



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

STAMFORD HIGH SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

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Stamford High School

Stamford Junior School and Stamford School were inspected at the same time and separate reports published.

Full Name of School	Stamford High School		
DfE Number	925/6028		
Registered Charity Number	527618		
Address	Stamford High School St Martin's Stamford Lincolnshire PE9 2LL		
Telephone Number	01780 484200		
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Email Address	headshs@ses.lincs.sch.uk		
Head	Mrs Yvonne Powell		
Principal	Mr Stephen Roberts		
Chairman of Governors	Mr Malcolm Desforges		
Age Range	11 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	639		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	582	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 3
Number of Boarders	Total:	57	
	Full:	39	Weekly: 18
Inspection dates	20 Sep 2011 to 21 Sep 2011		
	17 Oct 2011 to 19 Oct 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 October 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 December 2009 and can be found at 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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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Stamford High School is a day and boarding school for girls between the ages of eleven and eighteen. It was founded in 1877 as part of the legacy left to the Stamford Endowed Schools by the Brown's Hospital Trust. Situated close to the centre of Stamford, the school occupies its original site, comprising a number of Georgian houses that have been modernised and extended. It is one of the three constituent schools of the Stamford Endowed Schools foundation, the other schools in the foundation being Stamford School (for boys aged eleven to eighteen) and Stamford Junior School (for boys and girls aged three to eleven). The sixth forms of Stamford High School and Stamford School are combined for teaching purposes: pupils are taught jointly by staff of both schools, using teaching rooms in each school. The school has a Christian foundation but welcomes pupils from a wide variety of backgrounds irrespective of their personal beliefs.
- 1.2 Since the previous inspection, there has been a change of principal, and the number of scholarships and bursaries made available to pupils has increased. As well as the principal, a board of governors has oversight of the three schools. The foundation has recently become an incorporated charity.
- 1.3 The three schools of the foundation share common aims: to create a happy, exciting and supportive environment in which learning is the priority and where young people are inspired to achieve their best in all aspects of school life; to develop pupils' intellectual curiosity; for pupils to have a caring and respectful attitude towards each member of the schools' diverse and welcoming community; for pupils to perceive no obstacle in life as insurmountable and to exceed expectations in whatever they do.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 639 pupils on roll, of whom 194 were in the sixth form and 57 were boarders. Pupils come from a broad economic mix. Day pupils come from the local area in and around Stamford, and boarders predominantly from the UK, with some from overseas, primarily Europe and the Far East. Pupils joining from Stamford Junior School have automatic entry into the school.
- 1.5 The ability profile of the school is above the national average, with a significant proportion of pupils having far above average ability, and few pupils having below average ability. The school has identified 58 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 34 receive specialist learning support. Of the 23 pupils identified as having English as an additional language (EAL), 16 receive additional support. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The overall achievement of the pupils is excellent, both academically and in other activities. The school fully meets its aims. Pupils make good progress in their learning as a result of the teaching, which is good, with several excellent features. Their achievement is also well supported by the excellent curricular and extra-curricular provision, which offers them an extensive range of subjects and activities. The pupils' achievements are further enhanced by their excellent attitudes to their studies, the high level skills they develop to support their learning and their excellent behaviour.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent and is supported by highly effective arrangements to promote their pastoral care, welfare, health and safety. The pupils develop well spiritually; their self-confidence and self-esteem are excellent. They have a well-developed awareness of moral, social and cultural matters. They have a clear understanding of the difference between right and wrong, and they demonstrate a high level of respect and support for each other and for all members of the school community. Pupils make a valuable contribution to the work of the school and to the wider community, in both leadership and service roles. Pupils' experience of boarding is excellent.
- 2.3 The governors are highly committed to the school and take seriously their responsibility for checking regulatory matters. Leadership and management at both foundation level and within the school are excellent. The school meets all regulatory requirements and has responded to all the recommendations of the previous inspection report. The school's links with parents are excellent. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school, in particular with the range of extra-curricular activities provided, with the provision for boarding and with the timely responses they receive to their questions, all of which were confirmed by the inspection findings. A small number of parents responding to the questionnaire feel that the school does not encourage them to be involved in its life and work. The inspection found that parents have many and varied opportunities to be involved.

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) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the pace and level of challenge in the best lessons are extended to all lessons.
 2. Enhance learning by making more effective use of the information and communication technology (ICT) provision already in place.

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 overall quality of the pupils' achievement, and of their learning, attitudes and skills, is excellent. The pupils are well educated and the school successfully meets its aim of encouraging them to achieve the best of which they are capable in the classroom and beyond. The pupils display excellent literacy skills. They read confidently. They are articulate and assured communicators. They listen carefully, and express their ideas and opinions clearly and logically. In their written work and in lessons, they show excellent levels of knowledge and understanding and that they are capable of thinking independently and of reasoning at a sophisticated level. The presentation and organisation of their written work are consistently good and often excellent. Numeracy skills are used well by the pupils across the curriculum and their skills in using ICT are of a high order. Their creativity and aesthetic work are of an excellent standard, and they achieve high levels of success in art, music and drama, and in creative writing. Overall, pupils of all abilities make good progress, including those who are gifted and talented, although in a very small number of cases the most able are not fully challenged. Due to the support they receive, pupils with SEND make good progress, particularly in reading and writing, achieving levels of attainment at least in line with their peers. Similarly, well-focused support helps those pupils with EAL to make excellent progress in their understanding and use of English, and they achieve good results in external examinations.
- 3.2 The pupils gain high levels of success in sport at local, regional and national levels, notably in badminton, three-day eventing and trampolining, and as finalists in a football tournament for independent girls' schools. They achieve high grades in music and drama; in the last three years, 286 pupils had success in external music board examinations and 553 pupils in London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art examinations. During the same period, 88 pupils achieve gold level in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and 102 achieved silver level. Individual pupils have had a number of notable successes, including scholarships to specialist performance schools and reaching the national finals of the engineering Arkwright Scholarship. Increasing numbers of pupils achieve promotion to the rank of non-commissioned officer (NCO) in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). Almost all pupils go on to higher education, with the great majority achieving a place at their first-choice university or college.
- 3.3 The following analysis uses the national data for 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. Over that period, the school's results at GCSE have been far above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools, showing an improvement between 2008 and 2010. During the same period, results at A level were above the national average for maintained schools and above the national average for maintained selective schools in 2008 and 2010, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools in 2009. Results at A level in 2011 showed a further improvement on those in 2010. Results at GCSE and A level are good in relation to the pupils' abilities, indicating that their progress in Years 7 to 11 and through the sixth form is above the average for pupils of similar abilities, as confirmed by standardised measures of progress and by evidence seen during the inspection.

- 3.4 The pupils are fully engaged in lessons, where they work hard and show high levels of concentration. They enjoy their work and are highly motivated. They take the lead in their own education and become successful independent learners. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is excellent, and they work well on their own and co-operatively with each other.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.5 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent and fully supports the school's aim to ensure that pupils gain a broad base of knowledge, skills and understanding. The curriculum is suited to all ages, abilities and needs, and covers all the required subjects, including a wide-ranging and well-planned programme for personal and social development and a comprehensive programme of careers education. Provision for pupils who have EAL and for pupils with SEND is strong, ensuring that they can access the curriculum at all stages. The provision for pupils who are gifted and talented is successfully facilitated, primarily through subject departments. For example, in the fast-track French group, pupils sit their GCSE at the end of Year 10, enabling them to study Spanish in Year 11. Gifted and talented pupils are also well provided for in the excellent range of extra-curricular activities, many of which operate at a high level of challenge. In addition, such pupils have excellent opportunities to develop highly effective skills in researching, presenting and arguing their position on a chosen topic in sessions they run themselves.
- 3.6 The pupils are offered a wide choice of GCSE option subjects. The number of GCSE subjects a pupil follows has recently been reduced by one option subject to encourage greater depth of study. The International GCSE is currently being introduced in some subjects to increase challenge and stretch the most able. The range of subjects available at A level is similarly wide ranging. As part of an evolving whole-school initiative, the school's programme, designed to produce confident, happy, imaginative and creative thinkers, in Years 7, 10 and 11, encourages pupils to develop independent study skills. Subject-based independent study periods have been introduced to the Year 13 curriculum, which provide the pupils with the opportunity to explore each of their A-level subjects beyond the set syllabus.
- 3.7 The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. In sport, this includes regular netball, hockey, badminton, football, tennis and swimming fixtures, supplemented by sports tours, the most recent of which was to Barbados. The school has been designated premier status by a national badminton body. Pupils from the two foundation senior schools form an orchestra, a wind band and a choral society, to name a few. Drama productions are staged throughout the year, a recent example being *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Over 80 different pursuits, as diverse as bridge, sailing, golf and bee keeping, are offered in the activities programme during the week and on Saturday mornings. Older pupils also have the opportunity to participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the CCF.
- 3.8 Curriculum-based trips, such as the history department's visit to battlefields in Belgium, the English department's extensive programme of theatre trips, and language exchanges to France, Spain, Germany and Russia, enhance learning in the classroom. The many sixth-form trips include a visit to Washington by pupils studying politics and attendance at the American Association for the Advancement of Science conference for those studying science. Links with the community are

plentiful and varied. Members of the community visit the school to give talks on a number of topics, and pupils studying for a community sports leadership award help in local junior schools. Pupils represent the school on a local youth panel and help out at a nearby soup kitchen. The school's connection with a local care trust is a particular strength. The recent trip to Ladakh in India offered pupils the chance to be involved in charity work further afield.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.9 The quality of teaching is good; some aspects are excellent. This supports the school's aim for learning to be a priority, to inspire young people to achieve their best and to develop their intellectual curiosity. The best lessons are excellent and feature lively, fast-paced and enthusiastic teaching, with searching, open-ended questioning amongst an excellent variety of teaching techniques. In these lessons, pupils are encouraged to think independently and creatively, to develop logical and sustained arguments and to use skills in analysis, and resources are employed highly effectively to enhance the pupils' learning, including the excellent use of ICT. Less successful lessons lack pace, make less use of the ICT facilities and give limited opportunity for the pupils' learning to be extended and challenged. This results in pupils of all abilities being less engaged with their learning and consequently making less progress than in the more successful lessons.
- 3.10 Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge and have a good understanding of their pupils' abilities and needs. In response to the previous inspection report, teaching now makes better use of data about the pupils' performance when planning work. In most lessons, this allows pupils to acquire new knowledge, to increase their understanding, to develop their skills and thus to make good progress. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive excellent support and are fully integrated into lessons, as are pupils with SEND and those with EAL. In a small proportion of lessons, extension work for the more able pupils was limited, thus hindering their progress. Classroom management is of a high standard and behaviour in lessons is excellent. In most lessons, a good variety of activities and tasks keeps pupils focused on their learning. Staff make good use of the wide range of resources available, including ICT. However, though most classrooms have interactive whiteboards, they are not always used effectively to support learning.
- 3.11 A detailed framework is in place to assess the pupils' work regularly and thoroughly. Marking and annotation of written work are excellent. Marking is detailed and gives a clear indication of what the pupils have done well and what they need to do to improve further. Different subject departments use their own strategies to ensure that pupils know how well they are achieving, to encourage them to make progress and to develop intellectual curiosity. Individual feedback is given to pupils to assist them in the setting of clear targets to improve their work still further. In discussion, pupils were appreciative of the high quality of marking and of the feedback they receive, and they report that teachers give generously of their time out of lessons if they need extra help or advice.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' personal development is excellent and fully in line with the school's aim for them to have a caring and respectful attitude towards each member of its diverse and welcoming community.
- 4.2 Spiritual development is excellent. The pupils have a strong sense of self, and their self-confidence and self-esteem develop well during their time in school, as does their understanding of their place in the wider community. They appreciate the non-material aspects of life and understand and respect their own faiths and the faiths of others, all of which are encouraged through their work in philosophy and ethics, assemblies and the all-pervading school ethos of care and respect for others. Many pupils choose to attend on a regular basis services in the school chapel or the services of their own faiths, and the school's Christian Union is well supported.
- 4.3 The moral development of the pupils is excellent and they show a keen awareness of ethical issues, which they explore with thoughtful confidence. They have a highly developed sense of right and wrong, as demonstrated by their excellent behaviour around school. Their moral development is well supported by the excellent programme for personal and social development, which encourages discussion about a range of potentially sensitive topics. The pupils understand well moral dilemmas in the wider world, as evidenced by their consciousness of 'green' issues. Pupils from Year 10 attended a seminar organised by the Fairtrade Foundation on the production of chocolate, and then represented the school at a locally held chocolate week, linking up online with cocoa producers in Africa.
- 4.4 The pupils demonstrate outstanding social development. Their relationships with each other and with staff are exemplary. From the very start of their time in the school, the pupils learn to mix well with their peers and with pupils from other year groups; a particularly strong feature is the ready way in which older pupils support younger ones. The pupils eagerly take on positions of responsibility, from the democratically elected form captains, to prefects in Year 13, to roles such as NCO in the CCF, to name a few. The school council is ably chaired by members of Year 13. Guided by a comprehensive handbook, they conduct the meetings in a way that ensures the full participation of members from all year groups, who clearly value the opportunity to discuss issues such as school uniform and the revised length of lesson time. The pupils are keenly aware of the needs of others, both locally and further afield. They participate enthusiastically in fund-raising events in support of the three charities chosen annually by the school council. They are equally enthusiastic in offering service to the wider community, for example through the service element of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and by helping at local charitable events. The pupils gain an insight into and an understanding of public institutions and services in England, in part through the school's personal and social development programme.
- 4.5 Cultural awareness is well developed. The pupils are keen to learn about their own and other cultures, and they take full advantage of the opportunities offered to develop their awareness through their work in music, art and drama, their study of literature, and the school's extensive programme of visits to the theatre, concerts and art galleries. They also gain an excellent awareness of other cultures through their participation in the extensive range of trips the school provides to places as

diverse as India, Russia, Madagascar and Norway, and from friendships within the boarding community.

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

- 4.6 The quality of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent and fully supports the school's aim to create a supportive environment. The staff work closely together to provide excellent support and guidance for all pupils, confirmed by all the pupils interviewed. They say they feel safe at school and are confident that staff would willingly help them, should this be necessary. The chaplain, who is well known to the pupils, is also available to offer assistance. Pupils in Year 10 mentor Year 7 pupils, providing excellent support as new girls settle into the school. Pupils in Year 7 are most appreciative of the help they receive, and older pupils say that those friendships often continue beyond Year 7. The house system is strong and provides another way of encouraging friendships across the year groups. The pupils particularly like the fact that, once a week, they eat lunch with their houses rather than with their year group. This further enhances their relationships with pupils across the school.
- 4.7 Relationships amongst the pupils and between the pupils and staff are exemplary and show the highest level of mutual respect and care for one another. Pupils in Year 7 cite the friendliness of the school as one of the best aspects of their first half-term. In lessons and around the school, the pupils are clearly at ease with staff and are confident in asking questions or giving their opinion. They are confident that their views are listened to. A comprehensive anti-bullying policy is in place. The pupils say that bullying rarely occurs but, if it should, they are confident that the school would take speedy and effective action to resolve the situation. The school has high expectations of behaviour at all times and clear sanctions are in place should any unacceptable behaviour occur. Behaviour is excellent; the pupils are friendly and courteous around the school and respectful of others. A number of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that teachers do not monitor their workload and do not always treat them equally. Discussions with pupils during the inspection did not support this view.
- 4.8 Arrangements to promote the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent. Procedures for safeguarding children are clear and implemented highly effectively. The required pre-appointment checks on new staff are carried out and recorded correctly. All staff receive appropriate training in child protection at specified intervals. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are highly effective and cover all aspects of the life of the school for pupils, staff and visitors, including suitable provision for pupils who are ill or injured. All fire prevention measures are in order, and fire practices are held regularly and recorded correctly. Meals are of an excellent standard and offer a good range of choices, including healthy options, and are freshly cooked on the premises. The pupils are strongly encouraged to develop healthy eating habits and there are plenty of opportunities for exercise, both within the physical education curriculum and in other activities. Appropriate and detailed risk assessments are in place for events in and out of school. The admission and attendance registers are accurately completed and kept for the required period. The school has in place a suitable three-year plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.9 The quality of the pupils' boarding experience is excellent and plays a valuable part in their overall development. It successfully fulfils the school's aim to foster individuality, confidence and ambition within a caring and friendly environment. Relationships within the two boarding houses are excellent, both amongst the boarders themselves and between the boarders and house staff. The boarders are well cared for and well supported by the house staff who liaise effectively with teaching and medical staff so that they have a detailed knowledge of each pupil's overall well-being. New boarders are welcomed and say that they quickly become part of the house. Boarders from overseas are well cared for with a programme in place to support them as they settle into the school.
- 4.10 Across the age groups, boarders talk extremely positively of the benefits of boarding. All of the boarders who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that they enjoy boarding and that it helps them to develop as a person. Boarders say that they appreciate the advantages in their work habits that the structure and routine of boarding give them. Boarders in Years 12 and 13 say that the increased level of personal responsibility and freedom they are given prepares them very well for life beyond school. The boarders have access to an excellent range of extra-curricular activities after school throughout the week, and on Saturday mornings, including sports, music and general interest groups. An appropriate programme of activities for the younger boarders is provided on Saturday afternoons, reflecting their interests. On Sundays, the boarders attend chapel, although alternative arrangements can be made for those of other faiths to attend their own places of worship. Following that they join other boarders from the foundation for lunch, after which they join in a programme of trips and other activities organised for them.
- 4.11 The accommodation in the boarding houses is excellent and well resourced, and reflects the school's care and investment in the boarding provision. Boarders in Years 12 and 13 say that they are particularly appreciative of having facilities similar to those they expect to have at university, and see this as excellent preparation for the next stage of their education. Catering for the boarders is excellent, with a good range of choices, including healthy options. Suitable provision is made for boarders who are unwell. The previous inspection of boarding, undertaken by Ofsted, made no recommendations for further improvements to the provision.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The governors are highly committed to the ongoing success and future development of the three schools and to supporting them in achieving the foundation's aims. They work closely with the principal and the heads of the schools, providing excellent oversight of the work of the schools and discharging with due care their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. The governors show an excellent understanding of the needs and work of the schools and they provide highly effective support for their future direction and development. The four governance committees have clear remits and provide an efficient and effective focus for both review of current practice and for future and strategic thinking. The governors bring a wide range of experience and expertise, and undertake regular and appropriate training for the various aspects of their role. An exemplary programme of induction for all new governors is in place, as are excellent guidelines for governors undertaking individual roles and serving on committees.
- 5.2 The governors visit the school frequently to attend events and to meet socially with staff. The staff-liaison governor meets regularly with the staff, providing a readily accessible and effective conduit between staff and the governors. The link governor for the school provides effective and much valued support for the head and ensures that the school has its own representation on the governing body.
- 5.3 The governors take extremely seriously their responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety. This includes a thorough annual audit of the school's procedures and practice in the safeguarding of children, with all the necessary checks being carefully made and recorded, and all the requisite policies in place, implemented and regularly reviewed.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent and successfully ensures that the aims of the school are fully met. The executive team, comprising the principal, the heads of the three foundation schools and the bursar, works closely with the governors. Together, they are highly effective in providing the over-arching strategic direction for the three schools, in evaluating needs, in setting priorities and ensuring that they are achieved, and in securing high quality staff who are well deployed. The executive team is well supported by Stamford High School's senior leadership team (SLT). The SLT is highly effective in overseeing and driving forward the work of the school, as demonstrated by the pupils' excellent levels of achievement and personal development. Roles within the SLT have recently been redefined. This has further strengthened the leadership and management of the different areas of the school's work, in particular the provision for pupils who are gifted and talented and those with SEND, and much improved communication amongst staff responsible for academic and pastoral matters.
- 5.5 Since the previous inspection, the role of heads of year has been further developed so that it now successfully encompasses oversight of both the pupils' personal and academic well-being, and offers an excellent level of support to them. In addition, heads of subject have made more effective use of the data available to track pupils' achievements and progress in order to far better support the teaching and learning

and to identify individual pupils' needs. Liaison between the staff responsible for pupils' academic work and those responsible for their welfare has been significantly strengthened, resulting in a more accurate picture of each pupil's overall well-being. Support staff are well deployed, are highly committed to the overall success of the school and make a valuable contribution to the pupils' experience. The staff are well supported in their work by the recently revised appraisal system, which is tied into the school's development plan and which allows them the opportunity to reflect on their work and to set targets. Communication within the school and with the other foundation schools is excellent, in particular in the close collaboration that ensures the success of the joint teaching in Years 12 and 13.

- 5.6 The premises and accommodation are kept in good order. All staff receive the required training for their roles in safeguarding children and in welfare, health and safety. The school has in place detailed and well-considered policies and procedures that are effectively implemented, including a robust procedure for appointing new staff.
- 5.7 The school has responded to all the recommendations of the previous inspection report. The school day has been restructured to provide more realistic travelling time for pupils in Years 12 and 13 and for staff moving between the two sites, thereby aiding punctuality to lessons. In addition, more systematic use is made of the data available to track pupils' progress, and more effective programmes are in place to support those pupils with SEND and those who are gifted and talented.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.8 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent and fully support the school's aims. Parents of current and prospective pupils are issued with all the requisite information, and this, along with other material, is easily accessible on the school's website. This includes contact details, lesson timetables and attendance records. In addition, the parents are contacted by email about fixtures, productions and any other relevant dates, and each term they receive a calendar of events. The school takes every opportunity to share details of the successes of pupils through high quality publications such as *SHS Highlights* and through termly newsletters, as well as a link to the termly magazine; all of these also keep parents well informed of events and extra-curricular activities. Detailed information booklets are provided for all sections of the school and subject-based information is available through the parents' link on the school's website. The parents receive regular interim and full reports that are detailed and show a good knowledge of the pupils' progress and what they need to do to improve. These are supplemented by regular parents' evenings which provide a twice-yearly opportunity for parents to meet with staff to discuss their children's progress. Reports can also be accessed through the parents' section of the school's website.
- 5.9 Responses to the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire show a high level of satisfaction with the work of the school, in particular with the range of extra-curricular activities offered, the provision for boarding and the timely response parents receive to their questions, all of which were confirmed by inspection findings. A number of parents responding to the questionnaire feel that they are not encouraged to be involved in the school's life and work. The inspection found that there are ample opportunities available for parents to be involved. Parents are welcomed into school for matches, concerts, drama productions and social events. Topical matters, such as e-safety, drugs and coping with examinations, are addressed with information evenings for parents that tie in with presentations given during the school day to

pupils. Parents are invited to join the parents' association, which gives valuable support to the school.

5.10 The school handles parents' concerns with due care. Any complaints are dealt with appropriately and in line with its suitable procedure.

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 chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Jean Marsland	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Lynda Billinge	Deputy Head, GSA school
Mr Ian Edwards	Assistant Head, GSA school
Mrs Christina Foord	Head, GSA school
Mrs Harriet Granville	Deputy Head, GSA school
Mrs Anne Howarth	Former Senior Teacher, GSA school