



# Independent Schools Inspectorate Report



Queen Anne's  
— CAVERSHAM —

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The pupils' overall achievement is excellent. The school meets highly successfully its aim to enable pupils to go on to higher education, and develop their talents fully.

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Teaching encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and pupils do this freely. They respond well to encouragement to seek help when required and to the school's promotion of a 'no limits' approach to learning.

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The pastoral care provided for pupils throughout the school and arrangements to ensure their welfare, health and safety are excellent. The positive relationships evident in the community reflect the school's aim to enable pupils to develop strong and enduring relationships.

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The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent, ensuring that the school's aim to enable them to become confident, well-balanced individuals is met with resounding success.

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INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

QUEEN ANNE'S SCHOOL  
STANDARD INSPECTION

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## QUEEN ANNE'S SCHOOL

### STANDARD INSPECTION

Full Name of School	Queen Anne's School
DfE Number	870/6000
Registered Charity Number	312700
Address	Queen Anne's School 6 Henley Road Caversham Reading Berkshire RG4 6DX
Telephone Number	0118 918 7300
Fax Number	0118 918 7310
Email Address	office@qas.org.uk
Head	Mrs Julia Harrington
Chairman of Governors	Vice Admiral Peter Dunt CB
Age Range	11 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	357
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Numbers by Age	11-18 357
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 209
Number of Boarders	Total: 148 Full: 122 Flexi-boarders: 26
EYFS Gender	Girls
Inspection dates	01 Feb 2011 to 02 Feb 2011 02 Mar 2011 to 04 Mar 2011

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in April 2005.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government 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 is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain 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 and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in January 2008 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will 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.

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## **Inspection Evidence**

## I. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- I.1 Queen Anne's School is an independent day and boarding school for girls aged from eleven to eighteen years. There are currently 357 pupils, of whom 148 are boarders. The school is part of the Grey Coat Foundation, founded in 1698 in Westminster, whose charitable objective is the provision of education with a Christian ethos and which maintains oversight of the school's independent governing body. The school opened on the present site in 1894. It promotes a Christian ethos but welcomes pupils of all faiths or none.
- I.2 The school is based around Victorian buildings on a 35-acre site near Reading, with boarding accommodated in outlying buildings. Since the last inspection, in 2005, the school has opened a new science centre, art department and music technology suite, together with facilities for day pupils and for sixth-form private study. The chairman of governors was appointed in 2007 and the head in 2006.
- I.3 The school aims to ensure that all pupils will: benefit from an excellent, broad academic education which enables them to go on to higher education; be able to develop their creative, aesthetic, practical, physical, emotional and spiritual qualities and talents as fully as possible; be treated as individuals and helped to fulfil their potential and identify their strengths; benefit from belonging to a nurturing boarding community; and become confident, well-balanced individuals, good citizens and leaders, able to form strong and enduring relationships.
- I.4 The school is selective, but with an emphasis on the pupils' potential rather than achievement at the point of entry. The average ability of pupils on entry to the school is above the national average, with the range of abilities broadening marginally in Year 9 when a significant cohort of new pupils arrives. The pupils' abilities in the sixth form are slightly above the national average. Most pupils come from the Home Counties. A fifth of all pupils come from overseas, drawn from sixteen different countries. Pupils come mainly from professional households. There are 57 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), nearly all of whom receive additional support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 37 pupils who have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom nine receive specialist help with their learning.
- I.5 National Curriculum 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 (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
L4	Year 7
4	Year 8
U4	Year 9
L5	Year 10
U5	Year 11
L6	Year 12
U6	Year 13

## 2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

### 2. (a) Main findings

2.1 The overall achievement of pupils of all abilities and ages is excellent. They make exceptional progress to GCSE and good progress in the sixth form, enabled by good teaching and an excellent curriculum and programme of activities. The teaching in some subject areas is outstanding. Many pupils achieve exceptional standards in art and lacrosse. Creativity is a strength of much of their achievement. Pupils are good, often excellent learners, working very successfully together and frequently taking responsibility for their own learning, emboldened by the school's clear message of confidence in what they may achieve. Teaching is well planned, with a high regard for individual need, particularly, in nearly all teaching, for those with EAL, but effective marking and assessment are not always provided consistently.

2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent. They show high levels of spiritual development in response to the school's Christian ethos, and demonstrate strong self-esteem and a natural confidence, strengthened by creative and sporting successes. Pupils demonstrate a strong moral awareness and their social skills are highly developed. Their excellent cultural awareness is heightened by the integration of many cultures in the school and high level artistic performance. Their highly successful personal development is 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, although some perceived a lack of fairness in the operation of rewards and sanctions. Inspectors support the school's view that there is some justification in this, and its moves to revise procedures.

2.3 Excellent governance supports the school's aims and ethos strongly, providing a solid foundation for the educational standards of pupils and their personal development. Excellent oversight of their legal responsibilities is combined with rigorous financial oversight. Strategic planning is strong, supporting the excellent self-review which characterises management. The school has responded successfully to the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Leadership is excellent and management is highly effective overall. Policy making at all levels is clear and comprehensive. Academic middle management has been successfully developed but the implementation and monitoring of policies in some subjects is not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency. There are excellent links with parents, who expressed strong satisfaction with the education provided by the school in pre-inspection questionnaires. Some expressed concerns about provision for pupils with particular learning needs and provision of timely answers to parents' questions but inspectors found no evidence to support these views.

### 2. (b) Action points

#### (i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

#### (ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

I. Ensure that existing strong practice in teaching is applied consistently across all the subject areas, particularly in marking and assessment.

### 3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

#### 3. (a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The pupils' overall achievement is excellent. The school meets highly successfully its aim to enable pupils to go on to higher education, and develop their talents fully. Pupils of all abilities and ages, including those with LDD, achieve well in all subject areas in response to challenging, stimulating teaching and an enriching curriculum. In English, the humanities and creative subjects their work is consistently excellent. Pupils with EAL are actively involved in most lessons. Their achievements are consistent with others' when teaching recognises their needs, although sometimes progress is slowed when over-complex language is used. The achievement of more able pupils, and those with particular talents, is consistently good, strengthened by the school's provision.
- 3.2 Pupils develop good knowledge, skills and understanding. They are highly articulate and write persuasively and fluently. Some younger pupils' creative writing expresses their feelings highly effectively while others show mature appreciation of challenging poetry. The pupils' mathematical skills are well developed at all ability levels, often displaying the good reasoning skills common to all. In further mathematics, sixth-formers produced excellent reasoned proofs using an alternative method to the teacher's. Knowledge and understanding of science are consistently good.
- 3.3 Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) confidently to produce written work, manipulate images, and conduct research. Some develop excellent skills, using software for video editing. Pupils demonstrate highly imaginative creative and performing skills. The Year 7 choir demonstrated great enthusiasm, confidence and technical skill. Art work shows both exceptional creative imagination and technical finesse; these elements also characterise IGCSE music compositions.

- 3.4 Pupils perform successfully in instrumental and speech and drama examinations. A good number attain bronze and silver in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) scheme. Pupils regularly reach the finals of national mathematics and science competitions, winning a national chemistry competition in 2009. They win places in national musical ensembles and conservatoire junior schools and participate successfully in public speaking competitions. Teams achieve high levels of success nationally in lacrosse. Individuals have won gold in junior Olympic competitions and gained success in national swimming and equestrian competitions. Pupils in Year 11 mostly continue into the sixth form or proceed to maintained sixth-form colleges or other independent schools. All pupils enter higher education, some regularly achieving places to study science at universities with demanding entrance requirements, and at art and drama colleges.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at A level have been good in relation to the national average for girls in maintained schools and those in GCSE have been excellent. Both GCSE and A level results have been in line with the average for girls in maintained selective schools. At A level three-quarters of pupils achieved grades A\* to B and this proportion increased to four-fifths in 2010. These levels of attainment, supported by evidence from the pupils' work, indicate that they make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability at A level and that progress to GCSE is exceptional.

- 3.6 Pupils are good, often excellent learners. They frequently take responsibility for their own learning. They settle quickly and are usually focused, attentive and engaged throughout lessons, although this flags at times when teaching lacks imagination. Pupils listen well. They work co-operatively very successfully, particularly in drama rehearsals and sport. Files and workbooks are orderly and well presented.
- 3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)**
- 3.7 The school's excellent curriculum is highly successful in meeting the needs and interests of all pupils. It helps the school comfortably to fulfil its aims in terms of providing a broad academic education. Pupils, and their parents, express strong satisfaction with the variety of opportunities provided. There is a wide-ranging programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE), which includes public institutions and current affairs as well as health and environmental issues. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum provides a very good basis for further study in all areas of learning, especially in languages. Recent developments include the introduction of Mandarin and Latin for all Year 7 pupils. Pupils benefit from a good range of options in Years 10 to 11, where they study both IGCSE and GCSE courses, and from diverse A-level options which enable them to apply for a wide range of higher education courses. Breadth in the sixth-form curriculum is provided by an enrichment programme and an extended project, completed by all pupils, as well as modules of university courses.
- 3.8 The curriculum matches the differing needs of pupils very well, including those with LDD or EAL, through in-class support and additional tuition. The recommendation of the previous inspection report has been met. Pupils with EAL are particularly appreciative of the help they receive, such as a special programme when they join the school. As a result, they settle quickly into school life, and play a full part in it. More able pupils and those with particular talents benefit from well-targeted additional activities on Saturday mornings and participation in a range of competitions, including essay writing and public speaking.
- 3.9 Pupils receive very good careers advice and assistance. Careers fairs and work experience placements, in France as well in the UK, are combined with visits to higher education institutions. Pupils benefit from the school's links with several university departments. Visiting speakers provide talks and seminars about future options. Pupils appreciate the personal advice and guidance they are given, including help with constructing personal statements. The school has begun to encourage more pupils to apply to universities with rigorous entry requirements through additional support.
- 3.10 Both day and boarding pupils benefit from an excellent range of lunch-time, afterschool and Saturday activities, which include a wide variety of sports, as well as aesthetic activities. A very high proportion participates in school plays, sports teams and concerts. These enable those with particular talents to develop them fully, but also successfully encourage all pupils to appreciate the benefits of physical and creative activities. Some activities, such as the Year 7 choir, and physical education (PE) throughout the school, are compulsory. Participation in voluntary events is monitored carefully.

3.11 The school has an extremely wide range of links with the wider community. Many pupils serve the community through the D of E award scheme, visiting elderly people or helping those with disabilities. Pupils help to organise activities for children in local primary and preparatory schools, including sports events, and a very well attended French verse-speaking competition. Pupils learn about life in other countries through visits and exchanges, and by supporting a school in Indonesia. They enjoy participating in a great variety of charity fund-raising events, dressing up as their favourite literary characters to celebrate World Book Day. Pupils also take part in local arts festivals, performing in plays and concerts.

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

3.12 Teaching is good overall and promotes the pupils' progress effectively. The teaching in some subject areas is outstanding. Teaching is characterised by generally excellent relationships between teachers and pupils and the encouragement for them to be bold in their learning. Teaching supports well the aim of the school to enable pupils to develop their creative, aesthetic, practical, physical, emotional and spiritual qualities and talents as fully as possible. Excellent, focused teaching in creative areas such as art enables exceptional achievement.

3.13 Teaching encourages pupils to take responsibility for their own learning and pupils do this freely. They respond well to encouragement to seek help when required and to the school's promotion of a 'no limits' approach to learning. Teaching encourages pupils to have confidence that if staff believe they have potential to achieve something then it can be achieved, enabling pupils of all abilities to make good and often exceptional progress. Staff willingly spend much additional time with pupils, either on a formal or informal basis.

3.14 The individual needs of pupils are identified well in lesson planning and most teaching demonstrates a range of questioning and use of resources which meets these effectively, although occasionally the language capabilities of pupils with EAL are overlooked in selecting resources. Most teaching provides suitably challenging tasks for more able pupils, ensuring, for example, that where pupils finish tasks before others they are given more demanding extension tasks to complete, rather than more material at a similar level.

3.15 Strong methodology, time management and subject knowledge are common to teaching in all subject areas. Confident and detailed understanding of Virgil resulted in challenging interchanges with more able pupils in GCSE Latin, enabling them to make good progress. The use of group work is common and, in the most successful teaching, the organisation of groups to include pupils with differing needs allows pupils to help, and learn from, one another. This results in rapid progress, particularly for those pupils with EAL.

3.16 Resources are plentiful and of good quality, including a well-stocked and welcoming library. They are used well. Many rooms have projectors and screens and a number have interactive whiteboards which, allied to effective teaching, promote the pupils' good, sometimes excellent ICT skills. Recently completed facilities for science, art and music technology provide excellent resources for teaching and learning which are used well to support the pupils' learning.

- 3.17 Computer-based monitoring of the pupils' progress has been developed significantly since the previous inspection. Structured use is made of the results of standardised tests and internal examination results to determine individual subject targets for pupils. Progress is measured against these targets at the time of each report. A 'traffic lights' system is used to give pupils a clear indicator of the degree of progress they are making. This is used particularly effectively with younger pupils.
- 3.18 Most marking is regular and the best is excellent in quality, giving focused and informative comments and targets for improvement. However, this does not happen consistently across all subject areas. Where it is used, pupils appreciate the school's grade marking system and know exactly what it means. Marking is backed up in many subjects by effective assessment of the pupils' learning during lessons and by good oral feedback.

## 4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent, ensuring that the school's aim to enable them to become confident, well-balanced individuals is met with resounding success. A recent audit of opportunities across the curriculum for the pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally shows both deeply embedded awareness of this aspect in teaching, and resulting high levels of creativity in the pupils' responses.

4.2 The school's Christian ethos is fully represented in assemblies, the curriculum and many additional opportunities provided for pupils. They have opportunities to participate in pilgrimages to Westminster Abbey and in a conference for sixth formers to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible, the latter reinforced by chapel readings from this edition. Pupils respond sensitively to such opportunities; younger pupils wrote thoughtfully in response to a Remembrance service. A distinctive feature of their work in religious education (RE) is creative writing reflecting personality and moods. Pupils participate in assemblies in chapel, instigating and giving presentations on charitable causes, but their active involvement in developing services is more limited. They develop high self-esteem through their participation in sports and aesthetic activities, confidently attempting to acquire new skills in coaching sessions in lacrosse. Their self-confidence is also apparent in their easy articulation of their ideas, enhanced by recent development of opportunities for public speaking.

4.3 Pupils show strong moral understanding, actively participating in schemes to raise ecological awareness in the school. They write effectively on topics such as the impact of the First World War on relationships, and parallels between characters and situations in Greek drama and modern-day politicians. In discussion they show strong awareness of moral dimensions to historical issues, such as the treatment of women in Nazi Germany and Napoleon's legal system.

4.4 The pupils' excellent social development is characterised by high standards of behaviour, friendly attitudes to visitors and strong relationships within the school community. The school council provides good opportunities for pupils of all ages to take on responsibility and they take these seriously. The election of school officers offers pupils an additional method of influencing the development of the community. Older pupils assist younger, and house activities which include pupils of all ages strengthen this integration. Pupils develop a good understanding of aspects of citizenship, reflecting sensitively on topics such as slavery and taxation in their writing, and participating in mock parliamentary elections. Charitable work is a strong feature of school life, with regular fundraising activities, such as a pancake race, enlivening the school day in support of causes the pupils have selected.

4.5 Pupils develop excellent cultural awareness. The many nationalities represented in boarding are celebrated through chapel presentations and events to mark national holidays. This results in the effective integration of different ethnicities into the school community; pupils of all nationalities express their views clearly and confidently in group discussion. Sports tours, language visits and regular contact with visitors from abroad provide good opportunities to experience other cultures and result in a breadth of experience evident in many pupils' views and particularly strongly in their art. Joint concerts and art exhibitions with 'other schools linked to the Grey Coat Hospital Foundation and United Westminster Schools Foundation provide an excellent cultural focus and outlet for the pupils' significant creative talents. Pupils regularly perform in plays and musicals and appreciate opportunities to work with professional musicians and actors both in and out of school.

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

4.6 The pastoral care provided for pupils throughout the school and arrangements to ensure their welfare, health and safety are excellent. Pastoral arrangements are highly effective and support the pupils' personal development. The positive relationships evident in the community reflect the school's aim to enable pupils to develop strong and enduring relationships.

4.7 All pupils are members of a house. Each pupil has an academic tutor who provides individual support. The main focus for pastoral care is the housemistress. Pastoral staff work hard to integrate day pupils and boarders into the community. Regular house meetings, pastoral meetings and weekly briefings ensure effective communication. The involvement of many housemistresses in teaching means they are aware of the pupils' academic as well as personal development. Pupils say that they feel well supported throughout the school, and understand clearly who they can turn to if they have a problem. They appreciate the excellent range of help provided, which includes medical and counselling personnel as well as academic tutors, year heads and housemistresses. Pastoral staff ensure that each pupil's individual needs are met.

4.8 Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves are excellent. The school has a strong behaviour policy which includes clear expectations of all members of the school community, and systems of sanctions to deal with misbehaviour and rewards to promote good behaviour. The school is currently reviewing the operation of these systems in response to the concerns of some pupils regarding equity in their operation. The school has excellent measures in place to guard against bullying and these are reflected in the behaviour policy. Pupils are clear and confident that such issues occur rarely and are dealt with swiftly and effectively when they do. A new peer mentoring system, including training for pupils, has begun successfully amongst older pupils and timescales are in place to extend this to all pupils.

- 4.9 The school has robust arrangements to safeguard pupils, including boarders, and these are implemented well. Regular and effective training is given to all staff, including those with specific responsibilities, and procedures are understood clearly. Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are good and a strong policy is in place to ensure the pupils' health and safety on educational visits which takes excellent note of existing guidance. This is reflected well in assessments of risk. Good arrangements exist for pupils who are unwell and these are operated in conjunction with a comprehensive first aid policy. Appropriate planning for access for those with physical needs is made and arrangements for those with additional learning needs are good.
- 4.10 Food of excellent quality and quantity is provided and, through the PSHE programme, pupils are encouraged to follow a healthy lifestyle through participation in dance and sport. The pupils have benefited from the formation of a food committee in which they take an active role.
- 4.11 Registration of pupils is methodical and absence is followed up quickly. The requirement regarding the registration of sixth-form pupils in the previous inspection report has been met. The school maintains and stores an appropriate admission register.
- 4.(c) The quality of boarding education**
- 4.12 Boarding makes a good contribution to the pupils' education and their personal development. The recommendations made following the most recent statutory boarding inspection have been fully implemented. Relationships in boarding are strong, reflecting the school's aim to create a nurturing boarding community.
- 4.13 A very happy atmosphere pervades all the boarding houses. The school's intention to encourage independence and personal responsibility is reflected in arrangements for the boarders' care. This is particularly clear in the school's provision for Year 13 pupils, who are encouraged to cook for themselves and launder their own clothes in their boarding house, which they appreciate being able to do. Arrangements for weekly and flexi-boarding operate highly successfully. Sixth-form boarders often share a room with day pupils who may board occasionally, strengthening integration between these two groups. Overseas boarders are well integrated. The 'Language Week' provided for overseas boarders successfully provides activities, trips, and a chance to become used to the school and its campus before the school year begins. All boarders feel that they are given sensitive and well-focused care. Communication between boarding and academic staff is strong, ensuring that these two areas of the boarders' lives are considered as a whole.
- 4.14 Accommodation is good overall and the school has an ongoing plan for refurbishment and new building. The houses for younger pupils include good working areas in which a healthy work ethic is created during evening prep. All pupils have good access to electronic communication throughout the houses, ensuring easy communication with parents as well as friends. The library is available in the evenings as another resource. The food provided for boarders includes a good range of choice and generous portions.

4.15 The integration of boarders and day pupils is enhanced by the many excellent, shared activities that the extended school day allows, including cookery. The introduction of Saturday morning activities has been effective and offers a broad spectrum of sport and craft options. While the number of activities organized after eight o'clock in the evening is limited, pupils are happy to spend this time relaxing and organizing their own entertainment. The programme of weekend activities is excellent, with a variety of trips offered, and pupils are happy with the choices they are given, and with the option to decide for themselves how to use their time.

## 5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

### 5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance provides excellent support for the school's aims, demonstrating an acute awareness of its needs. The governing body includes a wide range of experience in education, business management and the law. It fully supports the school's Christian ethos, through representation from Westminster Abbey on the governing body, close and reciprocal links with the Grey Coat Foundation, and as an element of its strategic planning. A well-structured system of committees operates efficiently. Governors receive and exchange regular information about the school, including through regular meetings with senior managers and presentations by those responsible for the school's financial, estates and marketing development. These arrangements are supplemented by informal contact through attendance at school events. Governors give strong support to the school through rigorous financial oversight and thorough review of educational standards. They contribute significantly to strategic planning, supporting the school's aims for the future highly effectively. They include in this planning well-focused aims for the development of governance. These are supported by provision for governors to receive appropriate training.
- 5.2 Governors provide highly effective oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review safeguarding, staff recruitment, and health and safety arrangements diligently to support the pupils' personal development. The school buildings are maintained in good condition overall, including boarding accommodation, the development of which is provided for in a programme of continuous refurbishment. Recent developments make an excellent contribution to the school's provision. Imaginative planning for future building developments ensures that the school continually looks forward.

### 5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 Excellent leadership, and highly effective management overall, contribute much to the successful achievement of the school's aims. Incisive educational direction by senior managers, with a strong emphasis on the potential and needs of individual pupils, ensures their successful academic progress and excellent personal development.
- 5.4 There have been significant initiatives in many areas of the school's activities since the previous inspection, including the successful development of management structures to include the roles of assistant heads. These have been prompted by highly effective self-review. The ongoing nature of this self-review has ensured the successful implementation and monitoring of initiatives, although in some areas, such as the development of teaching, the school's vision is not yet fully realised.
- 5.5 Senior managers create strong policies and structures to address the school's needs. Regular meetings, effectively minuted, ensure that these are communicated to all staff. Policies are clear and comprehensive. Heads of academic departments give good guidance to staff in their subject areas, and many show initiative and imagination in their approaches to the development and monitoring of teaching and learning in response to the school's recent development of their role. In a few departments the monitoring of the implementation of policies, such as those for marking, is not sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency. Pastoral management operates highly effectively and sensitively, enabling the pupils to develop as confident, well balanced individuals in line with the school's aims.

- 5.6 Development planning is ambitious but well founded on a realistic appraisal of the school's financial position, the need to embed recent changes as well as develop new initiatives, and to ensure that existing resources and buildings are maintained alongside new developments. It is reviewed regularly and includes clearly identified criteria for success. It widely and appropriately delegates responsibility, reflecting departmental planning in line with the recommendation of the previous inspection. Careful financial planning ensures that pastoral and academic areas of school life receive good resources.
- 5.7 The school appoints well-qualified staff who fully support the school's ethos. A regular system of staff appraisal identifies appropriate areas for professional development. Arrangements to ensure the pupils' welfare, and for health and safety, are implemented highly effectively, including the training of all staff in safeguarding procedures. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and governors to work with children are robust, and the central register is maintained with great efficiency. The school's sense of community is enhanced by the effective work of secretarial, administrative and other non-teaching staff, who give good support to pupils.
- 5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians**
- 5.8 The quality of the school's links with parents is excellent. They are involved in many activities in the school, including social and cultural events such as concerts and sixth-form balls. There are weekly opportunities for parents to meet the head in an informal setting. Parents also augment the opportunities the school offers to pupils, for example by providing their expertise at the Careers Fair, as well as organising workplace visits, such as to a civil engineering firm, which fired some pupils' interest in devising solutions to design problems.
- 5.9 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show them to be highly satisfied with the education and care which the school provides for their children. They express particular satisfaction with regard to the approachability of staff, including senior managers. Inspection findings support these positive views. A few parents register concerns about the attention paid by the school to their children's individual needs, but inspectors found no evidence to support this.
- 5.10 The school has developed a wide range of methods for communicating with parents, including, for example, the informative and regularly updated website, as well as a weekly newsletter. It provides all necessary information to parents of current and prospective pupils, and keeps them well informed about the school's activities. There are extensive opportunities for two-way communication, both formal and informal.
- 5.11 The school has met the recommendation of the previous inspection report with regard to reporting to parents. Regular reports provide clear, good quality information for parents about their children's progress, although the shorter, 'progress' reports occasionally include comments which are not sufficiently specific to be helpful.
- 5.12 The school has well-developed and robust policies and procedures, including clear responsibilities and timescales, for responding to parents' concerns. These are recorded in detail, including follow-up actions. A few parents express reservations about the timeliness with which the school responds to concerns, but inspection findings do not support this view.
- What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.**

## 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 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

Mr Martin Bussey  
Reporting Inspector

Mrs Karen Davidson  
Deputy Head, GSA School

Mrs Ruth Mercer  
Head, GSA School

Mrs Karen Pickles  
Housemistress, HMC School



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