



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

OAKHAM SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Oakham School

Full Name of School	Oakham School
DfE Number	857/6000
Registered Charity Number	1131425
Address	Oakham School Chapel Close Oakham Rutland LE15 6DT
Telephone Number	01572 758500
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Email Address	admissions@oakham.rutland.sch.uk
Headmaster	Mr Nigel Lashbrook
Chair of Trustees	Mr Peter Lawson
Age Range	10 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	1065
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (537 boys; 528 girls)
Numbers by Age	10-11: 20 11-18: 1045
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 489
Number of Boarders	Total: 576 Full: 415 Weekly: 161
Inspection dates	24 Sep 2013 to 27 Sep 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2007.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of trustees, 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

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Margie Burnet Ward	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mrs Sandra Clements	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, GSA school)
Dr Haydn Griffiths	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Miss Barbara Habayab	Team Inspector (Vice-Principal, Society of Heads school)
Mr Michael Holder-Williams	Team Inspector (Head of Senior School, Society of Heads school)
Mrs Doris Hugh	Team Inspector (Former Head of Sixth Form, GSA school)
Mrs Mary Ireland	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Ken Underhill	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Dr Sarah Welch	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mr Ian Yorston	Team Inspector (Director of Digital Strategy, HMC school)
Dr Ernst Zillekens	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mrs Lynne Heath	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Miss Margaret Connell	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Principal, GSA school)
Mr Alex Tate	Team Inspector for Boarding (Housemaster, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Oakham School was founded in 1584. It is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 10 to 18. It occupies a range of buildings for teaching, sports and performance, ten boarding houses and six day houses, spread across Oakham, the county town of Rutland. Year 13 pupils belong to one of two houses that include both day pupils and boarders. The school is a charity that became incorporated in 2009, and is overseen by a board of trustees who include three ex-officio members and up to a maximum of eighteen co-opted trustees. Since the previous inspection the school has opened a design building, a new auditorium and a science building, and extended and updated facilities for sport and boys' boarding. The chair of the trustees was appointed in 2012 and the headmaster and bursar in 2009.
- 1.2 The school aims to promote a holistic education that provides a broad spectrum of opportunity to enable all pupils to find their niche and to develop their interests and talents, including the physical, cultural or creative. It seeks to create opportunities for innovation, teamwork and leadership, and to achieve the highest possible standards both inside and outside the classroom, enabling all pupils to fulfil their academic potential and cultivate a lifelong love of learning. It sets out to provide an education that prepares pupils to have the highest possible expectations of what they can achieve, and to give them the values and skills for life after school. The school seeks to offer all pupils compassionate and consistent pastoral support, and to value and respect individuals within a community based on a boarding ethos in which mutual respect takes the highest priority. It aims to encourage pupils to investigate and experience Christian and other faiths and to explore moral questions and the spiritual dimension of their lives.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 1065 pupils on roll, 576 of whom were boarders, either full or weekly ('day'), boarding for 2 or 3 nights each week. Years 12 and 13 are known as the Upper School, Years 9 to 11 as the Middle School and Years 6 to 8 as the Lower School. Other main points of entry are at the ages of 11, 13 and 16. Around 60 pupils in Year 12 are new to the school each year.
- 1.4 In Years 6 to 8 (the Lower School) the average ability on entry to the school is above the national average, with around a quarter of pupils of well above average ability. This remains broadly consistent in Year 9 when a significant number of pupils join the school. Pupils' abilities in the Upper School are slightly above the national average. Most day pupils come from a radius of 30 miles, and from a range of economic backgrounds. Boarders come from 37 different countries, and pupils from overseas comprise a tenth of the school roll. There are 125 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 31 receive support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Of the 143 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 112 receive specialist help with their learning.

- 1.5 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.

Lower School

School	NC name
Lower 1	Year 6
1 st form	Year 7
2 nd form	Year 8

Middle School

3 rd form	Year 9
4 th form	Year 10
5 th form	Year 11

Upper School

6 th form	Year 12
7 th form	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The pupils' achievements and learning are excellent. Good academic standards are attained, including by pupils with SEND, with EAL, and, when suitable levels of challenge are offered, by able, gifted and talented (A, G and T) pupils, although this is not consistently evident. Pupils in the Upper School attain excellent standards in many subjects and demonstrate highly developed learning skills. Pupils of all ages respond well to an excellent curriculum that stimulates development of all facets of their potential, and to good teaching. This results in good levels of progress, and high levels in the sixth form. Excellent achievement in activities is typified by national success in many sports by both individuals and teams, and by very high standards in creative and performing arts.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils show very high levels of confidence and behaviour. Their sense of community as members of day and boarding houses, and of the school, is an outstanding feature of their development. Pupils show excellent moral and cultural awareness, the latter enhanced by the school's ethos of internationalism and the integration of the many nationalities represented in the school. The pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care and arrangements to ensure their safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Those pupils who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires were highly positive about the school. A small minority expressed dissatisfaction with opportunities for the school to listen to and respond to their views. Inspection evidence, including from discussions with pupils, shows limited further support for this view. Good arrangements exist to communicate the decisions of the school council and related committees to pupils. The quality of boarding is excellent and contributes outstandingly to the boarders' personal development.
- 2.3 Excellent governance promotes the school's aims strongly and its support underpins the pupils' high level of achievement and personal development. Trustees ensure a high standard of human and material resources, and excellent building developments such as the science accommodation support the ambitious aims of the school. Trustees fulfil their responsibilities for oversight in those areas where they have legal responsibilities very securely. The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection and the recommendations of that inspection have been met. Leadership and management are excellent, characterised by strong planning and policy. The implementation of policy by academic middle leadership is good but not always consistent. Monitoring of the school's success is effective in many areas but the success of those pupils identified as A, G and T and the provision made for them is not consistently evaluated. The school's links with parents are excellent.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Devise a more systematic approach to monitoring the achievements of A, G and T pupils and ensure that arrangements to support those pupils and those with SEND or EAL are consistently implemented in all subjects.

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 Pupils demonstrate good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across all subject areas. All, including those in Year 6, respond consistently well to good teaching and an excellent curriculum that stimulates development of all facets of their potential. Pupils' mathematical skills and scientific understanding are good, and they demonstrate excellent practical skills. All pupils in a Middle School biology lesson successfully produced slides of animal cells and used a light microscope to observe them. The pupils' linguistic skills develop as they move through the school, to reach excellent standards in the Upper School. Understanding of the humanities is excellent. Pupils, including those with EAL, show good levels of articulacy in written and spoken English. Those pupils with SEND achieve consistently at levels commensurate with their peers, enabled by well-focused support in individual and group sessions outside lessons. Pupils who are A, G and T achieve well in extended essays and projects, particularly in the Upper School, and through engagement with the programme for scholars; they excel in developing their talents in creative subjects and sport. Younger A, G and T pupils show proportionately higher levels of achievement than their peers in their responses to work set, but evidence from lessons and these pupils' work shows limited opportunity for them to make rapid progress when they are not set work of extended or additional challenge.
- 3.3 Pupils' use of information and communication technology (ICT), including the accessing of online resources, is effective, an improvement since the previous inspection. Their work in art and design is exceptional, exemplified by the numerous life-form sculptures of excellent quality displayed throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate high level creative and performing skills in both drama and music; Lower School pupils rehearsed with confidence sections of a choral piece newly commissioned by the school. Excellent standards are attained in physical development.
- 3.4 Pupils reach high levels of achievement in activities. They are frequently members of national performing groups in music and theatre, and have won prizes in composition and choral competitions. They attain gold standard in exceptionally large numbers in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) and regularly gain armed forces scholarships. The level of attainment in sports is excellent. Individuals participate nationally in sports such as hockey, rugby, polo and sailing at the highest levels. Teams achieve success in national competitions in hockey, athletics and cricket. In sailing the girls' team has won European championships in its age category and boys gained the bronze medal.
- 3.5 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. Results at GCSE have been excellent in relation to the national average for pupils in maintained schools. They are similar to the average for pupils in maintained selective schools. Results in the International GCSE are higher than worldwide averages, and in double science results are higher than the UK average and in English literature similar to the UK average. Results at A level have been good in relation to the average for maintained schools and above the national average for maintained selective schools. Around 80% of grades have been awarded at grades A* to B. This proportion rose to 85% in 2013. Results in the International

Baccalaureate (IB) have been exceptional in relation to the worldwide average and above the UK average, a level maintained in 2013. These results, considered alongside the pupils' work and achievement in lessons, indicate that their progress to GCSE in relation to pupils of similar ability, including those with SEND or EAL, is good, and is high in the Upper School. Nearly all pupils proceed from Year 11 into the Upper School. Pupils consistently gain places at universities in the UK and elsewhere that have high entry requirements.

- 3.6 The work of many pupils demonstrates learning skills at high levels in many areas, such as co-operative working, including listening to others, making links, persevering, reflecting and thinking logically. A focus on independent research, with highly effective use of library resources, has resulted in significant progress in this aspect of learning, which meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. Younger pupils demonstrate less-developed learning skills at this early stage of the school year but the focus placed on these in literature, research skill sessions and teaching, allied to the pupils' desire to succeed, lays firm foundations for progress. Pupils in the Upper School are confident and focused in their learning; they explained their reasoning and debated ideas to excellent effect in theory of knowledge lessons.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 Both these areas of provision support the aim of the school to promote a holistic education, resulting in a broad spectrum of opportunities for pupils. The curriculum effectively promotes the acquisition of good skills in literacy and numeracy for all pupils, and provides ample opportunity for them to participate in creative, aesthetic and physical activities, together with diverse choice in the extensive co-curricular programme.
- 3.9 The curriculum is continually under review. In Years 7 and 8 increased provision for the creative arts has resulted in excellent opportunities for pupils, and in Years 10 and 11, the addition of courses in creative digital media, computing and citizenship has extended an already wide range of optional subjects.
- 3.10 The curriculum in the Lower School is broad, balanced and challenging, and designed to give pupils a wide range of experience. In Year 6, pupils receive class teaching for most of their lessons, moving on to the main school site for specialist subjects such as sciences and the creative arts. German and Spanish are introduced in Year 8 and pupils are well prepared for the transition to the Middle School.
- 3.11 In Year 9 pupils opt for German or Spanish as a second language and experience a rotation of creative subjects, with flexibility to cater for different needs and strengths. At GCSE a broad basis is maintained, with good options to suit the individual. This prepares pupils well for the Upper School and produces confident learners. Pupils express their satisfaction with the subjects on offer.
- 3.12 The free choice between A levels and the IB in the Upper School is a distinctive feature of the school; it offers a wide range of subjects in both programmes. The school has developed a course in environmental systems, now adopted as part of the IB diploma.

- 3.13 Opportunities to extend study in academic areas suit A, G and T pupils very well and include projects in Years 9 to 11 in which pupils research independently, tackle problems in teams, and develop and improve communication and leadership skills. Year 6 pupils have enjoyed pond dipping at Rutland Water in science and brought back photographic images to process in ICT lessons. Departments run extra-curricular clubs, such as the biology dissection club and the fun club in economics. A strong programme for scholars is allied to many trips with an academic focus. The school promotes the acquisition of good learning habits through activities in all year groups. A lecture for Year 13 pupils on adopting a 'growth mindset to study' provoked excellent discussion and interaction.
- 3.14 The school provides excellent systematic support for pupils with SEND or EAL. Each pupil with SEND has an individual education plan and appropriate support is organised outside and within the timetable. Information on each pupil's plan is provided clearly to staff. Pupils very much value the help they receive.
- 3.15 The careers and higher education department ensures high quality guidance and support for pupils and is currently being effectively re-developed. It is well resourced, providing access to up-to-date information on the school intranet and website, and through good quality handbooks. A group of knowledgeable advisors includes expertise on American universities. Work experience is organised for Year 11 pupils, but much is also arranged independently. Good guidance is given on option choices and Upper School courses. Encouragement and advice are given to individuals planning a Gap Year. Pupils said that they feel very well supported.
- 3.16 A highly effective, comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, enjoyed by the pupils, is taught by tutors, assisted by specialists for certain topics.
- 3.17 The outstanding co-curricular programme offers an exceptionally wide and diverse selection of clubs or activities, ranging from Model United Nations (MUN) and Latin American dance-based exercise to cake making, guided by experienced and enthusiastic staff. The many opportunities available in sport, creative arts and other recreational or adventurous activities contribute significantly to the pupils' personal development. Well over half the school plays in representative teams in any given week. Teamwork and leadership skills are developed in both the Combined Cadet Force (CCF), and the DofE, which offer challenges as far afield as Nepal and the Falkland Islands.
- 3.18 The voluntary action programme offers great scope for involvement within the wider community. Activities include fund raising for charities, prison visiting, assisting in local hospitals and with sailing activities for people with disabilities, and supporting elderly people. The Wednesday lunchtime concert in the parish church coincides with market day and attracts a large audience. The school promotes internationalism through the curriculum and links to the wider community, such as schools in Morocco, Kenya and India, and has attained the British Council International School Award.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.19 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.20 Teaching makes a positive contribution to the pupils' progress. It supports well the school's aim to provide the highest standard of teaching so that pupils fulfil their academic potential.
- 3.21 Teaching displays strong subject knowledge and lessons are planned carefully to stimulate learning, thus securing good progress, and excellent progress in the Upper School. The pupils say that they feel encouraged and supported by their teachers, and appreciate the individual support provided regularly out of lessons. Pupils can attend regular Tuesday and Thursday support sessions. Most lessons are well paced and resourced, with material prepared which engages and assists pupils, although a small amount of teaching that lacks these characteristics limits progress. The library is an excellent and well-used resource, providing wide-ranging opportunities for research. The pupils are encouraged to use ICT in their learning, including to research material for the IB extended essay. The most successful teaching challenges A, G and T pupils to go beyond the constraints of the syllabus and think critically, but this challenge is not consistent in all teaching.
- 3.22 Committed and highly skilled teaching for those with SEND or EAL uses a variety of appropriate resources to supplement work in class and gives pupils clear strategies and study techniques. This teaching is effective in providing targeted support for pupils, in both small group work and individual lessons. Specialist staff also provide regular training for subject teachers. Good examples of targeted teaching techniques and systematic support for pupils with SEND or EAL were seen in some subject teaching, but this is not consistent across all subject areas.
- 3.23 Pupils are encouraged to develop excellent learning habits and to work towards learning independently, with considerable success. This was seen in an engaging creative writing lesson in the Lower School where pupils made excellent use of a thesaurus. The cumulative impact of such teaching is clearly demonstrated in highly confident independent learning in the Upper School, enhanced by the school's distinctive and effective approach to the teaching of theory of knowledge.
- 3.24 Teaching is characterised by a warm and supportive learning environment; pupils show respect for the staff and their peers, value their learning and enjoy coming to class. Opportunities provided for pupils to work collaboratively benefit all pupils, including the more able and those with SEND. Care is taken to provide appropriate styles of teaching for pupils in Year 6, to which they respond well. Similar care is taken with teaching styles in Year 8 to ensure a smooth transition into the Middle School.
- 3.25 Work is regularly marked, with the best examples providing detailed feedback, such as well-focused reference to assessment objectives. However, the monitoring of the pupils' responses to comments given in marking, for example requiring them to extend or correct work, is limited in scope. A thorough assessment process for pupils in Year 11 and above uses data from standardised tests to set ambitious targets for each pupil. In the Middle School and Lower School, targets are set following discussion with pupils, who say that they feel encouraged and supported by this process.

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 pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils develop values and life skills that prepare them very well for the challenges of life, successfully fulfilling the school's aims. By the time they leave the school, pupils know themselves exceptionally well and demonstrate high levels of self-esteem and integrity.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They take pride in their achievements and in representing the school at various events. The excellent range of creative activities in which pupils engage inspires strong reactions. Through a discrete spiritual achievement programme pupils explore the effect of their actions on others. Pupils of Christian and other faiths are enabled to become reflective and exhibit a strong sense of spirituality. A chapel presentation on the story of Joseph and the importance of family and loyalty, devised and presented by older pupils, stimulated full engagement by their peers, and ended with committed hymn singing. Jewish and Muslim pupils can conduct their own prayers. Boarders and day pupils appreciate opportunities for reflection in a busy day, such as house quiet times.
- 4.4 The pupils' excellent moral development is demonstrated in their clear understanding of the significance of agreed rules and of sanctions for inappropriate conduct. They appreciate and celebrate belonging to a large, unified community and respect each other's property and space. In and out of lessons, pupils respond at high levels to many opportunities to explore moral issues. Pupils studying for GCSE present balanced and insightful arguments in essays on issues such as aid to Africa. In house assemblies, pupils engaged in a discussion on the best way to raise money for a charity, and showed concern for equal access within the school for those with disabilities. Pupils demonstrate concern for those less fortunate than themselves through the voluntary action programme. They spoke enthusiastically about visits to senior citizens, prisoners and local schools.
- 4.5 Pupils develop outstanding social skills. They value relationships and treat each other and all staff with respect. Middle School pupils described how, when friendship issues arise, they set their own targets for resolving them. Pupils show exceptional maturity, confidence, articulacy and openness in general and in discussions. Beginning in the Lower School, they demonstrate impeccable behaviour towards visitors, accept responsibility readily and develop strong leadership skills. All Year 8 pupils have designated responsibilities, such as making announcements in assembly, which they do confidently. Older pupils develop these skills through the house system, membership of the school council and its committees, and in CCF and DofE activities. Year 13 prefects, the Decem, provide excellent role models for younger pupils. Pupils of different ages work together very effectively in creative activities and sports. Pupils view the PSHE scheme and individual personal development targets as effective means to improve. They develop a secure knowledge of British public institutions through the Year 9 citizenship programme, visits to the Houses of Parliament and participation in the MUN.
- 4.6 Pupils have a very good appreciation of and respect for their own and other cultures, stimulated by the school's international dimension. Presentations by pupils from a range of faiths about the impact of religion on their lives, together with tutorial

programmes focused on integration with others, support the school's boarding ethos of mutual respect. As a result, pupils live in harmony within the culturally diverse school community. They particularly enjoy the opportunity to be taught by foreign nationals. Pupils experience other cultures and help with projects to improve infrastructures through visits to Kenya, Morocco and India. They develop strong awareness of Western European and other cultures, assimilating key elements into their work in drama, art and music with much success.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The pastoral system in the school, centred on the day and boarding houses, is organised to ensure consistent and compassionate care, meeting its stated aim with great success. Pastoral provision is generous in scope and of high quality. Comprehensive policies and procedures are implemented very successfully and monitored with care. Pastoral meetings held regularly amongst staff ensure that any concerns about pupils are dealt with quickly. Record keeping is efficient and matters of concern well documented. Pupils feel secure, happy and confident at school.
- 4.9 The high quality of relationships between the staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves is a strength of the school. The pupils are confident that they know who to turn to if they have any concerns. Small tutor groups allow staff to know their pupils well. The grouping of day and boarding pupils in Year 13 into one house for boys and one for girls focuses care on providing strong support for final examinations and excellent preparation for life after school. There is an easy exchange of views between staff and pupils at all ages. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of pupils expressed dissatisfaction with opportunities to give their opinions and the response these receive. Inspection evidence shows that pupils can communicate their views to the school council and a number of related committees. Discussion is reported on and published in minutes. In addition, matters raised are discussed by senior leaders, including through a weekly meeting with the chair of the school council.
- 4.10 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour, including procedures to guard against harassment and bullying, are highly effective. Pupils recognise that when instances of bullying are reported they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Any incidents are recorded effectively and their nature monitored by senior leaders. An annual questionnaire to pupils about anti-bullying measures provides additional information. Pupils have a clear understanding of the school rewards and sanctions system and confirm that it is fair, although a few pupils feel that sanctions are not applied consistently. Inspection evidence shows that, in the few instances of more serious misbehaviour, procedures are operated fairly and sanctions are suitably recorded. The school is vigilant in the consistency with which staff apply lesser sanctions.
- 4.11 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.12 The food provided is of a high standard and greatly enjoyed by pupils. Choice is generous and supports a healthy lifestyle. Healthy eating is covered well in PSHE and promoted in the dining hall. The extensive range of sporting activities offered, together with generous timetable provision for games, provides additional support for healthy living.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 The school has secure and well-implemented arrangements to safeguard the pupils' welfare. Designated staff receive regular child protection and inter-agency training. Child protection training for all other staff is similarly effective. Induction for new staff is prompt and well focused, and good arrangements exist to ensure that temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of the procedures. Effective working relationships are maintained with national and local agencies, and advice is sought promptly and appropriately, and followed.
- 4.15 Registration of all pupils is undertaken carefully and any unexpected absence of day pupils from school is followed up quickly by office staff. The school maintains a suitable admission register electronically, which is backed up and stored appropriately.
- 4.16 Arrangements to ensure the pupils' health and safety are strong. The nature of the school's site, integrated into the town, is understood well and associated risks are assessed and regularly reviewed. Day pupils who feel unwell receive the same excellent care as boarders, in the medical centre. A well-structured first-aid policy includes good provision for particular areas of the school's activities, such as sport. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of those with particular SEND.
- 4.17 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are very efficient. Regular drills are held and equipment checked appropriately. Assessments of risk are effective and wide ranging throughout the school. Health and safety measures are regularly monitored and any necessary adjustments are made promptly.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.19 The school's aims are well supported by high quality provision, which results in the excellent personal development of the boarders.
- 4.20 Boarders are happy, confident and articulate, and enjoy being part of their community. A strong sense of school and house loyalty is immediately apparent and pupils have very high standards of behaviour. Relationships within the houses are harmonious; a team of dedicated and supportive house staff works hard to ensure that every boarder's experience is positive and happy. Senior leaders in the school act as tutors in houses, which promotes a cohesive boarding experience. Taster weekends and a comprehensive induction programme ensure that all new boarders settle quickly and soon feel at home, and cultural differences are appreciated and respected. House staff collaborate with teaching staff to ensure that the needs of pupils with EAL or SEND and of those who are A, G and T are well met. House prefect roles in the Lower School and Middle School allow younger boarders to cultivate leadership skills. Senior boarders have the opportunity to take on greater responsibility as members of the Decem, preparing them for life in the wider world. Boarders are encouraged to express their views and receive feedback through various councils and committees. However, many prefer to take advantage of the frequent opportunities they have to speak directly to house prefects or staff. In interviews boarders were enthusiastic about all aspects of their boarding life and showed true appreciation of the care and help they receive. Sanctions are sensitively applied and monitored by senior staff.

- 4.21 Catering is of exceptionally high quality, and in questionnaire responses and interviews boarders expressed almost unanimous satisfaction with the provision of food. This view was supported by inspection findings. A four-weekly rota of menus, with an emphasis on healthy eating, provides excellent choices of nutritious and freshly prepared food, most of which is locally sourced. Individual dietary needs are carefully and sensitively catered for. Portions are appropriate and the catering staff are eager to adapt menus to satisfy the boarders' preferences. Themed menus offer additional variety. A few boarders expressed dissatisfaction with the provision of snacks and drinking water. Investigation showed that snacks are regularly available and all water in houses is potable.
- 4.22 The medical centre is run by a team of well-qualified and friendly nursing staff. The centre is spacious and exceptionally well equipped, providing bright and comfortable separate accommodation for boys and girls. There is a daily doctor's surgery and nurses are available at all times. The school also offers the services of a well-qualified counsellor. Medication is suitably stored, and an efficient electronic recording system ensures that vital information is recorded and shared between the medical centre and a boarder's house. A very high proportion of school staff, including support staff, has had first-aid training, including some defibrillator training. Boarders speak highly of the efficient laundry service.
- 4.23 The school has outstanding sports facilities that promote the health and fitness of boarders. In addition, a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities fosters pupils' physical, spiritual and intellectual development. In questionnaire responses a few boarders commented negatively on the balance of free time available. Evidence shows that staff's monitoring of boarders' participation in activities works to ensure boarders achieve a healthy balance between work and play, particularly in examination years. Weekend trips and activities are arranged for younger boarders. Suitable access is given to the facilities of the town, in addition to the welcoming school shop.
- 4.24 Boarders are accommodated in ten boarding houses, five for boys and five for girls. The two houses for younger boarders provide high quality accommodation; furnishings are bright and cheerful, and dormitories are spacious and airy. A joint common room with a large balcony allows boys and girls to socialise together. The six Middle School houses and the two houses for Year 13 pupils are well furnished and designed. A rolling programme of refurbishment and maintenance ensures that good standards are maintained throughout all the boarding houses. All houses have excellent common rooms, kitchen and games facilities. Boarders respect one another's privacy, which is supported by quiet spaces in each house, and confirm that their belongings are secure. Bathroom facilities are very good.
- 4.25 Boarders are able to keep in contact with their families through email, landline and mobile telephone, and video links. Boarding staff maintain good links with parents through email and telephone contact, as well as through visits.
- 4.26 Excellent arrangements for the boarders' welfare, health and safety are a key element of boarding provision. All staff and prefects receive an induction in safeguarding. Strong measures are taken to promote the health and safety of boarders. Contractors and visitors in houses are always accompanied. Any adults and children over the age of 16 living in boarding accommodation who are not employed by the school have all necessary checks. Fire drills take place at least once each term, including at night. Policies and procedures for countering bullying are clear, and are understood by the boarders, who reported that any incidents are

swiftly and effectively countered. Staff register the boarders' attendance at least three times each day, and books for signing in and out are carefully monitored.

- 4.27 Houses are well staffed: at least two members of staff sleep in the house at night in suitably separate accommodation. Boarders are aware of the procedure for contacting a member of staff in the night when necessary. Leadership and management of boarding are excellent. Strong policies and procedures are thoroughly implemented, regularly reviewed and updated. Staff demonstrate a true commitment to the school's aims, actively promoting its boarding ethos of mutual respect and social harmony, which is echoed by the pupils. There is a genuine sense of loyalty shown by staff; they are proud of the boarding provision and readily go beyond the boundaries of job descriptions to support the boarders in their care. Staff are experienced and well qualified. New staff, including any Gap Year assistants, benefit from the comprehensive induction programme. Regular boarding staff meetings give opportunities for the sharing of good practice. All boarding staff have regular and detailed appraisals to review and develop their expertise. The school is generous in funding training courses for staff to ensure that the needs of boarders are well met. Parents' responses to questionnaires showed a very high level of satisfaction with all aspects of boarding; this was supported by the boarders' responses. Parents feel that boarding is well organised, managed effectively, and promotes their children's progress and development. Inspection evidence endorses these views.
- 4.28 All the requirements of the previous Ofsted boarding welfare inspection have been met.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governance embraces the school's ethos of a holistic education whole-heartedly, and promotes it through substantial provision of financial resources and diligent care for accommodation across the large school site. It enables the successful fulfilment of the school's ambitious vision to enable all pupils to find their niche, and supports its aim to achieve the highest possible standards inside and outside the classroom, through highly effective governance structures. These maintain the pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. Trustees view the school's work as an integrated whole and provide commensurate support for boarding. All, including those who are members ex officio, demonstrate strong commitment to the school. They are given careful induction and a good number take up the opportunities for training on offer. Good use is made of the trustees' individual skills and expertise, and trustees identify areas that would benefit from additional input of skills through on-going review. Regular presentations to trustees by senior leaders, including those with responsibility for the pupils' welfare, health and safety, provide the full governing body with high quality information about the school's activities and about current educational issues, such as e-safety. Trustees visit the school, including a comprehensive termly visit to boarding houses.
- 5.3 Enterprising and careful financial management has enabled the school to secure funding for regular capital projects, such as the high quality auditorium and science building and to be able to plan securely for future development. Trustees support the school's realisation of key objectives, as expressed in the well-informed strategic development plan. The school's success is viewed as a starting point for further improvement and trustees provide well-focused challenge, for example in educational areas such as standards and the school's monitoring of A, G and T pupils. Arguments about possible future paths are weighed up thoughtfully and realistically. Trustees provide strong oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review welfare, staff recruitment, and health and safety arrangements regularly, including an annual review of safeguarding measures by all trustees, which is minuted in detail and includes discussion with designated staff.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.5 Strong leadership and management ensure that the school's appropriately ambitious aims are met with success in many areas, particularly in offering all pupils compassionate and consistent pastoral support and in preparing them to have the highest possible expectations of what they can achieve. Significant progress has been made since the previous inspection in enabling all pupils to fulfil their academic potential. The programme and strategies to cultivate in pupils a lifelong love of learning have developed their learning skills effectively, particularly so in the Upper School, and recent appointments made and measures taken provide a good foundation for further progress. These successes result in the pupils' excellent personal development and achievement.
- 5.6 The school evaluates the success of its educational and pastoral provision with care and a clear focus. Resultant planning and policy are strong, additionally informed by the views of parents, staff and pupils, and are implemented highly efficiently by senior leaders. Recent revisions to the senior leadership structure have provided a visible academic focus and effectively drawn lines of responsibility; similar clarity exists with regard to the roles of middle leaders, meeting the recommendation of the previous inspection report. Further implementation of policy by middle leaders is highly effective in boarding, the pastoral care of all pupils, finance, and in the areas of welfare, health and safety. Effective budgeting ensures that all areas of school life receive a high standard of human and material resources. Within the curriculum, implementation is good, but a few inconsistencies remain, such as in the provision of suitably challenging work for more able pupils in some areas and consistent support in subject teaching for those with SEND or EAL. The monitoring of policy implementation is generally robust but is not as systematic in oversight of the successful provision for pupils with A, G and T, as in most areas of the school. As a result, the achievements of these pupils and the provision made for them are not consistently evaluated.
- 5.7 The school appoints staff of high quality, both teaching and non-teaching. Schemes for biennial appraisal and linked professional development are clear and comprehensive. They are kept under continual review. External appraisal provides independent assessment for senior leaders. The recently instituted academic committees allow middle leaders to contribute to decision making and strategic academic planning more systematically. Induction of new staff is thorough and includes clear guidance on relationships between staff and pupils. The school makes effective use of staff expertise to lead seminars and workshops, and to provide training. Teaching staff also attend external training courses as appropriate.
- 5.8 Arrangements to train staff in their roles to ensure the pupils' welfare, and for health and safety, are implemented effectively, including the training of all staff in safeguarding procedures. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors (trustees) to work with children are secure. When staff begin work before a criminal records check has arrived, suitable checks against the barred list are always made, together with an assessment of risk, and supervision put in place. The recording of checks is methodical and comprehensive.

- 5.9 Administrative, catering, maintenance, medical and other non-teaching staff take considerable pride in the school's achievements and their contributions to its success, which are valued by pupils.
- 5.10 Parents express an extremely high level of satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children. Their responses to questionnaires showed that most are satisfied with the information given about their children's progress. In the secure section of the school's website parents can access reports, although information about internal report grades or rewards and sanctions is given to pupils directly. Reports give clear and useful information about pupils' work and progress. Specific suggestions for improvement are discussed by staff directly with pupils. The reports written by tutors and housemasters, and those from the leadership or other senior leaders, provide positive encouragement wherever possible.
- 5.11 The school has a clear and appropriate complaints procedure that is available on the website.
- 5.12 The school maintains good relationships with parents, in accordance with its aims. It has made an effort to seek parents' views, for example through a survey conducted in 2010. As a result of that survey, communications with parents are now co-ordinated more effectively. The first point of contact for parents who have particular concerns is the housemaster/housemistress, whom they can contact either by telephone or email and who will seek the advice of colleagues, when required, before reporting back to parents. Individual teachers can be contacted by email and they are required to respond within 24 hours. Evidence shows this to be the norm.
- 5.13 Parents have good opportunities to be actively involved with the work and progress of their children. They are invited to parent-teacher meetings once a year and to talks on a variety of subjects, ranging from child protection to academic matters and careers advice. They are welcome to attend sporting events and musical and theatrical performances. They are also invited to attend the annual speech day. The parent-teacher council, whose longer-term focus is currently under discussion, has raised issues such as the format of speech days, the role of the tutor and the house selection process. A few parents based overseas feel that they have limited opportunities to have contact with the school. Inspectors found that the school encourages staff to be available for internet-based conversations with parents who live abroad.
- 5.14 The parents' portal on the school website, which has been created since the previous inspection, provides parents effectively with additional information, for example on school policies. All required information is made available to parents of current or prospective pupils. In addition to the website, parents of prospective pupils gain an overview of the education offered through the school prospectus. The biannual school magazine, *The Oakhamian*, presents a comprehensive overview of all school activities, from trips abroad to musical, theatrical and sporting achievements. It also includes specific house news and features, such as an article about learning habits at Oakham.

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