



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
BRUTON SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Bruton School for Girls

Full Name of School	Bruton School for Girls
DfE Number	933/6003
EYFS Number	EY363067
Registered Charity Number	1085577
Address	Bruton School for Girls Sunny Hill Bruton Somerset BA10 0NT
Telephone Number	01749 814400
Fax Number	01749 812537
Email Address	info@brutonschool.co.uk
Headmistress	Mrs Nicola Botterill
Chair of Governors	Mr David H C Batten
Age Range	2 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	246
Gender of Pupils	Girls (mixed to the age of 7)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 1 5-11: 39 3-5 (EYFS): 20 11-18: 186
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 165
Number of Boarders	Total: 81 Full: 79 Weekly: 2
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Helen Snow
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	25 Mar 2014 to 28 Mar 2014

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 February 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. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mrs Deborah Forbes	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Paula Burgess	Team Inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)
Mrs Sarah Haslam	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mrs Rosalynd Kamaryc	Team Inspector (Principal, GSA school)
Mrs Anne Price	Team Inspector (former Staff Development Co-ordinator, HMC school)
Mrs Linda Trevethick	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Glynis Holmes	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bruton School for Girls is a day and boarding school for girls aged 2 to 19 years and boys aged 2 to 7 years. The school aims to inspire its pupils to experience and enjoy success and develop resilience in as broad a range of spheres as possible. It seeks to develop self-confidence, self-awareness and self-respect, appreciating the cultural and spiritual aspects of life. The school is a charity of which the governors are trustees. The headmistress has been appointed since the previous inspection.
- 1.2 Founded in 1900, the school was set up as a private boarding and day school, in the historic town of Bruton, in the Somerset countryside. In 1911 it became a public secondary school, becoming fully independent in 1944. Sunny Hill preparatory (prep) school was founded from the school's growing junior department in 1997. The following year it opened an Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting. The preparatory school and the EYFS (or pre-prep) are housed in adjacent buildings on the main school site. The school provides after-school care for children from the ages of three to eleven. Full, weekly and flexi boarders are accommodated in three boarding houses on site. One accommodates sixth-form boarders while another houses boarders in Years 10 and 11. The third house is for boarders up to Year 9.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school has redeveloped Highcroft, the sixth-form house, to provide a sixth-form centre, and changed the composition of Cumberlege to become the GCSE house. The Years 1 and 2 classes have moved from the pre-prep building, which now houses only EYFS children, to the prep school. Significant investment has been made in information and communication technology (ICT) and an outdoor performance space has been created.
- 1.4 There are currently 246 pupils on the school roll, 186 of them in the senior school, including 81 boarders. There are 39 pupils in the prep school and 21 in the EYFS. Of these, five are boys, four of them in the pre-prep. Nine pupils in the prep school are boarders. In the prep school the ability range of the pupils is slightly above the national average, in the senior school it is above the national average and in the sixth form most pupils have ability that is in line with the national average. The school has identified 68 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); 44 of them receive learning support from the school. There are two pupils with statements of special educational needs. English is an additional language (EAL) for 38 pupils, 32 of whom receive support for their English.
- 1.5 The day pupils come from the local area and from families with business, professional or farming backgrounds. The boarders come from the UK as well as from a wide variety of different countries overseas.

- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception Early Years Class	Reception

Preparatory Department

School	NC name
Prep 1	Year 1
Prep 2	Year 2
Prep 3	Year 3
Prep 4	Year 4
Prep 5	Year 5
Prep 6	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
Senior 1	Year 7
Senior 2	Year 8
Senior 3	Year 9
Senior 4	Year 10
Senior 5	Year 11
Lower sixth	Year 12
Upper sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements in academic and extra-curricular activities is excellent. In EYFS the children develop their basic skills, responding willingly to the expectations of the staff. In the prep school, pupils acquire good literacy and numeracy skills, which form an excellent foundation for achievement in the senior school. Creativity throughout the school is evident in the attractive and talented artwork which decorates the walls. Pupils make excellent progress, gaining success in public examinations, at GCSE, IGCSE and A Level. Prep school pupils are prepared very well for life in the senior school while senior school pupils obtain university places, often at the institution of their first choice. They are articulate and enjoy the challenge of public speaking and debating. Especially in the sixth form, pupils are independent minded, relishing the stimulus of pursuing their own ideas. Their attitudes to learning are co-operative, determined and enthusiastic. A broad curriculum throughout the school offers pupils the opportunity for enrichment, and specialist teaching in the prep school aids the transition to the senior school. Excellent teaching meets the needs of pupils of all abilities, although the use of ICT is not yet fully developed. A wealth of extra-curricular activities is available to the pupils, who participate successfully in sport, music and drama in particular.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is a strength of the school. At every age they benefit from close, supportive relationships with each other and with the staff. They are friendly, courteous and very well behaved, showing concern for others and a mature sense of responsibility, within their own community and outside it, particularly with regard to the environment. Their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, most pupils said that they liked being at the school. A small minority felt that the school did not ask for or listen to their views and that teachers gave sanctions unfairly. However, in interview, pupils stated that they knew exactly how to make their views known and inspection evidence endorsed this view. There was no evidence of unfairness in the awarding of sanctions and the school was seen rather to operate by giving encouragement and rewards.
- 2.3 The school benefits from excellent governance. The governing body is diligent in meeting its legal responsibilities and in planning for the future of the school. Governors know all sections of the school well, exercising careful financial management in order to meet those needs which are priorities. Leadership and management of the school show an outstanding coherence of vision, ensuring that the entire community shares both vision and values. Staff and pupils are motivated to achieve to their highest potential. Recommendations from the previous report have been addressed. The boarding provision is at the heart of the school, contributing to its success. All those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that their children enjoyed boarding.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.
- 2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
 - 1. Develop more fully the use of ICT in teaching and learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school fulfils its aim to support pupils to reach their full potential, to develop intellectual curiosity and to be motivated by their studies. Individual needs are very well met.
- 3.3 The pupils' levels of knowledge and understanding are often excellent and at least good. Their standards of literacy are high: written tasks are thorough and well presented. In the prep school, pupils read fluently in English, and those taking French are able to write complex sentences. Pupils speak with confidence and clarity, as illustrated by their excellent success in speech examinations. They listen attentively to each other and to their teachers.
- 3.4 Pupils have confident numeracy skills and can apply mathematics as in a Year 13 physics lesson, finding Young's modulus. They develop excellent reasoning and critical thinking skills, approaching problem solving activities with enthusiasm and rigour, for example in food and nutrition. Their creative work is highly imaginative and well executed, with many examples of artwork displayed around the school.
- 3.5 In music approximately a third of pupils gain music qualifications, a fifth of those at Grade 6 and above, in a wide range of instruments, several with distinction. In drama, almost half the senior school pupils have an acting certificate, many with distinction. Two-thirds of Year 13 pupils achieve the highest level of a food qualification. Pupils are successful in national and international mathematics competitions and participants in a national science programme have co-authored papers for academic journals. Pupils participate keenly in physical activities, many pupils playing at county level in a variety of sports. Individuals also compete at county, national and international level.
- 3.6 The majority of sixth-form leavers gain places at the universities of their choice, almost half of them going to those with a high standard of entry.
- 3.7 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 currently available. In the prep school, use is made of standardised testing to measure progress and attainment, in addition to internally moderated assessment of National Curriculum levels. Results in the national tests at age eleven have been good in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. Results at GCSE have been above the national average for maintained schools and similar to that for maintained selective schools. This standard has been maintained in 2013. Results in IGCSE were higher than worldwide and UK norms. The A-level results have been similar to the national averages for maintained schools and maintained selective schools, with the results in the last two years showing an upward trend with over two-thirds of the grades in 2013 being at A* to B.
- 3.8 Nationally standardised measures of progress in the prep school indicate that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The level of attainment at GCSE, and standardised measures of progress that are available, indicates that pupils make progress in the senior school that is potentially high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The level of attainment at

A level, and standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that pupils make progress in the sixth form that is appropriate in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. During the inspection, inspectors judged the progress that pupils at all levels make in lessons, scrutiny of their written work and interviews with them about their work to be high in relation to national age-related expectations.

- 3.9 Pupils with SEND make excellent progress thanks to the focused teaching and individual support they receive. Pupils who have EAL are prepared for IGCSE English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) in which they achieve excellent results. The fluency they acquire enables them to achieve well in other GCSE subjects. The most able pupils at all levels benefit from the challenging teaching they receive.
- 3.10 Pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They take pride in their work; they are inquisitive, well-organised, highly motivated and enthusiastic, always willing to try things out for themselves when given the opportunity. They also work well in groups, listening to and supporting each other, enjoying each other's success. Their behaviour in lessons is exemplary; they settle quickly and pay careful attention to their teacher. These cooperative and positive attitudes contribute significantly to their learning.
- 3.11 The recommendation in the previous report to find ways to encourage pupils, especially those who are more able, to think critically and to become independent learners has been addressed.

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

- 3.12 The contribution of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.13 The school fulfils its aims to inspire, challenge, encourage and support its pupils through provision of an age-appropriate curriculum that meets the range of needs of the pupils, alongside an extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities. Effective support for pupils with SEND and EAL ensures that they are able to benefit fully from the curriculum. Able pupils are given many opportunities to broaden and deepen their studies.
- 3.14 In the prep school, the curriculum covers all the main areas of learning; it is enhanced by the provision of specialist teaching in French, PE, mathematics and science. The curriculum is enriched through a programme of activities which includes speech examinations, an outdoor education programme and Mandarin. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught to all years through a programme which covers topics appropriate for their age and assists them with discussing the concerns of their daily lives.
- 3.15 In the senior school, pupils benefit from a broad curriculum which includes the separate sciences and classics. In Year 8, they have the opportunity to add a second foreign language; there are also opportunities to study Latin. Since the previous inspection, the ICT curriculum has been reviewed and now includes programming. Provision for PSHE has also been reviewed and a comprehensive course is delivered through timetabled lessons and other organised activities. The provision of careers advice is valued by pupils who speak highly of the guidance they are given at different stages of their education. The biennial careers evening provides an insight into the opportunities on offer after school and involves parents, old girls and other members of the local community.

- 3.16 In the sixth form, pupils choose from a range of academic subjects, including further mathematics. The sixth-form enrichment programme includes advanced spoken English, a cookery course and extension studies on topics such as politics and financial management. The weekly lectures, recently introduced, cover a wide range of topics and are also a valuable source of enrichment for the sixth form. Pupils express their appreciation of these lectures and affirm that they help to prepare them for life after school.
- 3.17 Pupils throughout the school are given opportunities to take part in a wide variety of sporting activities. They make very good use of the school's excellent sporting facilities and many take part in a programme of matches with local schools in a range of sports, as well as inter-hall events. Music and drama offer many opportunities for performance and their many associated activities are well supported and serve to enrich the pupils' educational experience. Along with art, they offer opportunities for links with the local community. In particular, sixth formers have enjoyed contacts with a well-known commercial art gallery in the locality.
- 3.18 The school offers a wide range of activities and clubs. The halls, or house, system also provides valuable opportunities for girls to work together in events such as the recent mathematics challenge and the Christmas pantomime. Learning is enriched through an extensive programme of theatre visits and other cultural visits both in the UK and overseas. Pupils talk enthusiastically about their experiences and share them through excellent displays around the school. The school has a link with an orphanage in India and pupils spend time working there each summer. Pupils have many opportunities to contribute to charitable ventures and they do so with genuine enthusiasm and generosity. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is popular and provides personal challenge and opportunities for community service. In interviews and in response to the questionnaires, pupils said that they are very pleased with the range and quality of activities on offer.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.19 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.20 At all stages, teaching is well planned and reflects understanding of the individual needs and abilities of the pupils. Teachers demonstrate strong subject knowledge and much enthusiasm and goodwill. The most effective lessons are conducted at a brisk pace and incorporate a variety of activities, with opportunities for pupils to think independently, to challenge and to develop well-reasoned arguments. Starter activities are used effectively in some lessons to stimulate discussion and ensure that pupils engage quickly in the subject. For example, in a Year 11 PE lesson, a collaborative starter activity provided effective revision of the links between diet and training. A very small minority of lessons in the prep and senior schools were less effective in supporting the school's aims. These lessons lacked pace and offered limited challenge for the most able.
- 3.21 Sixth-form teaching, in particular, generates interest, imagination and intellectual curiosity in the pupils. Opportunities are given for discussion and independent research and effective use is made of questions to extend and challenge pupils' understanding. In a Year 13 religious studies lesson, skilful questioning challenged pupils' views on intuition and helped to extend their thinking on the topic being discussed.

- 3.22 The excellent collaborative relationships which exist between staff and pupils, in both the prep and senior schools, serve to enhance teaching. Pupils feel well supported by their teachers and are very appreciative of their dedication and willingness to offer additional guidance. As a result, pupils develop a very positive attitude to learning and the atmosphere in lessons is conducive to the achievement of high standards. Frequent praise assists pupils to work co-operatively and to support each other's learning, as when pupils in Years 3 and 4 worked well together in a French lesson as they ordered days of the week. Classroom management is excellent and encourages high standards of behaviour and pupils' active involvement in their lessons. Teaching throughout the school is well resourced and classrooms are spacious and light. Many have imaginative displays of pupils' work.
- 3.23 The requirements of pupils who have SEND are very well met both in lessons and in the skills development unit. Those with EAL are also extremely well supported, enabling them to have full access to the curriculum. In the most effective lessons, activities are provided to offer additional challenge for the most able pupils, as in a Year 9 physics lesson, where the most able were given the opportunity to act as troubleshooters to teams preparing a presentation on energy resources. The required provision for any pupils with a statement of special educational needs is highly appropriate.
- 3.24 Since the previous inspection, the school has reviewed its ICT provision. Training for prep and senior school staff has been successful in stimulating awareness of the potential of technology to promote learning. Although some departments are already making good use of ICT in lessons, including interactive whiteboards, it is not sufficiently embedded as an integral part of teaching across the school to fully exploit its potential to enhance pupils' learning and achievement.
- 3.25 Since the previous inspection, the school has made much more effective use of assessment data. Baseline information and levels of attainment are recorded which help to inform teaching and enable effective tracking. Reports are informative and positive and set useful targets for each pupil. Self-assessment is part of this process. Teachers give valuable oral feedback in lessons and marking is carried out on a regular basis, with examples of very good practice seen in art and PE. In interviews, pupils said they appreciate the carefully annotated marking of work and constructive comments which enable them to make effective progress.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school fully meets its aim to help pupils develop self-awareness, self-respect and to appreciate the cultural and spiritual aspects of life. Pupils are reflective, compassionate and alert to each other's needs, demonstrating high levels of emotional maturity. In the prep school the woodland learning environment builds pupils' confidence and in all parts of the school pupils have a high level of spiritual awareness. For example, pupils demonstrated sensitivity and empathy in their response to each other's drama performances and Year 11 pupils were articulate in their discussion of the social and spiritual dimensions of the literature they had read. Sixth formers expressed a sense of awe and wonder at the complex systems of nature.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils are courteous and considerate, their behaviour exemplary and the atmosphere purposeful and supportive. They have a well-developed sense of right and wrong, consider moral issues in assemblies and respect the school's code of conduct. Pupils value the 'hallmark' system which rewards good citizenship and recognise their own role in maintaining good relationships within their community, some acting as peer mentors or 'buddies' for younger pupils. Pupils show thoughtful understanding of the ethical dilemmas presented, for example, by international conflict. The sixth-form PSHE and lecture series further extends and challenges pupils' thinking.
- 4.4 Pupils have a very strong sense of social responsibility and readily contribute to the life of the school, relishing the many opportunities to take leadership roles such as running extra-curricular clubs, organising fund-raising ventures or leading assembly with their tutor group. They value events which bring the school together such as the Art Walk and have a strong sense of community spirit. Prep school pupils considered the wider world through an African themed assembly and reflected on the importance of looking after each other in their community. All pupils are aware of the needs of those less fortunate than themselves and enthusiastically engage in charity projects and community service both locally and further afield. Sixth formers support an orphanage in India through fundraising and voluntary service. Pupils develop political awareness through PSHE and demonstrate resourcefulness and high levels of social and economic awareness in their eco work which has been recognised in national awards.
- 4.5 Pupils of all ages develop a high level of cultural awareness, including that of the Western cultural tradition, as a result of their work in RE and PSHE. Pupils are respectful of others' faith and heritage, and value the achievements of those from backgrounds different from their own. They maintain harmonious relations in all parts of school, and their cultural, social and global awareness is enhanced through a wealth of school trips. Senior school pupils speak warmly of the life-enhancing qualities of music, drama and art. Prep school pupils celebrate art and develop their appreciation of other cultures through vibrant, creative projects.
- 4.6 The pupils' personal development is excellent and is a significant strength of the school. By the time they leave, pupils have highly developed social skills, a strong moral compass, a commitment to citizenship and the confidence to pursue their

ambitions. The school fully meets its aim to encourage confidence without arrogance, respect and care for others and a love of life.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The relationships between the pupils and the staff and between the pupils themselves are a strength throughout the school. Staff know the pupils extremely well and monitor each pupil's attainment, achievement and happiness through a number of well-developed systems, including daily welfare logs, weekly welfare committee meetings and the termly pupil record sheet and summary. Pupils demonstrate that they enjoy being with each other throughout the school and show genuine concern for each other. Many opportunities exist for pupils to mix with different age groups. For example, girls register in family hall groups, and peer mentoring and 'buddy' systems successfully unite older with younger pupils and day with boarding pupils.
- 4.9 In keeping with its aims, the school is very successful in helping to develop pupils' self-confidence, self-awareness and self-respect. Pupils are given positions of responsibility as they progress through the school. Pupils in Year 6 spoke enthusiastically about helping with the younger classes and Year 9 pupils felt honoured to be chosen to show parents of prospective pupils around the school.
- 4.10 The school actively encourages pupils to adopt a healthy lifestyle. Pupils take regular exercise and participate in competitive sports and the school is committed to outdoor education projects. The pupils enjoy their meals at school and are helped to make healthy choices, such as selecting two vegetables at lunch time. The message of healthy eating is reinforced in school displays.
- 4.11 The school is extremely effective in promoting good behaviour through age-appropriate rewards, such as sticker charts, credits, privileges and 'honourables'. In responses to questionnaires a very few pupils commented that bullying was not handled well within the school. On inspection, the school was found to maintain extremely good records of concerns for pupils worried about the way in which they were being treated by others. Staff were seen to be vigilant in monitoring the situation until a satisfactory resolution was reached. When interviewed, all pupils had a clear understanding of whom they would turn to if they were treated unkindly by others. Throughout the school, staff are actively involved in taking preventative measures to ensure their pupils feel safe.
- 4.12 Pupils' views are regularly sought throughout all aspects of school life. Pupil forums include a school council, boarders' forum and an international forum. For younger pupils views are expressed through circle time, PSHE and the worry box. Pupil questionnaires identified a small minority of pupils that felt they were not asked to express their views but, on inspection, this was not found to be the case. Pupils expressed gratitude that they were able to contribute to a suggestions book in the dining room and that the kitchen staff were able to respond.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND and the school is active in carrying out changes.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.15 The school's arrangements for safeguarding its pupils have regard to official guidance. An appropriate policy sets out clearly the procedures which the school follows when necessary, and training of all staff and volunteers is meticulously carried out. A record of when training in child protection has been given, and when it is due to be renewed, is kept on the single central register of employment to ensure that there are no exceptions. The senior designated person for child protection has helpful contacts with local agencies for the benefit of the pupils. The school practises safer recruitment and is rigorous in carrying out and recording vetting checks on its staff.
- 4.16 Fire risk assessments have been carried out on all the buildings on the school campus. Necessary repairs or improvements are systematically dealt with. Regular maintenance checks are carried out on all fire equipment, and fire drills take place each term, both in the school buildings and in boarding time in the boarding houses.
- 4.17 An extremely detailed policy gives careful guidance on all matters of health and safety, ensuring that the pupils live and work in an environment where hazards are recognised and minimised. Risk assessments cover every area of the school buildings and are created for activities on and off the site. Staff taking pupils on trips or visits away from the school follow a rigorous and thorough procedure to ensure their safety. There is good provision for sick pupils, whether boarders or day girls. Many of the staff hold first aid qualifications and the names of those qualified are displayed in several places in the school.
- 4.18 Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and stored.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The quality of boarding education is excellent.
- 4.20 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The school works extremely hard to nurture, encourage, challenge and support the girls in their care. Every girl is helped to develop as an individual. Boarders are happy, friendly, confident, respectful and articulate. They are very enthusiastic about their boarding experience. Boarding houses have a 'family feel' and relationships are warm. A small minority of the questionnaire responses highlighted tension between girls in one of the houses. Inspection evidence indicates staff are dealing appropriately with this matter. Heads of house support the staff by taking on duties and they help younger boarders. These girls enjoy their responsibilities and their actions have a positive impact in the houses. Behaviour is exemplary: boarders care for and help each other. They develop strong friendships. Boarders integrate exceptionally well in the houses and value those who come from other countries. Visiting day pupils are welcomed as part of the house community. Boarders have appropriate access to information about the world through access to television and newspapers.
- 4.21 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders are very well cared for as individuals and kept safe at all times. Ongoing refurbishment of the boarding houses indicates the school's intention to maintain and update accommodation. Boarders personalise their rooms to meet individual taste. All bedrooms are appropriately furnished and adequately heated. Rooms are cleaned daily and provide a comfortable space for boarders. Valuables can be stored in a lockable

space in the bedrooms, or handed in to house staff for safe keeping. In a small minority of responses to the pupils' questionnaire it was suggested that some boarders felt their rooms were outdated. Inspection evidence demonstrates that the programme of refurbishment will address these concerns. Corridors and common rooms or 'cosies', of which there are several in each house, are personalised by boarders with very attractive artwork done by the girls. In the younger girls' house there is a games room. These areas are welcoming and are equipped with a piano, television, board games, DVDs and videos. Kitchens are adjacent to common areas and although a small minority of the questionnaires suggested there was a shortage of things provided for the preparation of hot drinks and snacks, inspection evidence contradicts these views. Showers and toilets are plentiful and there are baths available. The in-house and central school laundry facilities provide the means for boarders to get washing done quickly. The dining hall is a very pleasant social area. Despite a small minority commenting negatively in the questionnaires, inspectors found that the food is of high quality and plentiful, and that most boarders enjoy their meals. Food is prepared from locally sourced ingredients where practical; it is nutritious, well cooked and attractively presented. There is plenty of choice and the menus are well balanced. Pupils with special dietary requirements are well catered for and menus are rotated every three weeks. There is always fresh fruit and water available at meals and in the houses. The hot chocolate machine in the dining room, available in the mornings, is greatly appreciated.

- 4.22 Boarders' medical care is excellent. The welcoming and very well-equipped medical centre is run by a qualified nurse who works extremely closely with the housemistresses and the local surgery. A doctor visits once a week. There is daily electronic or telephone communication to ensure the highest level of care for all boarders. All medical interventions are recorded electronically, and medication is correctly and appropriately stored and dispensed. The arrangements for self-medication are rigorous, and the confidentiality and rights of boarders are respected. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is available to boarders and house-based excursions are organised to places of interest, the cinema and the theatre. The programme offers something for everyone, including several outdoor activities which encourage boarders to keep fit and healthy. Parental consents and appropriate risk assessments are in place. For new boarders, various well-designed house-based induction programmes help them to settle well. Comprehensive information is provided for parents and boarders. Individual houses produce their own induction booklets detailing various age-appropriate induction activities. All boarders have a wide range of adults to whom they can turn for help and guidance. House noticeboards provide comprehensive information and contact details for the school counsellor, independent listener and all pertinent outside agencies. Boarding staff are very easily accessible, both day and night. Access is available to several quiet spaces if girls want to be alone. There are effective lines of communication between parents or guardians and house staff. Parents are encouraged to telephone if they have a query or want to speak to their daughter. Internet contact is also used.
- 4.23 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare, health and safeguarding are excellent. The school has strong links with the local safeguarding board and staff training is kept rigorously up to date. Superb communication between all staff and with parents underpins the safety and welfare of boarders. There are very effective systems and policies in place. Due care is employed when recruiting suitable staff. The excellent anti-bullying policy promotes kindness and thoughtfulness. Pupils say they feel very safe in their houses. The clear system of rewards and sanctions promulgates the aim that boarders live in harmony, are kind to others and take

responsibility for their own actions. There are well-known procedures in place for signing in and out, and house staff are always aware of boarders' whereabouts. There is a clear and well-understood missing child policy. There are appropriate fire risk assessments and fire prevention arrangements. Regular well-recorded fire drills take place during boarding hours.

- 4.24 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. Boarding is run extremely efficiently by a strong team, with capable leadership. Senior leaders on the welfare committee support experienced teams of house staff who carry out their duties and responsibilities conscientiously. Without exception boarding aims are achieved. The senior boarding team meets weekly to review and discuss issues. Information is effectively shared about boarders' welfare and their academic progress via the school intranet. The overall boarding development plan identifies clear direction for development. Boarders' views are continually sought informally and formally at house meetings, chaired by the heads of house. In a small minority of the pupil questionnaires it was suggested this did not happen, but inspectors found much evidence to the contrary. Regular meetings within the houses influence practice. In their responses to the questionnaires an overwhelming majority of parents expressed satisfaction with their daughters' boarding experience.

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 governors are always mindful of the benefits of preserving the ethos of the school, while at the same time making a long-term financial plan to support the school leadership in its strategic planning. The governing body discuss future projects with the school leadership and identify priorities with careful financial management. New governors are chosen for the expertise they can bring to their roles and they undergo an induction process which includes child protection training.
- 5.3 The governors are effective in discharging their responsibilities for child protection, carrying out an annual review of the policy and procedures at a full governing body meeting. The governors also check the single central register and personnel files to ensure that safer recruitment practices are fully followed. They have proper procedures for the handling of complaints. Their oversight of the school is effective, aided by frequent, regular reports from the headmistress, the bursar and other senior members of staff. They ensure that welfare, health and safety matters have a high priority in their discussions and decisions. Governors also scrutinise, update and evaluate school policies to ensure that they comply with regulations.
- 5.4 All governors are involved in a regular programme of visits to each different section of the school so that they are well informed about the concerns and needs of each. Papers are circulated efficiently before meetings so that governors are fully prepared. They offer both challenge and support to the leadership of the school and have established a regular pattern of appraisal for the headmistress and bursar which includes the setting of targets for the future.
- 5.5 Governors meet parents at speech days, at plays and concerts and they have useful links with the parent 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 excellent.
- 5.7 Dynamic, visionary leadership of the school underpins many of the improvements effected in the school since the previous inspection. Restructuring of the team has resulted in efficient, collaborative management at every level, so that the school has a real sense of community and shared values. The school fulfils its aim to inspire, challenge, encourage and support pupils. The senior leadership team (SLT), which includes the head of the prep school, meets regularly to discuss operational matters but there is a wider senior leadership team (WSLT) which discusses strategy for the development of the whole school. These meetings serve not only to explore strategic ideas but also to ensure good communication with the rest of the staff about the ideas being considered. A welfare committee, including the head of boarding, ensures that all pupils are fully supported to enable them to achieve their personal potential. It reports termly to the governors. There are regular meetings of departmental heads, and emerging issues are used to identify future training. An annual meeting of each head of department with the headmistress is used to reflect

on areas of success and areas which could be improved. The head of the prep school chairs a weekly meeting with the prep school staff as well as a weekly meeting of the EYFS staff, thereby ensuring that communication is facilitated throughout the school and that staff in all sections of the school are included in processes of evaluation and development.

- 5.8 The leadership team creates clear policies, including those regarding safeguarding, regularly monitoring and evaluating them before presenting them to the governors for further discussion and approval. They then implement the policies efficiently in accordance with the duties delegated to them by the governors. School leadership is successful in recruiting and retaining high quality staff, ensuring that they are appropriately trained in matters relating to health and safety, welfare and safeguarding. Safe recruitment is rigorously practised and the leadership team ensure that all necessary checks on staff, governors and volunteers are completed before they are employed.
- 5.9 The clear direction provided by the leadership is evident in the achievements of the pupils and in the high standards of their personal development. Planning is effective at all levels. The school development plan has specific aims and clearly defined targets, which both feed into and form departmental development plans. The transparency of the system ensures that all staff are aware of the priorities, enabling the school to make progress.
- 5.10 The leadership team has undertaken a number of initiatives with regard to teaching and learning in the school, aiming to achieve excellence in these areas. It has been successful in engendering enthusiasm for good practice in the staff, who have responded with professionalism and a genuine desire to do the best they can for the pupils in their charge. These practices are rapidly becoming established and are appreciated by pupils and their parents.
- 5.11 Since the previous inspection, the leadership and management of boarding have undergone changes, with the appointment of a new head of boarding who meets weekly with the housemistresses and is part of the WSLT. Boarding is an important focus of the school's development plan as is manifest from improvements since the previous inspection. The school leadership ensures that the quality of the boarding provision enhances the personal development of the pupils.
- 5.12 Channels of communication are clear and effective. Middle managers, both pastoral and academic, have confidence in the leadership team, sure that their voices are heard and respected. Staff at all levels benefit from the support and encouragement provided by their line managers.
- 5.13 The quality of links between the school and parents is excellent. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire parents expressed great satisfaction with the education provided by the school. They are very pleased with the progress their children make and are confident that they will receive the support they need. A few parents said that they felt that the school did not respond to their concerns well. The inspection evidence found that any concerns were dealt with promptly and followed the school procedures very carefully.
- 5.14 Parents have many and varied opportunities to be involved with the school. They are invited to concerts, drama productions and to watch sporting fixtures. Afternoon teas and drinks parties are held to allow parents and staff to meet less formally. Parents can easily speak to staff whenever they have any concerns and are able to e-mail members of staff directly, ensuring a prompt response. The well-established

Parent Staff Association, which organises fund-raising events and other occasions, has the full support of the school and provides further excellent links for parents.

- 5.15 The parents of existing and prospective pupils are provided with an attractive pack containing all the information they require. The school website also provides much useful information, both for prospective and current parents. A weekly e-letter is produced, which keeps parents fully informed about school life. An annual magazine, very professionally produced, celebrates the school's achievements and celebrations.
- 5.16 Reports are very detailed and incorporate grades for effort and attainment. Pupils say that the reports give very clear information and show that the teachers know them very well. In responses to questionnaires parents expressed overwhelming satisfaction with the school.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

- 6.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. Very comprehensive planning and the high expectations of all staff ensure complete coverage of the educational programmes for all areas. A 'working wall' is used very effectively to note children's reactions to activities and how these activities could be extended either for the class or individuals. As a result, the provision matches the children's individual needs. Assessments made on two year-olds are very thorough and regular. Half-termly assessments pinpoint accurately what the children can do and set targets for next steps in learning. Baseline and end of Reception year assessments show all children making excellent progress from their starting points, well above national averages. The children's records very effectively chart their progress through the EYFS.
- 6.2 Small classes allow all children to be very well supported in their learning and children are also encouraged to become more independent learners. This enables them to learn effectively and be ready for the next stages in their learning. Adults are enthusiastic and plan exciting activities to motivate the children. The opportunity to take part in the woodland learning environment enhances their education and gives them the opportunity to develop their skills and learn to take risks in a safe setting.
- 6.3 Links with parents are excellent. Parents said that the school has a truly 'open door policy' and that they feel welcome to speak to their child's key person or any member of staff at any time. Before joining the setting children, with their parents, have taster sessions in order to help them settle quickly. Half-termly assessments, together with written comments on what their child can do now, the progress made and next steps are shared with the parents and then sent home. Parents have free access to their child's progress records and are encouraged to use comment slips to contribute to them. A small minority of those parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school did not respond to their concerns well. The inspection evidence shows that concerns are dealt with very thoroughly. The pre-inspection questionnaire responses showed that parents are pleased with their children's progress and that their children feel happy and safe at school.

6.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

- 6.4 Provision for the children's well-being is outstanding. Children under the age of three are happy to come into class and settle with an activity, while parents have the opportunity to see what their child has been doing and speak to the key person. Children are happy and play well together, gradually developing their independence and their investigative skills. Older children are able to choose their own activities from the well organised equipment and resources. At times the opportunity to move freely between different classes allows them to play and talk with different adults and children.
- 6.5 Excellent opportunities to use the extensive outside space and a large indoor space, sometimes with a specialist teacher, allow children to develop an understanding of

the importance of physical exercise. They develop independent hygiene routines and learn from an early age how to put their coats on and change into their PE clothes. Careful preparation and frequent visits during the summer term to their next class or school ensure smooth transitions.

6.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

- 6.6 Leadership and management are outstanding. Governors make regular visits to the EYFS and fully support them in their aims. Since the previous inspection they have provided an interactive whiteboard in the Early Years class to help with development in the use of ICT. Children are cared for extremely well in a very welcoming, safe environment. Planning is carefully monitored to ensure that all learning and development requirements are met and a balance of child-initiated and teacher-led activities are included.
- 6.7 All required safeguarding and welfare policies are in place and are regularly reviewed. Regular EYFS team meetings provide very effective opportunities for self-evaluation and ensure a clear vision for the future, with all team members taking an active part. Training in safeguarding and child protection is up-to-date with rigorous procedures for safe recruitment in place. All members of staff take part in annual appraisals and regular supervision meetings, and professional development ensures that they are knowledgeable about current educational developments. Excellent partnerships with parents and appropriate outside agencies ensure that the EYFS setting is able to support each child, whatever their needs.

6.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 6.8 The overall quality and standards of the provision are outstanding. Tracking and assessments show that all children make excellent progress relative to their starting points. Children under the age of three develop the confidence to enjoy mark making and are able to listen and respond to a story. They are beginning to recognise numbers. They develop their physical skills, enjoying a range of exciting activities and can use simple tools.
- 6.9 Children are provided with a range of opportunities appropriate to their age and ability, allowing them to develop appropriately, including those with EAL, SEND or who are able. By the end of Reception, children express themselves clearly, write in simple sentences using their phonic knowledge and are able to understand simple addition and subtraction. They are confident when using the interactive whiteboard and enjoy using the computer. The children share resources happily and work co-operatively to achieve a common aim, such as taking turns to use the jug to fill the water tray. They organise themselves independently and very effectively. They build excellent relationships with staff and feel safe and secure in school.
- 6.10 Safeguarding and welfare policies are very effectively implemented; fire procedures are understood and regular risk assessments of both premises and equipment undertaken. All adults are fully committed to the safety and protection of the children. A comprehensive development plan shows a clear vision and strong commitment to evaluating practice and continuous improvement. This ensures that children thrive and make the most of their early education in a safe, stimulating environment.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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