming pool, theatre and science laboratories. The adjacent farm is an integral part of the whole school. Pupils are able to stable their own ponies at the school and keep various pets.
- 1.2 The school aims to encourage pupils to embrace life with enthusiasm. Through providing opportunities for challenge, inspiration, fun and fulfilment, it seeks to allow children to be children within a family atmosphere. It sets out to place particular focus on valuing individual effort and achievement. The school seeks to find all pupils' strengths, identifying and preparing them for the appropriate senior school.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection there have been changes within the senior leadership team. The school has 180 pupils on roll. There are 14 children in the EYFS. The school has identified 52 pupils with a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and of these 38 receive extra support. No pupil has an education, health and care plan or a statement of special educational needs. There are nine pupils with English as an additional language (EAL), all of whom receive additional support. The majority of pupils are of white British origin, many from local professional and farming families. A small number come from European or Asian countries.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the school is above the national average overall, with a fairly wide spread of abilities represented and some variations in the spread of abilities between different year groups. Overall, most pupils are of above average ability. The overall ability profile rises slightly for older year groups.
- 1.5 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 quality of the pupils' achievement in academic and extra-curricular activities is good, as evidenced in the number and breadth of the awards they gain at the end of Year 8. In the EYFS section children achieve excellent standards. The pupils' confidence, ability to articulate ideas clearly and excellent listening skills are well developed. Their good literacy and numeracy skills and their positive attitudes to learning prepare them well for life beyond school. Good teaching underpins the generally good progress made, but few opportunities for research and enquiry, or for the wider use of information and communication technology (ICT), limit the development of the pupils' independent thinking and study skills. The marking policy is not applied consistently. Through participation in a broad curriculum pupils develop good reasoning skills and build a secure knowledge base. This aspect is particularly strong in the EYFS section, where the children are extremely eager and show a strong enthusiasm for learning about the world around them. All the pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire feel that they are performing well and making good progress.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development, across all ages is excellent. Pupils are confident and happy, and demonstrate excellent social skills. They are well mannered, thoughtful and considerate. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, and show considerable respect for other people, other cultures and their environment. The quality of boarding is sound. Outcomes for boarders are excellent and they enjoy their boarding experience. The good pastoral care provided promotes pupils' well-being and ensures that every pupil's needs are well known. The pupils report feeling safe and well cared for at school. Overall, welfare, health and safety arrangements are sound, though elements of policy and practice lack consistency, for example in matters of risk assessment, with an over-reliance on informal systems and communication. All checks are carried out when appointing staff, and the results recorded, but the checks are not always completed prior to staff starting work.
- 2.3 Governance, whilst offering good support to the senior leadership team and developing many good practices, is unsatisfactory. Insufficient attention has been given to aspects of safeguarding pupils when recruiting staff, and the responsibility for the oversight of regulatory requirements more widely is not clearly understood. The failure to implement fully the recommendations from previous inspections in 2008, 2011 and 2012 and a lack of critical engagement with the school development plan have limited the school's progress. The leadership and management of the school are sound. At some levels there is excellent practice, but this is not consistent across the school; suitable policies are not always implemented uniformly. Strong leadership within the EYFS section promotes a culture of continuous improvement. In other areas, poor prioritisation and lack of focus addressing identified concerns have led to weaknesses in practice and provision. The senior leadership team has established excellent relationships with pupils and their families. The family atmosphere which the team creates is strong and parents are highly supportive of the school and its ethos.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that all staff have undergone the required checks before commencing work at the school and that where relevant, supervision arrangements are recorded [Part 4, paragraph 18.(2)(a), under Suitability of staff and proprietors and Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), and 8.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety, and National Minimum Standard 14.1, under Staff recruitment and checks on other adults];
- ensure that the governing body undertakes an annual review of safeguarding policies and procedures [Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b), and 8.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety, and National Minimum Standard 11, under Child Protection];
- review and establish effective monitoring of the school's risk assessment policy and its implementation, including in boarding, and take appropriate action to reduce risks identified [Part 3, paragraphs 16.(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety and National Minimum Standard 5.1 and 6.3]
- maintain the school premises, and accommodation and facilities therein to a standard, such that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are ensured [Part 5, paragraph 25]
- produce suitably detailed welfare plans and disseminate written information and guidance to members of staff to ensure consistency of treatment for boarders with medical or emotional needs [National Minimum Standards 3.1, under Boarders' health and well-being];
- ensure that suitably private washing facilities are provided for boarders [National Minimum Standard 5.3];
- establish systems to ensure that the school leadership demonstrates the knowledge and skills required to meet the Independent School Standards consistently [Part 8, paragraphs 34.(1)(a) and (b), under Quality of leadership and management in schools, and National Minimum Standards 13.1, 13.2 and 13.4, under Management and development of boarding].

2.5 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards (NMS) for Boarding Schools 2015, as described above.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve pupils' independent research and learning abilities, including their use of ICT across the curriculum, building on skills already established in the EYFS.
2. Provide consistently high quality teaching across the school, by identifying and sharing the most effective teaching strategies and by ensuring the consistent implementation of policies.

3. Ensure greater formality, clarity and consistency in communication by documenting procedures to govern practice across the whole school, including boarding.
4. Ensure that all staff, including those in boarding, are able to carry out their roles effectively by providing them with adequate training.
5. Ensure that the school development plan contains clear criteria for success, and that its timely implementation is monitored by governors and managers on a regular basis.

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 good.
- 3.2 The wide range of pupils' achievements and the good standards attained across the school reflect its aim to identify, nurture and develop individual talents and interests. The children in the EYFS make very good progress in relation to their ability and starting points, with all achieving the level of development typical for their age and some exceeding this. Their achievement is particularly strong in knowledge and understanding of the world, and in expressive arts and design. Children enjoy their learning. The older children plan their own work and take great pride in completing tasks. The concentration displayed by the children as they work is a striking feature of the setting and an outstanding example of active learning. Children confidently use search engines and books for research and enjoy the challenges set for them. Reception children demonstrate their emerging reading and writing skills, and some children work confidently with numbers to 100 and use equipment to solve algebraic problems. Nursery children, working at their own pace, are learning to use letter blends in reading and writing, to recognise the value of fractions and to use listening equipment to share stories with their friends.
- 3.3 From Year 1 the pupils read confidently in front of others and articulate their ideas clearly when talking to their peers and adults. They can consider different points of view and discuss their ideas logically. Their numeracy skills are good, and they apply these skills effectively across the curriculum. Pupils investigate efficiently, demonstrating a good understanding of the scientific process. As at the time of the full inspection in 2011, their sound skills in ICT are rarely used as a tool for learning, although the school has improved the provision of ICT facilities since 2011. Pupils develop good literacy skills, reinforced through their study of Latin and other languages. They show good recall of previous learning and are quick to make links between topics. Their physical skills are excellent and they participate enthusiastically in team games, swimming, and triathlon and tetrathlon training and events. They show initiative and creativity in music and drama, relishing opportunities to work together in small groups. They produce high quality pieces of art.
- 3.4 Recent sporting achievements include a girls' hockey team becoming national under-12 Independent Association of Prep Schools hockey champions. Pupils have also been successful at national level in rugby and football teams, and in under-15 county cricket. Pupils perform confidently in front of their peers and gain awards in external music and speaking examinations. They have won many prizes at county shows, proudly showing the school's farm animals.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm but from the work observed in pupils' books, from lesson observations and from pupil interviews, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. When tackling new work, pupils confidently make links with previous learning, ensuring a secure foundation to their knowledge and understanding, and promoting good progress. Their progress is less rapid when tasks set are prescriptive or lack sufficient challenge.
- 3.6 Pupils with SEND progress well due to the excellent small group and one-to-one support they receive. Pupils with EAL achieve good levels of language fluency,

enabled by additional specialist teaching and an inclusive learning environment. Pupils identified as gifted and talented progress well and achieve high standards through engagement with additional challenges, and the opportunity to work at an accelerated pace in a small group. All the pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that they feel they are making good progress. They feel that they are encouraged to do things for themselves and to work independently.

- 3.7 Pupils achieve good results in scholarship and entrance examinations to their senior schools, frequently gaining awards. Recent successes have included academic, dramatic, sporting, riding and design technology awards, demonstrating the breadth of pupils' achievements.
- 3.8 Pupils are keen to learn: they have positive attitudes to their work. Their approach to learning and their behaviour in class are excellent. These positive attitudes and strong, supportive relationships promote good learning and underpin the pupils' good progress. They concentrate well and show good levels of perseverance at tasks. When given the opportunity to work co-operatively they do so with enjoyment and enthusiasm.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.10 In the EYFS spacious and carefully planned teaching areas, with direct access to the outdoor classroom, support the free flow of activities and foster children's independent learning choices. Older children in the setting plan their learning from the guidance in their diaries, with opportunities to follow their own lines of enquiry. Detailed individual education plans for children in the EYFS ensure that the learning requirements of every child are fully met. The flexibility of these plans ensures that any specific weaknesses, for example in numeracy or literacy, are addressed before moving onto the programmes of study for Year 1.
- 3.11 The curriculum offered is broad and balanced, incorporating a wide range of subjects, and is suitable for all ages and abilities. It fully supports the school's aim to give all pupils the opportunity to discover their own particular talents and interests. Pupils benefit from learning French, Latin from Year 4 and optional Greek in Years 7 and 8. These lessons reinforce the school's values and prepare pupils well for future life. The inclusion of rural studies, a distinctive feature of the school, contributes to the pupils' awareness of food production processes and builds their confidence both when handling animals and tending plants. All parents who responded to the questionnaire were extremely positive about the range of subjects provided.
- 3.12 Specialist science, art and design technology rooms offer space and equipment for pupils to develop their skills. The inclusion of drama and music, and the availability of well-equipped space for rehearsal and performance, enable pupils to express themselves creatively and perform with confidence to an audience. The library is well resourced and used effectively by the pupils. Several programmes focusing on raising the profile of reading have been developed. During a recent mock general election, great care was taken to ensure that a balance of political opinion was presented to and discussed by the pupils. All pupils benefit from a relevant, structured personal, health, social and economic education (PHSEE) programme, which is supplemented by talks and visiting speakers, including specialist e-safety training for the pupils in Years 6 to 8.

- 3.13 Pupils have many opportunities to participate in sport, using the school's extensive facilities. The wide range of sporting activities offered enables pupils of all ages to participate frequently as part of a team. Pupils also benefit from opportunities to take part in the school's triathlon and tetraathlon programmes and shooting, which are strong features of the provision. Many pupils volunteer to work on the school farm and proudly contribute produce from their gardens to the school kitchen, as well as enjoying riding and show jumping. The curriculum is further enhanced by a wide range of off-site visits, including regular visits to places of historical significance. Pupils have recently visited an Elizabethan manor house and toured the SS Great Britain ship. These and similar visits develop pupils' understanding of British history and culture. Residential trips, such as a leavers' camp and a night walk in the hills, develop their independence. A stimulating programme of visiting speakers enhances the pupils' experience and development.
- 3.14 Effective systems are in place to identify pupils with SEND. These pupils receive individual lessons by qualified staff and are well supported. Learning strategies that provide targeted support for them in the classroom are shared between all relevant staff, but they are rarely used to provide suitably adapted tasks. Pupils with EAL have good support, they are extremely positive about the help they receive and they participate well in class. Able, gifted and talented pupils are challenged through the provision of additional opportunities, with Greek and further French conversation classes offered to able linguists. This provision promotes high levels of achievement and supports the school's aim to enable pupils to achieve their very best. Streaming in ability groups from Year 5 also allows the curriculum to meet the needs of different pupils.
- 3.15 Extra-curricular provision is good. The provision for extra-curricular music and drama has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils are involved in a number of choirs and ensembles that perform in concerts and shows, at both school and external venues, and a pupil rock band writes and performs its own material. The wide range of extra-curricular activities offered is adapted term by term in response to pupil interest. Recent opportunities have included debating, model making, book club, dodgeball, bowls, basketball and card tricks. Pupils benefit from links with the community, learning about the needs of others, such as through collaboration with a local special school on a joint drama project and participation in a choir event in aid of a nearby hospice. In their questionnaire responses, parents were universally positive about the range of extra-curricular activities on offer.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.17 Teaching supports the school's aim to develop the pupils' self-esteem, enabling them to become confident learners and to develop positive attitudes to learning. In the EYFS and Year 1, high quality observations of children's learning are carefully mapped on individual education plans that provide detailed information for teachers to plan the next steps in learning. Teaching pays exceptional attention to the identification of the most effective learning style for each child. This is incorporated into a carefully planned sequence of learning, thereby providing each child with a secure foundation. Teaching uses the excellent range of resources, including computers, the local environment and school grounds, to excite and motivate the children. Practical activities and investigations engage their interest and curiosity, promoting questioning and stimulating the development of enquiring minds. Detailed staff knowledge, high expectations and an intuitive understanding of child development ensure that teaching enables children to progress and achieve extremely well.
- 3.18 From Year 2, teaching enables pupils to make progress and prepares them well for scholarship and other entrance examinations. It provides pupils with opportunities to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills necessary to be successful in their future studies. Teaching presents pupils with well-balanced views and opinions and provides opportunities for them to consider alternative perspectives, thereby promoting tolerance. In the best lessons, teaching provides challenge and opportunity for pupils to develop their own interests through research and open-ended activities, fulfilling the school's aim to support individual gifts, talents and interests.
- 3.19 Teaching is most effective when time is used effectively and a good pace is maintained throughout the lesson so that pupils maintain high levels of interest and engagement. Where expectations are high, pupils rise to the challenge and produce good work. When clear learning objectives are shared and pupils are challenged to think for themselves through carefully focused questioning, progress is rapid. In instances where tasks set are prescriptive and learning objectives are not clear, there are lower levels of pupil engagement and consequently their progress is less rapid. Specialist staff have strong subject knowledge that they share enthusiastically with the pupils. This results in high levels of pupil engagement and promotes good progress. When teaching gives pupils the opportunity to reflect on their prior learning, they show good recall, often explaining in great detail the content of previous lessons. Skilful questioning to extend pupils' thinking and to build on their prior knowledge and experience contributes to high levels of achievement. On occasions, teaching provides little opportunity for pupils to question and reason, and the use of a limited range of resources fails to engage all learners. In some parts of the school, colourful, interactive displays which include pupils' good work create a stimulating environment to support learning. This good practice is not consistent across the school.
- 3.20 Relationships between the pupils and their teachers are excellent. Pupils respect staff and believe that they will help them with their learning. Teachers know their pupils well and are aware of their particular talents or specific learning needs, although the provision planned to meet pupils' specific needs is not always incorporated in lessons.

- 3.21 Some opportunities for independent study are provided through homework. A small minority of pupils who responded to the questionnaire felt that homework does not further their learning. From work scrutiny and pupil interviews, inspectors found that the homework tasks set are appropriate and make a sound contribution to the pupils' learning.
- 3.22 Following the recommendation of the 2011 inspection, the marking policy has been updated and clear guidelines for marking are included in the staff academic handbook but the implementation of the policy lacks consistency. Marking is still not being used by all teachers to give pupils guidance for improvement as well as celebrating or commending achievement. Requests for corrections or completion of work are sometimes included, but these are not always followed up. Since the previous inspection, standardised assessment data is now used more widely to track pupil progress. This information is stored centrally and is accessible to all staff, who are beginning to use this more effectively to help plan lessons. Senior leaders review results, and in discussion with heads of department where relevant, identify pupils who may need additional support. This information forms part of the evidence used when selecting pupils for ability groupings from Year 5 upwards. The process is currently under review.

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 In the EYFS and Year 1, the children work well in groups and enjoy spontaneous role play, for example clearing up in the play house. They confidently took on roles in the production of a class play. They take responsibility for their behaviour, learning to make choices, such as when to return to the class group if they have had time out to reflect. They act responsibly, remembering to sign out when they go to the toilet or when washing up after their break time snack. They understand the basic concept of right and wrong, and were able to apply this when writing their own rules for a woodland challenge. The children are confident and well prepared for their transition to Year 2, facilitated by the smooth transfer of records and detailed staff knowledge of each child.
- 4.3 From Year 2, the pupils' personal qualities are extremely well developed, reflecting the school's aim to actively promote the development of pupils to be polite, thoughtful and respectful of others. Pupils display much warmth and enthusiasm towards their school, their physical environment, the opportunities they have and their fellow pupils. They are confident and have a highly developed sense of self-worth.
- 4.4 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. It is underpinned by their strong sense of the value of non-material aspects of life, and supported by chapel services, in which pupils demonstrate a powerful sense of belonging. They participate in enthusiastic hymn singing and reflect on messages presented to them by local clergy and during prayers. The beauty of the school setting and the pupils' closeness to nature through their work on the school farm enable them to appreciate profoundly the spiritual potential of life beyond their daily experiences.
- 4.5 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and develop positive moral values through chapel services, the PHSEE curriculum, and their own and their teachers' high expectations of them. They demonstrate these in their treatment of others. Pupils are unfailingly polite to adults and to each other, naturally thanking each other for small acts of kindness. A very large majority of parents' questionnaire responses regarding pupil behaviour were positive. Pupils are developing an understanding of the rule of civil and criminal law in England.
- 4.6 Pupils' excellent social development is achieved particularly through the strong emphasis on the school as a community, enhanced by its family boarding ethos, about which pupils are exceptionally positive. Pupils' interactions with others reflect friendly, open relationships, in keeping with the school's aim to allow children to be children. Pupils use their common sense in making decisions. They relish their responsibilities, such as being a school prefect in Year 8 or a dormitory prefect in boarding, although such opportunities are limited for younger pupils. The pupils take these responsibilities seriously, carrying them out with fairness. The school council is a respected and effective institution. Pupils have a well-developed sensitivity for those less fortunate than themselves. They take part in a wide range of fund-raising initiatives, such as sponsored walks, Harvest Festival events with food bank collections and fund-raising for a local hospice. Pupils are inclusive and tolerant of

each other, as observed when those of different ages played together, such as during a spontaneous cricket match during break time.

- 4.7 Pupils' excellent cultural development is displayed in the easy and natural way in which they welcome and value their peers from other cultures. Trips such as to a local mosque help to develop pupils' understanding of and tolerance towards other faiths and cultures. In lessons and in discussion, pupils display respect for and interest in their peers' experiences and outlooks. Pupils understand the democratic process through participation in the nomination and election of school council representatives. They have an excellent understanding and appreciation of their own culture and Western traditions. Pupils from other cultural backgrounds integrate seamlessly into school life.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is good.
- 4.9 A well-established culture of pastoral support and guidance is embedded throughout the school, fully supporting its aim to value and nurture each individual. The contribution of the EYFS provision to children's well-being is excellent. A well-established key person system promotes strong relationships between the staff, the children and their families. Children new to the setting settle quickly, helped by the caring, family atmosphere and the thoughtfulness displayed by their peers. Staff model the good behaviour expected of the children. Children whose behaviour falls below expectations are quietly asked to find a task until they feel ready to re-join the class activity. Children learn how to keep healthy. They enjoy healthy snacks, and the appetising and balanced lunches are served in a family atmosphere. The children are helped to manage their own personal hygiene. They have many opportunities for exercise which promote the development of their gross motor skills.
- 4.10 Throughout the school, relationships both between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves are excellent. Pastoral care is managed by staff who know the pupils extremely well and who show genuine concern for individuals. Pastoral needs are discussed formally at staff meetings and informally amongst the staff. However, an over-reliance on informal communication can occasionally result in some staff being unaware of specific pastoral issues. Overall, however, the day-to-day care of pupils is supportive and strong.
- 4.11 Pupils' appreciation of healthy eating is strengthened by the exceptional opportunities for first-hand observations of and participation in food production at the farm. The quality of the food provided is excellent. Prepared on site, it is nutritious and plentiful. This provision, along with many opportunities for exercise, makes a strong contribution to the promotion of the pupils' healthy lifestyles.
- 4.12 The school promotes good discipline and behaviour through a suitable system of rewards and sanctions that encourage positive behaviour. A very few pupils, in their responses to the questionnaire, felt that sanctions are not always fair. From records and pupil interviews it was judged that care is taken to ensure that sanctions imposed are fair and proportionate. Good behaviour is recognised and celebrated through house points and certificates. Pupils are quite clear that bullying in any form is unacceptable; they feel secure and happy in school. They know that they can talk to any member of staff if they have worries or concerns.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

- 4.14 The school has effective methods to seek and listen to the views of pupils. A very small minority of pupils felt that the school does not ask for or respond to their opinions. Through discussions with pupils and observations in school, the inspection evidence does not support this view. Most pupils feel that their opinions are listened to and they achieve change, such as the introduction of home clothes for weekend chapel services. The opinions of pupils are also valued through the democratically elected school council, composed of representatives from Years 4 to 8. Younger pupils make their views known through informal discussions with their class teachers.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is sound.
- 4.16 In the EYFS and Year 1, staff take great care to promote children's welfare and to keep them safe and secure in the classroom and the immediate outdoor environment. All staff in the setting receive paediatric first-aid training and suitable arrangements are in place for the administration of medicines and to care for sick children. Careful adherence to recruitment protocols and safeguarding and welfare procedures ensures the children's safety in the setting and on school visits. Thorough induction procedures ensure that new staff are fully aware of school policies and procedures for health and safety. All staff receive regular refresher paediatric first-aid and safeguarding training.
- 4.17 The school is aware of its safeguarding responsibilities but has not always been sufficiently timely in putting them into effect. For example, policy documentation was still under review prior to the inspection to incorporate the most recent changes to national guidance; by the end of the visit it was up to date and published. However, the annual review of the safeguarding policy and its implementation by governors is not firmly established. Designated senior staff have regular higher level training, and all staff are confident about the processes set out within the policy; they are well informed and receive regular update training. Strong links have been established with outside agencies. All pupils who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire reported feeling very well cared for and safe in school.
- 4.18 Staff in the school have undergone all necessary checks, and these are recorded centrally, although on a small number of occasions, the results of checks by the Disclosure and Barring Service had not been received before the person started work. In these cases, there is no record of supervision arrangements put in place for staff pending the arrival of checks. In one case, the required barred list check was not carried out until the day after the person started work. The school's admission register was not completed appropriately. During the inspection it was updated and now meets requirements. The attendance register also needed to be updated during the inspection in order to meet requirements. Both registers are stored or backed up appropriately. All statutory fire checks and other routine maintenance checks are carried out regularly, and support staff receive training appropriate to their roles to ensure that the pupils are kept safe.
- 4.19 In line with its aims, the school seeks to build pupils' awareness of risk and to develop their ability to manage risks appropriately. Thorough risk assessments are undertaken for school trips and off-site activities, but the need for assessing the risks inherent on the school's extensive site is not an integral part of its health and safety management plan. The school has taken steps to improve on-site signage, as recommended at the previous boarding inspection in 2012, but it has not taken

sufficient action on the recommendation to separate vehicles and pedestrians across the school site. The school makes good provision for pupils who are sick or injured with appropriate facilities. A high proportion of staff hold relevant first-aid qualifications, which are updated regularly. Communication systems tend to be informal in character and as a result are not sufficiently effective in ensuring that all staff know about and give due regard to pupils with specific welfare issues that may have an impact on their behaviour.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

4.20 The quality of boarding is sound.

4.21 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. The boarding experience makes a strong, positive contribution to the personal development of the boarders. They are mature, confident, happy and very appreciative of the care they receive. Boarders are given outstanding support by all the boarding staff, who work well together for their benefit. The relationships in the boarding houses are excellent. Staff are committed to promoting the boarders' welfare and achievements, working hard to integrate the boarders with the day pupils. Boarders from overseas are well supported and fully integrated into the school community. Relationships within the dormitories, throughout the age and gender ranges, are warm and positive. Younger boarders appreciate the help given to them by senior pupils. The ethos of the school is that everyone should be treated as an individual and valued for who they are. This is reflected in the boarders' outgoing natures and friendliness towards everyone, regardless of background, culture, ability or gender. All of this results in a warm, happy atmosphere. School and dormitory prefects have effective training in their roles and meet staff weekly to discuss issues and raise any concerns. Boarders in each year group can develop leadership skills and take responsibility as sports captains, form captains and school council representatives. The school farm gives every volunteer a responsible role in the nurturing of animals and growing of produce. Boarders cannot have any electronic devices or mobile telephones in school, but can access information about world events from daily newspapers and friends. Year 8 watch the news with an adult each day. Boarders can express their views formally to the prefects, school council representatives and boarding forums, but say that they can talk to anyone about anything and that their views will be heard.

4.22 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. The induction process is well organised. Boarders have 'taster' nights and are given a guide. Boarding staff know their charges well and provide effective individual support and guidance. Weekly welfare meetings are held to discuss boarders' well-being and provide additional support if necessary. Boarders have a wide range of people they can turn to for help, identified for them on the 'listening tree'. The independent listener talks to the school about her role annually. The surgery is well staffed by a specialist team, supported by a local doctor. Appropriate policies and protocols are in place for the management of medications. Boarders value the staff and the care they receive, and are well looked after when ill. Individual medical records are held for each boarder, but welfare plans prepared for boarders with medical or emotional needs do not have detailed action plans. Written information and guidance are not disseminated to members of staff, so consistency of treatment is not ensured, which has an impact upon individual boarders' welfare. Accident injury forms are kept; the omission of some essential information on the forms was addressed and rectified by the end of the inspection. Because of their age, boarders are not allowed to self-medicate.

They cannot see a doctor on their own and are not deemed 'Gillick competent'. The boarding staff team members work well together, they are supportive and communication amongst them is excellent. Very good quality meals are provided for boarders; dietary, medical and religious needs are met. Some food is supplied by the school's farm and boarders' gardens. Boarders enjoy the meals and menus are varied, with nutritionally balanced food, hot, cold and vegetarian options, juice and fruit. Boarders also have snacks and drinks in the morning and afternoon.

- 4.23 There is a rolling programme of refurbishment of boarding accommodation. The boarding showers have been renovated, but the communal changing room showers lack privacy. The dormitories are comfortable but tired, with limited space; nearly all boarders sleep in bunk beds. The houses are clean, and well lit and maintained, and access to the boarding house is supervised at all times. There are suitable general common room facilities. Boarders participate in a wide variety of activities throughout the year. An excellent range of clubs is offered and boarders have opportunities to relax. During the summer months they play outside in the extensive grounds. Boarders are able to contact their families easily, thus meeting the recommendation of the 2012 intermediate boarding inspection. One telephone does not offer sufficient privacy, a matter identified as needing attention at the Ofsted boarding inspection of 2008 and restated at the ISI boarding intermediate inspection of 2012. A minority of boarders felt that their belongings are not safe. Inspectors judge that systems are in place for the safe keeping of personal belongings, but ease of access to clothes, such as games kit, can lead to items being borrowed by other pupils. There is an efficient laundry system and boarders can buy personal requisites at school.
- 4.24 The school's welfare and safeguarding arrangements for boarders are unsatisfactory. Arrangements for the safeguarding of boarders are sound. A new safeguarding policy has been ratified by the governors and sound procedures are implemented. The experienced safeguarding team has effective links with the local authority safeguarding advisor. All staff, prefects and dormitory captains receive safeguarding training appropriate to their positions. Ancillary staff have appropriate safeguarding training. A significant proportion of staff have first-aid training. An appropriate appraisal system is in place, but staff appointed to new boarding roles do not always receive timely training. The school has a zero tolerance policy on bullying and boarders are confident that any incidents will be dealt with swiftly. Boarders say that school rules and sanctions are fair and appreciate the school's reward system. Their behaviour and manners are excellent. The discipline policy allows for physical restraint, but staff have not received training in its implementation. All staff have fire training and regular fire drills take place, including during boarding time. As at the time of the previous intermediate boarding inspection in 2012, there is insufficient separation of vehicles and pedestrians.
- 4.25 The leadership and management of boarding are sound. The freedom and ability for boarders to play and enjoy childhood accord with the aims and ethos of the school. The staff strive to provide all boarders with a positive experience and actively promote their well-being through the care they offer. The boarding management and leadership team members work well together, but there is no plan for boarding development or self-evaluation for improvement. The school's leadership and management do not consistently fulfil their responsibilities effectively to ensure that the National Minimum Standards for boarding are met. The school values the views of parents and boarders, and has excellent relationships with both. Parents are contacted by email weekly with up-to-date news about events and activities. Both the parents' and boarders' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly appreciative of the boarding experience.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is unsatisfactory.
- 5.2 Individual governors bring a wide range of professional knowledge and experience to the governing body. They are fully committed to the school and its strong family ethos. Through formal and informal visits the governors know and are known by most parts of the school community. Contact with the EYFS is less effective.
- 5.3 Since the previous inspection, governor support and monitoring groups have been established. Through these, the governors seek to establish effective oversight of all aspects of their work, including their responsibility for finance, staff appointments, accommodation and financial planning. Each support and monitoring group meets at least once a term and minutes of those meetings are shared with all governors. These developments provide a good framework for governance but, to date, they have not always been sufficiently effective in addressing urgent matters such as traffic safety. The governors are aware of the school development plan but have not reviewed it sufficiently regularly. Consequently, they have been unable to provide appropriate challenge as a stimulus for improvement. Through termly reports from the leadership and frequent informal conversations, governors are kept well informed about pupil achievements and academic matters. They offer support and advice as appropriate.
- 5.4 The governors have an awareness of their safeguarding responsibilities. They have read the guidance on keeping children safe in education and undertaken child protection training, but they have not paid sufficient regard to their detailed responsibilities in this matter. They are kept informed of changes in practices, but a formal annual review of the school's safeguarding policy, including its procedures and implementation, by the entire governing body has not been undertaken and documented.
- 5.5 Systems for the governors to monitor the school's regulatory responsibilities are not rigorous. This weakness has resulted in areas of non-compliance in relation to requirements covering welfare, the suitability of staff, premises and management. The recommendations from previous inspections have not always been implemented. Plans for future building developments have eclipsed the immediate needs and actions required to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the school community.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is sound.
- 5.7 Within the EYFS, the day-to-day management and leadership are of high quality. Strong, informed leadership, supported by cohesive teamwork, ensures the smooth and efficient running of the department. Children flourish in the welcoming and stimulating environment within the setting. A termly EYFS development plan is drawn up by staff, based upon the children's outcomes and regular evaluation of educational programmes and learning. The plan includes clear measurements for success and identifies actions to improve the setting and its links with the rest of the school. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. The inclusion of the leadership of the EYFS in the senior leadership team further strengthens links. Staff supervision, training and regular updates maintain the high levels of good practice. Strong links with parents and suitable links with outside agencies ensure that the needs of each child are fully met. Parents receive carefully written reports of progress against the Early Learning Goals.
- 5.8 At whole-school level, the leadership establishes a strong culture of care and support, and these attributes promote a culture of mutual respect and underpin daily routines. They are a clear expression of the school's stated commitment to valuing and nurturing each member of the community.
- 5.9 The leadership is not entirely effective in the management of regulatory policies and practices. Staff are trained appropriately in their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. All new members of staff receive relevant safeguarding training as part of the thorough induction process. All required recruitment checks are carried out, but these have not always been completed in a timely manner, with records of supervision arrangements where relevant. Minor administrative errors in the recording of checks were corrected during the inspection. Systems within the school to manage risk, and to respond to specific risks identified, are not clearly defined. This lack of oversight has led to a failure to meet some of the statutory regulations in relation to welfare, health and safety and premises and accommodation.
- 5.10 Staff appraisal and professional development have been implemented as a result of the recommendation of the 2011 full inspection and are becoming embedded. The school is supportive of training needs and in the EYFS training is particularly effective. The recommendation from 2011 to draw up a school development plan has been met in part. The plan has been prepared and shared with governors. It addresses all aspects of school life, but the lack of a clear means to judge its success or regular review limit its contribution to strategic planning.
- 5.11 Subject leaders have responsibility to oversee the planning, teaching and assessment of the different subject areas from Years 2 to 8. The quality of this monitoring is inconsistent; consequently, effective links are not always made across the school. The school is aware of this and is already taking steps to clarify roles and responsibilities.
- 5.12 The school has high quality links with parents. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed their strong support for almost all aspects of the school. They particularly appreciate the wide range of subjects available and the extra-curricular activities offered, and that their children feel happy and safe. The

school maintains constructive relationships with parents. Most concerns are resolved informally, and a suitable procedure outlines the route for formal complaints to be swiftly resolved. Parents are appreciative of the efficient systems for communication with the school and the regular opportunities to speak to staff, including at the end of the day.

- 5.13 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the life of the school and the work of their children. In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a few parents felt that the school does not encourage them to be involved. Through discussions and observations during the inspection, inspectors found that parents have appropriate opportunities to participate. Parents are invited to contribute to the seminar programme for older pupils and to class topics for younger children. They are welcomed to concerts and plays, to join the school ski trip, to watch matches and to whole-school events, such as a recent sponsored walk. They are invited to information sessions, which have included advice to them about keeping their children safe online.
- 5.14 In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a few parents expressed concerns about the amount of information they receive on their children's progress. Inspectors judge that parents receive good information. From discussions during the inspection and scrutiny of a sample of reports, inspectors found that reports are detailed and realistic in their appraisal of pupils' progress. Through these formal written reports and meetings with teachers, parents are fully informed of their children's progress. Information on the curriculum for the year ahead is provided, and meetings to explain the procedures for Common Entrance are arranged for the parents of pupils in Years 6 and 7. Pupils in Year 8 may attend a formal parents' evening should they or their parents so wish. High quality publications such as the prospectus, regular newsletters and the school's website ensure that the parents of current and prospective pupils are fully informed about the school's activities.

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