

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Westholme School

Full Name of the School	<b>Westholme School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>889/6000</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>526615</b>
Address	<b>Wilmar Lodge, Meins Road, Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 6QU.</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01254 506070</b>
Fax Number	<b>01254 506080</b>
Email Address	<b>principal@westholmeschool.com</b>
Principal	<b>Mrs Lillian Croston</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Kenneth Ainsworth</b>
Age Range	<b>2 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed 2 to 11; girls 11 to 18</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> November 2007</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

# CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION .....	1
	Characteristics of the School .....	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION .....	2
	The Educational Experience Provided .....	2
	Pupils' Learning and Achievements.....	4
	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils .....	5
	The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment).....	6
3.	THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS .....	8
	The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils.....	8
	The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community .....	9
4.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ....	10
	The Quality of Governance .....	10
	The Quality of Leadership and Management .....	10
5.	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....	12
	Overall Conclusions .....	12
	Next Steps.....	12
6.	SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE .....	13
	List of Inspectors .....	13

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Westholme School is located on the outskirts of Blackburn. It consists of five schools on three main sites. The Nursery provides for children aged 2 and 3, and the lower school at Billinge House for pupils aged 3 to 7. The boys' school at Beardwood House is for boys aged 7 to 11 and the middle school at Beardwood Bank is for girls aged 7 to 11 years. The upper school at Wilmar Lodge is for girls aged 11 to 18. Most of the pupils' parents have business or professional backgrounds. At the age of 11 most of the girls proceed to the upper school, and the boys go to selective local schools. At the age of 18 most girls go on to higher education. The school was founded in 1923. In 1940 the school became a 'recognised' preparatory school and in 1950 admitted its first senior pupils to Beardwood Bank. It then moved to a larger site to provide for pupils aged 11 to 18 and Beardwood Bank became the middle school. The upper school moved to its present sites in 1968 and a substantial building programme was initiated. Since the previous inspection the school has added the Nursery and the boys' school to the middle school site.
- 1.2 The school's mission statement is 'children come first'. The school aims to help all pupils realise to the full their own aptitudes, abilities and qualities. It seeks to create a caring community in which pupils are offered help and guidance. It endeavours to provide a curriculum which offers a balanced course and to encourage a positive attitude to study. It seeks to create an environment in which pupils are encouraged to be courteous and considerate to others. The school aims to enable pupils to play an active part in the local community and to involve the community, and especially the parents, in the life of the school.
- 1.3 The school is attended by 1082 pupils. The Nursery is attended by 19 boys and 14 girls; there are 55 boys and 112 girls in the lower school. The boys' school is attended by 73 boys and the middle school is attended by 156 girls. The upper school is attended by 653 girls of whom 148 are in the sixth form. Standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils covers a wide range; however, the majority of pupils are of above average ability. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results will be above the average for all maintained schools.
- 1.4 Approximately one in ten pupils have Asian backgrounds, none of whom require support with English as an additional language. In total, 10 pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) in the upper school and 44 in the lower, boys' and middle schools. One pupil in the upper school has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 As in the previous inspection, the school provides a high quality education in almost all respects. It achieves its aim to provide a balanced curriculum which includes numeracy, literacy and communication skills and the study of the physical, social and aesthetic environment. The school has corrected the imbalance identified in the previous inspection between English and the remainder of the curriculum in Years 1 and 2. The approach to teaching personal, social and health education (PSHE) in the upper school has some shortcomings.
- 2.2 The Nursery provides a well-balanced programme of activities suited to the age range. Children are appropriately enabled to progress to the National Curriculum when they are ready.
- 2.3 The curriculum provided for pupils in Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 meets their needs well. In Years 2 to 6 a suitable emphasis is placed on literacy and numeracy and a substantial range of other subjects provide a suitable curriculum. Specialist teaching in subjects such as music, physical education and swimming is beneficial. Grouping by ability in some middle and lower school mathematics classes is helpful to pupils.
- 2.4 Pupils in Years 7 to 9 have a suitable curriculum based on the National Curriculum. Pupils study either Spanish or French in Year 7 and Mandarin, and in Year 8, an additional modern foreign language. The ethics, philosophy and religion (EPR) course is a particularly strong feature of the curriculum. In Years 10 and 11 a substantial core of compulsory subjects is complemented by a wide range of options. The school offers considerable flexibility in accommodating pupils' choice of subjects. The choice of English language and drama, or English language and literature is particularly beneficial as it enables pupils to develop their literacy aptitudes and abilities appropriately. A high proportion of pupils take three separate sciences with the remainder studying core science and an additional science. A wide range of subjects is available for students in Years 12 and 13. AS critical thinking and the curriculum enrichment programme are particular strengths.
- 2.5 Throughout the school, aspects of PSHE have been identified across the curriculum. This approach is effective from Reception to Year 6. In the upper school the cross-curricular approach does not ensure systematic coverage of topics and issues such as anti-bullying receive insufficient attention. In Years 12 and 13 PSHE is included in the curriculum. Appropriately, the main focus is on careers education and guidance and study skills whilst also providing some sessions on specific other topics.
- 2.6 Curriculum planning is generally of a high quality and some is outstanding. Throughout the school, information and communication technology (ICT) lessons effectively develop pupils' skills in using specific software programmes such as word processing or spreadsheets. Some subjects use ICT appropriately but there is no overall plan showing where ICT is used in subjects. As a result, pupils' use of ICT in subjects is not always at an appropriate level.
- 2.7 The curriculum at each stage is greatly enhanced by a substantial programme of visits to relevant places of educational interest, talks from appropriate speakers and a wide variety of in-school workshops. Pupils benefit from these. Year 2 showed wide-ranging knowledge and understanding when recalling their visit to a Jewish museum and synagogue. Residential courses and overseas visits widen pupils' experience and promote independence. Focus days, such as those based on Roman and Victorian history, give pupils insight into specific topics.

- 2.8 The range of extra-curricular activities is outstanding throughout the school. Of particular note are the academic competitions in which pupils participate. They show considerable commitment and help younger pupils, for example in drama activities. Sport, music and drama are particularly well represented and many opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their interests in other areas such as chess and digital photography. Unusual events such as the ‘master chef’ competition and the ‘paper clip’ physics competition are particularly noteworthy. Most activities take place during lunchtimes as many pupils have long journeys after school. Pupils’ attendance is recorded in music and sport but not in other activities. Pupils’ participation is not included in reports to parents but is recorded by pupils in their section of the report.
- 2.9 Preparation for the next stage of education is thorough: Nursery children are gradually introduced to the lower school and Year 2 to the boys’ or middle school. Links between the middle school and the upper school are strong; taster days familiarise pupils with their next school. The boys’ school is strengthening its links with secondary schools and assists parents and pupils well with making choices and applications. In the upper school, the careers department prepares pupils well for GCSE and A-level options choices. Profiling meetings are provided for each pupil to discuss progress as they approach GCSE. In the sixth form, the development of interview technique is a particularly strong feature. Members of the local business and professional community provide simulated university interviews for students. Preparation for Oxford and Cambridge entrance is well organised. Work experience is available for Year 12 students and is largely organised by their parents. Overseas work experience placements are provided by an external agency. Community service is a valuable part of The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme. Pupils raise considerable funds for local and national charities and the choirs and orchestra perform for the local community.
- 2.10 The provision for pupils with LDD is effective. Pupils’ learning needs are assessed when they join the school. Most of the pupils identified as having LDD have mild learning difficulties usually associated with literacy. A list is compiled and circulated to the teachers. Individual education plans (IEPs) are drafted for those with more significant learning difficulties. Most of these pupils benefit from the close individual attention teachers provide and are enabled to progress. However in the upper school, teachers rarely plan their provision for these pupils in sufficient detail which results in some inconsistency in the quality of teaching provided for them.
- 2.11 Certain pupils have been identified as gifted and talented and their names have been placed on a list which has been circulated to all staff. Individual teachers are expected to provide additional challenge for them. However, such practice is not widespread and the pupils have not been made aware that they are on the list.
- 2.12 The school meets all of the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

## **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.13 As in the previous inspection, pupils generally demonstrate high standards of learning and achievement. The school meets its aims to help each pupil to achieve well and to encourage a positive attitude to study.
- 2.14 Pupils with LDD progress satisfactorily and achieve in line with their abilities. They achieve well in English which is where most of their difficulties lie. Gifted and talented pupils usually achieve in line with their capabilities; many gain GCSE A\* and high A-level grades.
- 2.15 Pupils' attainment at ages 7 and 11 in national tests is very good for their abilities. Results are far above the national average for maintained primary schools. Their attainment at age 14 in national tests is good in relation to ability. Results are well above the national average for maintained secondary schools. Attainment at GCSE is good in relation to pupils' abilities. It is well above the national average for maintained secondary schools. Pupils' attainment at A-level is in line with their abilities. It is above the national average for maintained secondary schools.
- 2.16 Pupils achieve outstandingly in individual and group activities; this is better than at the time of the previous inspection. The school achieves considerable sporting success at local and regional levels, particularly in netball, football, swimming and cross-country. Pupils demonstrate a wealth of talent in music and drama and achieve impressive results in speech, music and drama graded examinations. Commendable standards are achieved in academic competitions, for example in mathematics, biology, chemistry and physics. A substantial number of awards, including gold and silver, are achieved in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- 2.17 Pupils' literacy skills are well developed, and they use number and ICT confidently when they have the opportunity in other subjects. Pupils rapidly learn to read in the lower school and many have reading ages far in advance of their chronological age. They become increasingly competent in reading aloud and some become confident public speakers. Pupils read widely for pleasure and to acquire information. The school libraries are well used. Most pupils are keen to answer questions or participate in discussion or debate. Older pupils express themselves concisely and use ambitious vocabulary. From an early age, pupils write well: grammar, punctuation and spelling are of a high standard and handwriting usually well formed. Handwriting lessons in the middle school are beneficial in this respect. As pupils progress, they write for an increasingly wide range of purposes, their work is well structured and presentation is of a high standard. Pupils listen attentively and readily absorb information aurally.
- 2.18 Pupils take notes confidently by the time they reach the later years in the upper school and rarely need to be prompted to do so. Their files are well organised, diagrams and written work are generally neat and they use their notes well for revision.
- 2.19 Pupils are keen to learn. They are amenable and rapidly enter into the spirit of lessons with enthusiasm. They are keen to join in and are responsive. Pupils work well together, taking turns and helping each other if they can. They pay attention to their teachers and concentrate well. They persevere, even when the challenge is high. Most enjoy their work and are highly industrious. They organise themselves well in practical work. Pupils follow guidance, particularly in relation to health and safety instructions, carefully.

## **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.20 As in the previous inspection, pupils show high degrees of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school achieves its aims in creating a caring community and encouraging positive attitudes.
- 2.21 Pupils demonstrate a well-developed knowledge of world faiths; assemblies and visits to places of worship enable them to gain direct experience. Links with Blackburn Cathedral and the local parish church, expeditions to a Jewish museum, visits from a Buddhist monk and celebration of Eid and Divali are beneficial. Assemblies provide opportunities for pupils to celebrate religious festivals. The ‘journey’ course in Year 9 provides an imaginative opportunity for spiritual exploration. Pupils are well aware of beauty and harmony through their studies in art and music. They express awe and wonder when the opportunity arises. In a chemistry lesson, Year 10 pupils expressed their amazement that salt could apparently be added to a gas jar full of water without affecting the water level. Assemblies in the lower, middle and boys’ schools are often of a high standard. For example, a class assembly about Advent enabled pupils to participate and explore issues such as giving, being kind and polite, and discussing how tidying-up makes the world a better place for us all. The upper school assemblies seen during the inspection did not explore such issues in depth. The many opportunities provided for pupils to take responsibility and to take initiative build pupils’ self-confidence. The school takes every opportunity to celebrate pupils’ achievement and this contributes to their self-esteem.
- 2.22 Pupils respond well to the school’s provision for moral development. Moral issues feature strongly in subjects such as drama, EPR and English. Circle time provides useful opportunities for younger pupils to explore issues as they arise, for example, Year 4 discussed behaviour at lunchtime and Year 3 discussed kindness to animals. Assemblies, at this level, are thought-provoking and enable pupils to consider what constitutes a ‘good friend’ and how we should ‘care for the world’. Pupils consider substantial issues of right and wrong as part of the EPR course where complex issues such as the ethics of organ transplantation are discussed in Year 10. Days devoted to issues such as fair trade and poverty enable pupils to become more aware of topics such as sustainability and ethical commerce. Outside speakers and the study of topics such as the United Nations or criminality are thought-provoking. Pupils’ involvement with external organisations, such as the local Youth Parliament and a justice awareness charity, and in the lower school, their work with a project in Africa, contribute strongly to their awareness of moral issues and self-esteem.
- 2.23 Pupils show well-developed social skills. They make a strong contribution to the school community. The prefect system is effective throughout the school as it provides many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. Others gain experience as form captains, house and games captains and librarians. In the upper school, sixth form students organise social events for younger pupils and lead some clubs and activities. Charity prefects lead their fundraising campaigns well. Residential visits for Years 4 to 6 support pupils’ social development well.
- 2.24 Throughout the school pupils show a high degree of cultural awareness. The arts are strong, with many pupils learning musical instruments, participating in school orchestras, choirs or ensembles, taking part in school drama productions or creating inspiring art and design work, the display of which is highly impressive throughout the school. Cultural days, for example celebrating the Chinese New Year and events such as an African drumming workshop, heighten pupils’ awareness of cultures from around the world. Many subjects include the

study of other cultures as part of the curriculum. School visits to European countries and further afield, for example to Peru, do much to widen pupils' cultural horizons.

- 2.25 The school meets all of the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.26 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now more consistent and generally of a high standard. The school achieves its aims to help each pupil to realise to the full her or his own aptitudes, abilities and qualities and to encourage a positive attitude to study through teaching.
- 2.27 Small classes and individual attention ensure that all pupils make suitable progress. Teachers know their pupils well and give close attention to individuals. Though upper school teachers' planning rarely identifies specific activities for pupils with LDD, teachers usually provide more help for those experiencing difficulty or more challenge for the more capable pupils. Teachers usually pitch questions at suitable levels for the ability of individual pupils. Setting by ability, where provided, enables a more focused approach. Where pupils are required to provide different responses, such as in the arts, they usually work at an appropriate level.
- 2.28 Most teaching encourages effort and enthusiastic teaching captures pupils' attention. In general, lessons are carefully planned. In most cases lessons provide continuity and planning ensures that pupils reflect on prior learning, usually at the beginning of the lesson. Such planning details a range of activities. In the middle and lower schools, shared planning for both classes in each year ensures parity across the year.
- 2.29 Teachers use questioning well, particularly open ended questions designed to provoke thought, often at a deep level. Such questions are often probing and invite pupils to make hypotheses, for example concerning the probability of rain based on the study of cloud types in Year 3. Such questioning develops pupils' ability to think for themselves, to form opinions and to validate them with factual support. The best lessons provide a range of well-organised activities, such as paired work, discussion, debate or practical activities. Pupils respond best when opportunities for participation, such as role-play, are provided. Most lessons progress at a swift pace. When they do not, pupils remain engaged but make slower progress. Where time can be found for a plenary session, pupils are enabled to review their learning and prepare for the next session.
- 2.30 Teachers know their subjects and age groups well and are fully familiar with examination syllabus requirements. They make objectives explicit and explain clearly and relate content well to pupils' experience and previous knowledge.
- 2.31 Sufficient suitable resources are generally deployed. Well-chosen examples illustrate learning well. Interactive whiteboards are used well in the lower, middle and boys' schools but have not yet been fully exploited in the upper school. Worksheets prepared by teachers are generally used well.
- 2.32 Teachers provide useful spoken feedback to pupils. Marking is generally positive and informative but in the upper school it is quite inconsistent in quality; the best is detailed and constructive but some gives insufficient guidance to pupils. This indicates the need for closer monitoring of marking by the senior management team. Assessment for learning is being introduced and is proving to be beneficial, as it enables pupils to review their progress in relation to objectives and to set achievable targets for themselves. Substantial pupil

performance data has been collected and analysed to identify overall progress. The school monitors pupils' performance in relation to whole-school aims. An annual review for pupils with LDD enables their performance to be monitored and new IEP targets to be set. The lower, middle and boys' schools keep thorough records of progress made during the year.

- 2.33 Teachers have high expectations of behaviour, which are usually met. Pupils are amenable; only the mildest rebuke is needed to regain their attention. Teachers are relaxed with pupils and relationships are positive. Many teachers use humour well, often to convey difficult concepts. For example, Year 10 pupils were asked "why are fish happy", to explain how the fish avoid being caught by appearing to be somewhere else, explaining the refraction of light in substances of different densities, water and air.
- 2.34 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils**

- 3.1 Pastoral care is of a generally high standard. However, the school is aware that it needs to strengthen its approach to prevent bullying. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are assured. The school has maintained the high standards since the previous inspection. It achieves its aim to create a caring community in which pupils are offered help and guidance.
- 3.2 At each stage the school provides effective support and guidance for its pupils. The class teachers in Reception to Year 6 know their pupils well and are the first point of contact for pupils if they have concerns. Pupils expressed confidence in their class teachers in this respect during the inspection. In the upper school form tutors show concern for their tutees and pupils generally trust teachers with pastoral issues. Staff meetings provide a useful forum for teachers to discuss pupils who are giving cause for concern. This ensures all staff adopt a consistent approach in relation to individuals. Additional support is provided, such as mentors for some Year 11 pupils if necessary, and profiling meetings are provided for each pupil to discuss progress.
- 3.3 Relationships are positive and a high degree of mutual respect widely evident. A well-graduated approach to rewards and sanctions is effective. Classroom rules are displayed in many rooms. Pupils are keen to receive certificates, merits and house points. Suitable records are kept of more serious sanctions. The anti-bullying policy provides limited guidance to teachers particularly in relation to intervention techniques, and the cross-curricular approach to PSHE places insufficient emphasis on anti-bullying measures. Some pupils in the upper school expressed concern about the incidence of bullying. Inspection findings are that in view of pupils' concern, the anti-bullying policy and the PSHE provision are inadequate. Admissions and attendance records meet statutory obligations.
- 3.4 Child protection arrangements are generally sound. The governors review the policy annually and a governor has particular responsibility for the oversight of child protection. The child protection officer for the five schools is the principal; one other member of staff is being trained. This is adequate because they meet regularly to discuss any concerns or issues. The school adopts safe recruitment procedures and the backgrounds of all staff have been checked with the appropriate authorities. Suitable training has been attended by the child protection officer and the staff.
- 3.5 Health and safety arrangements are effective. Fire risk assessments and drills have been undertaken and properly recorded. Though there has been a disability access survey, the school is aware that it has yet to prepare a disability access plan. The upper and lower schools have medical rooms and suitably qualified staff provide high quality medical care at the upper school. Trained first-aiders are located in each of the other schools but medical facilities are inadequate as they do not have a designated medical area which offers privacy or which provides a wash basin. Throughout the school, pupils' medical backgrounds are known and staff are properly informed. Medicines are properly stored and correctly administered. Teachers emphasise health and safety issues where relevant. School lunches are of a high standard; they are nutritious and appealing, and portions are generous. Pupils appreciate the meals.

- 3.6 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) ensure the anti-bullying policy is more substantial and includes intervention techniques [Regulation 3.(2)(a)].

- 3.7 The school does not yet meet its obligations under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act because it has not drawn up a disability access plan within the context of the three year requirement [Other legislation].

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.8 The school has a strong partnership with its parents and has improved its links with the community since the previous inspection, which are now more substantial and continue to be beneficial. The school achieves its aims to encourage pupils to play an active part in the local community.
- 3.9 Parents are satisfied with the quality of education provided. There was a positive response to the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire. Inspection findings concur with parents' views in most respects. Parents feel the school enables their children to make progress and that an appropriate range of subjects is offered. They are happy with the help and guidance provided, and with standards of behaviour. They feel that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and views and that the extra-curricular activities provided are substantial. There was some concern about provision for pupils with LDD which concurs with inspection findings.
- 3.10 Many opportunities are provided for parents to be involved. The parent/teacher association raises additional funds for the school. Parents attend 'meet the teacher' evenings, which are partly social occasions. They also attend sufficient suitably scheduled meetings to discuss their children's progress or future schooling. They vigorously support school productions. Some help with making costumes or assist with activities and visits.
- 3.11 High quality information is provided about the school. The website, newsletters, magazines and annual reviews are informative and well presented. An annual calendar and the parents' handbooks are helpful to parents. Reports to parents are detailed and usually constructive in tone. The school deals with parents' concerns properly. Administrative support is of a high quality in the upper, middle, Nursery and lower school but it is inadequate in the boys' school and some boys' parents are concerned they cannot always contact the school when they need to.
- 3.12 Many beneficial links exist with the community. Pupils participate in civic events; choirs and bands go to senior citizens' homes; local functions are held in the cathedral and other venues. Members of the local business community assist with mock university interviews for sixth form students and with the Young Enterprise scheme. The school's many involvements with local, national and international charities have developed well-established links. The old girls' association is strong. A wide range of visitors to the school enhances the curriculum. School facilities are used by a well-known football club's ladies team, the police, the county's chess association and an established international pony club. Links exist with a local maintained school for GCSE French and older students help pupils in local maintained primary schools with reading.
- 3.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 As in the previous inspection, the school benefits from effective governance. Governance enables the school to achieve its aims.
- 4.2 One governing body oversees the five schools. This is adequate because they are properly constituted and well organised. Sufficient suitably scheduled meetings of sub-committees take place and full governing body meetings ensure that issues are thoroughly presented and discussed. Minutes of meetings show that pertinent issues are discussed and well-informed decisions are taken. A good range of valuable expertise exists in the governing body that includes legal, education, business, marketing and building professionals. Effective oversight of the main issues is assured. The principal and the headteachers of each school provide informative annual reports. Governor recruitment arrangements are sound but training attended, particularly in relation to monitoring the quality of education provided, has been less thorough.
- 4.3 Strategic planning is strong. The governors keep a keen eye on demographic and other pertinent issues. Establishing a Nursery and a boys' school were both undertaken with such issues firmly in mind. Prudent financial planning has enabled the school to undertake these ambitious projects confidently. Governors participate in the annual conference for school development planning. Considerable investment has been made in educational resources, particularly ICT and interactive whiteboards.
- 4.4 Relationships between governors and the school are strong. The chairman of governors works closely with the principal and at the end of the school year all headteachers attend a governors' meeting to present their annual reports. Governors are supportive of functions. A governor effectively oversees child protection arrangements.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.5 The school benefits from strong leadership and management; this is similar to the previous inspection. The school has heeded the recommendation from the previous inspection to improve accommodation in the upper school. It is now of a consistently high standard.
- 4.6 Morale is high and a positive ethos permeates all the sections of the school. This is directly attributable to the leadership at each level. The whole-school senior management team consists of the principal and the headteachers of each school. They work well together and are a dynamic and purposeful group. The senior management team of the upper school consists of the principal and two deputies. This is too small for the number of tasks they each have and as a result several new initiatives such as 'assessment for learning' and tracking pupils' progress are proceeding slowly. Furthermore, limited time is available in which to monitor the quality of education provided, and this leads to some inconsistency in areas such as marking. However, monitoring is strong in the Nursery and the lower, boys' and middle schools, and provision is consistent. The leadership and management of the pastoral aspects of each part of school are straightforward and, with the exception of PSHE, they are efficient; form tutors and year heads work well together in the upper school and class teachers liaise effectively with headteachers in the other parts of the school.
- 4.7 The school development planning process is well organised and appropriately involves the governing body. The annual conference enables staff to review progress and agree plans for

- the coming year. This ensures departmental development plans relate well to whole-school priorities. Sufficient policies and procedures are in place, which are concise and generally followed. Policies are reviewed and amended when necessary.
- 4.8 Sufficient suitably experienced teaching staff are deployed. Adult-child ratios are in line with recommended levels for pupils under the age of five. Safe recruitment procedures are in place. With the exception of science, limited technical support is provided in practical subjects in the upper school. Classroom assistants are effectively deployed in the Nursery and lower school.
- 4.9 Appraisal has been introduced since the previous inspection and is generally beneficial. Its main focus is on professional development for individual teachers. It involves initial review, discussion with a line manager and target setting. Lesson observation is part of the programme. Overall, it has been positive in improving the quality of teaching and in ensuring that teachers keep up to date with their subjects. It has not identified the need for more in-service training to support teachers in their provision for pupils with LDD, in teaching PSHE and citizenship across the curriculum or, in the upper school, using the interactive whiteboards. Few teachers have attended anti-bullying in-service training. Induction arrangements for teachers new to the school are sound; teachers are assigned a 'buddy' and a programme of meetings ensures they soon become familiar with school policies and procedures. Newly qualified teachers have a mentor who provides support and guidance. They have sufficient time for preparation and marking.
- 4.10 Resources are sufficient and generally used well. Accommodation and facilities are of a high quality. Pupils in Years 2 to 6 use the upper school's swimming pool, and lower, middle and boys' schools' productions are staged in the theatre. The boys' school uses the upper school sports facilities and has recently acquired an additional football pitch which is being upgraded. The upper and lower schools have medical rooms, but the middle and boys' schools do not.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4].
- 4.12 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) provide appropriate facilities in the boys' school and the middle school for pupils who are ill [Regulation 5.(1)].
- 4.13 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school achieves its objectives; it puts pupils first and helps them all to achieve their potential. It provides a high quality of education at each stage, but the approach to PSHE in the upper school does not ensure a systematic coverage of all topics. The extra-curricular programme is outstanding throughout the school. The provision for pupils with LDD is not well developed but is generally effective. Pupils demonstrate high levels of learning and achievement and of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Generally high quality teaching is evident at each stage. Pastoral care is of a high standard. However, the school is aware that it needs to develop its approach to the prevention of bullying further. Pupils' welfare, health and safety are assured. The school has a strong partnership with its parents and substantial links with the community. Parents are satisfied with the quality of education provided. The school benefits from effective governance and strong leadership and management.
- 5.2 The school has maintained the high standards since the previous inspection and has improved the quality of teaching, the provision for extra-curricular activities and its links with the community. Accommodation is now of a higher and more consistent quality in the upper school. In response to the previous Ofsted inspection, the Nursery has improved attendance registration arrangements.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standards 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils) and 5 (premises and accommodation). It does not yet meet its obligation under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to improve provision further, it is suggested that the school should:
1. adopt a more systematic approach to teaching PSHE in the upper school ensuring adequate coverage of anti-bullying measures;
  2. strengthen support for pupils with LDD by providing more training for teachers in planning and meeting these pupils' learning needs.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) ensure the anti-bullying policy is more substantial and includes intervention techniques [Regulation 3.(2)(a)];
  - (2) provide appropriate facilities in the boys' school and the middle school for pupils who are ill [Regulation 5.(1)].
- 5.6 In order to fulfil its duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, the school must produce the required disability access plan within the context of the three year requirement [Other legislation].

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 26th to 29th November 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the medical room. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr John King	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sheila Hayward	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Miss Linda Clark	Head, SHMIS school
Mr John Doulton	Former Principal, HMC school
Mrs Patricia Guy	Co-ordinator, GSA school
Revd Stephen Golding	Chaplain, HMC/GSA school
Mrs Joanna Perks	Director, IAPS school
Mrs Kathleen Silvester	Former Head of Prep School, ISA school
Dr Linda Skelton	Deputy Head, ISA school
Mr Alistair Watson	Teacher, HMC school
Mrs Lesley Wood	Former Head of Sixth Form, GSA school