



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

HIGHFIELD SCHOOL

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Highfield School

The pre-preparatory school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School	Highfield School		
DfE Number	938/6252		
Address	Highfield School Highfield Lane Liphook Hampshire GU30 7LQ		
Telephone Number	01428 728000		
Fax Number	01428 728001		
Email Address	office@highfieldschool.org.uk		
Head	Mr Phillip Evitt		
Proprietor	Mr William Mills		
Age Range	8 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	270		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (144 boys; 126 girls)		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	162	
Number of Boarders	Total:	108	
	Full:	108	Weekly: 0
Inspection Dates	24 to 27 Jun 2014		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in January 2011.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, with boarding staff and with the proprietor and one other director, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, a chapel service and an assembly. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils, and took meals with pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation, school policies and handbooks made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Timothy Holgate

Mrs Lynn Duncan

Mrs Chris Lewsey

Mr Stephen McManus

Mr Stephen Bailey

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Senior Tutor, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Highfield School was founded as a boys' boarding school in Southampton in 1892. It was acquired by the grandfather of the present owner and chairman in 1907, and moved to its current purpose-built premises in a 175-acre site near Liphook in Hampshire. The school accepted day pupils and became co-educational in 1978. In 1992, the school opened Brookham, a pre-preparatory school for children aged from three to seven years, on the same site. Although run as separate schools, both Highfield and Brookham are now owned by the same company, whose chairman is the owner and proprietor. Directors of the company act as the schools' governors. The current head has been in post since 1999.
- 1.2 The school seeks to provide a first-rate day and boarding education, supported by a strong Christian ethos, in a community where every child is treated equally, respected, happy, fulfilled and secure. It aims to achieve this by developing a lively, enquiring mind, providing a creative, innovative and vibrant curriculum and encouraging all children to work to the best of their ability and become independent learners. The school values application, perseverance, and initiative. It aspires to promote moral values, to develop positive attitudes towards and concern for the environment, to foster close relationships between the school and home, and to prepare children for the challenges and demands of their life in the wider world.
- 1.3 The school provides education for 270 pupils (144 boys and 126 girls) between the ages of 8 and 13 years, of whom 108 are boarders. No pupil has a statement of special educational need, but the school has identified 75 with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 65 receive formal support for their learning. Fifteen pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), mainly from Spain and Russia, but only four require support for their English. Pupils are nearly all from white British backgrounds, and are drawn from professional and business families in the towns and villages of east Hampshire and west Sussex. The majority of pupils live within 30 minutes drive time from the school. Pupils take a range of standardised tests during their time in the school, which indicate that the ability profile is above the national average, with a fairly broad spread of abilities represented.
- 1.4 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 school is highly successful in realising its aspiration to provide a stimulating and challenging educational experience through which pupils can be well prepared for their move to senior school. Pupils' achievements, both in class and in their activities, are excellent, and they demonstrate outstanding attitudes to learning. They develop strong levels of subject knowledge and understanding for their age, and standards of literacy and numeracy are high. Pupils make good, and for many, excellent, progress over time. Those with SEND or EAL, and the more able, make particularly effective progress. Success in sport, music and drama is especially notable. The high level of success by pupils is enhanced by the breadth and balance of the appropriately demanding curriculum, and by the excellent teaching. Teachers generate a genuine love of learning in their pupils, and provide them with great encouragement and strong support, although the quality of marking is inconsistent across the school.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal qualities are a major strength of the school and they demonstrate high levels of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils show a strong awareness of others, enhanced by their community service work, and show well-developed self-confidence and a pronounced sense of responsibility. They are well supported by the excellent pastoral care, support and guidance provided by the staff. Relationships are outstanding and measures to promote good behaviour are effective. Arrangements to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety are, in most respects, excellent. The excellent boarding experience enables boarders to take full advantage of living in school, and they are happy, fulfilled and well supported.
- 2.3 Very effective oversight of the school's life and work by the proprietor and board of directors ensures that its sense of direction and purpose are clear and strongly promoted. Good leadership and management, much of which is excellent, enable the school to achieve strong outcomes for pupils. Staff are appropriately trained in safeguarding and in other welfare and academic areas, but records of training are not kept efficiently enough. The school has made good progress in addressing the previous inspection recommendation by improving the monitoring of teaching and learning. Insufficient progress has been made in ensuring a fully rigorous staff recruitment process, as some required checks were not all completed promptly in the recent past. Links with parents are excellent.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that checks of medical fitness are carried out and satisfactory references are received before staff start work in the school [Part 3, paragraphs 7 and 8, under Welfare, health and safety, Part 4, paragraph 19.(3), under Suitability of staff and other adults and, for the same reason, National Minimum Standards 11 and 14.1, under Child protection and Staff recruitment and checks on other adults].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve the systems for tracking and monitoring the progress of all staff recruitment checks, in order to ensure a fully rigorous process.
2. Ensure that records of all staff training are kept in such a manner as to permit easy identification of current and future training needs.
3. Monitor marking and assessment practices more closely to ensure greater consistency within and across subjects and enable all pupils to identify the next steps in their learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Throughout the school, the quality of pupils' achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 They are very well educated in accordance with the school's aims and, by the time they leave, are well prepared for entry to senior schools. Pupils show high levels of subject knowledge and understanding and are well equipped to succeed in a wide range of learning situations. For example, pupils in Year 5 have an extensive knowledge and understanding of the structure and function of flowering plants, and Year 7 pupils are familiar with the concept of rhetorical questions. Their speaking and listening skills are especially high. They read fluently and with expression, and show pronounced skills in writing factually and creatively. Numeracy skills are strong and their grasp of basic arithmetical computation and familiarity with multiplication tables are excellent. Pupils show competence in information and communication technology (ICT), particularly in Years 6 and 7, where they use tablet computers with skill and imagination, for example in researching and presenting new information in different ways. Year 6 geographers created animation sequences simulating the process of coastal erosion. Older and more able pupils show good analytical skills and reasoning ability. They make pertinent predictions and hypotheses and evaluate the significance of new information presented to them. Such pupils demonstrate pronounced independent thinking when given opportunities to do so.
- 3.3 Pupils exhibit considerable creative ability and enjoy conspicuous success in art, music and drama, both in school and in external competitions and examinations. Achievement in extra-curricular activities is excellent, from the high level of success at local and regional level in individual and team sports, and in the many new skills learnt through the Keys to Life programme, such as lifesaving and resuscitation skills, and lighting campfires in the woods under supervision.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average but, on the evidence available from their performance in lessons and interviews, it is judged to be excellent. This is supported by their response to the demands of an ambitious curriculum and by their success in gaining places at academically-selective senior schools, as well as a proven track record in gaining awards and scholarships. Pupils' progress over the longer term is good and, for many, it is excellent, particularly those with SEND or EAL. They demonstrate significant gains in knowledge and skill, shown by their performance in standardised tests and the improvement in their written work. The most able pupils generally make a high rate of progress and enjoy the challenges posed in the classroom and activities programme, and the variety of specialist clubs and extension groups. Such pupils are adept at linking and illustrating theoretical concepts with examples and previously acquired information.
- 3.5 Pupils' attitudes and commitment to lessons and activities are outstanding. Almost without exception, they relish academic work and a love of learning. They show commitment and effort, enjoy explaining and justifying their thinking, and understand the importance of giving their best. They work particularly well when co-operating and collaborating in teams and small groups. They are confident and perceptive when asking and answering questions.

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

- 3.6 The curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 The curriculum is broad and diverse and is complemented by a rich and varied extra-curricular programme. It is suitable for all ages, abilities and needs and it fully supports the aims of the school. Spanish is a recent addition to Latin and French, while the three separate science subjects from Year 7 provide an extremely thorough coverage of physics, chemistry and biology. The curriculum is very well-planned and caters for the needs of all pupils. The 'creative curriculum' in Years 4 and 5 provides an imaginative and challenging topic-based cross-curricular approach to learning for these younger pupils, with a suitably strong focus on literacy and numeracy. Older pupils are very well prepared for the rigours of Common Entrance (CE) and scholarship examinations. Since the previous inspection, pupils in Years 6 and 7 use tablet computers extensively in lessons, and these have added a valuable and stimulating dimension to their learning.
- 3.8 The school is very good at diagnosing the needs of pupils with SEND and EAL, providing one-to-one specialist support as required. Individual education plans (IEPs) are drawn up, regularly reviewed and progress is efficiently monitored. These IEPs provide detailed guidance to teaching staff as to how best to cater for these pupils in class. The provision for the more able pupils is excellent. Such pupils are challenged and extended through special scholarship classes, a wide range of extension clubs, a programme of external speakers and opportunities to experience more demanding specialist coaching and teaching.
- 3.9 An excellent range of extra-curricular activities complements and extends the diverse interests and talents of the pupils. Provision for sport is strong and particularly diverse, with a blend of traditional team sports, as well as opportunities to try new ones, such as golf, triathlon and squash. The school is currently undertaking a thorough review of the sports programme and its administration. Opportunities for music making are plentiful, and many pupils receive instrumental tuition and perform in ensembles and musical groups. The school has a long tradition of enabling all pupils to benefit from drama, and each year group produces a performance every year, most of which involve the entire year group. The after-school activities programme also includes leisure clubs such as computer programming, film club and judo.
- 3.10 A particularly notable feature of the education provided is the Keys to Life programme, which mirrors the components of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme for senior school pupils. It develops self-reliance and self-confidence and enables pupils to acquire a range of new skills, such as debating, nature study and cookery. A key element is the Highreach programme which provides significant opportunities for pupils to work with the elderly and with children with mild disabilities and learning difficulties. The curriculum is also broadened by many visits, residential trips and field work, both in the UK and abroad.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.12 Teaching is highly effective in meeting the school's aim to develop lively, enquiring minds. Lessons are taught with enthusiasm and a desire to share the enjoyment of a topic with pupils. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed a system to monitor the quality of teaching. Although not yet fully established, it already provides a valuable system of peer review and feedback, which enables teachers to share learning strategies and techniques.
- 3.13 Planning for lessons is thorough and effective, with a wide range of learning activities that enable lessons to move at an appropriate pace, and provision of appropriate challenge for pupils of all abilities. Lessons nearly always include a stimulating variety of tasks that encourage the pupils' interest, such as competitive challenge starter activities, quizzes and presentations by pupils. Pupils are given many opportunities to work individually, in pairs or in small groups, which allows them to learn in different ways and adds to their enjoyment. In a small number of less successful lessons, the short lesson length was not well used, the lesson was heavily dominated by the teacher, and inappropriate planning restricted the opportunity for pupils to think creatively and work unaided. In such lessons, pupils' independent learning was limited and their progress slowed.
- 3.14 Lessons usually contain lively debate and interaction between pupils and teachers, which further develop their ability to question and reflect on the lesson content. Teachers use a wide range of excellent resources to support the activities on offer. The use of tablet computers in Years 6 and 7 has increased the range of learning opportunities given to pupils, which they greatly enjoy. The pupils feel using the tablets helps them to learn and makes the lessons more interesting.
- 3.15 Teaching demonstrates excellent subject knowledge, for example, in a music lesson where the pupils were introduced to the military 'call and response' and then had to create their own. In many lessons well-chosen and probing open-ended questioning encouraged independent thinking, especially for the most able. This is not always consistently developed across the school. Praise and reassurance are used to good effect and this develops pupils' self-confidence. The relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent, and pupils are highly complimentary about the support and guidance they receive from their teachers.
- 3.16 The teaching provision for pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent. Teachers are aware of the needs of their pupils, following helpful information provided by specialist staff which gives guidance on how the pupil should be supported in class. Teachers' lesson plans highlight the needs of individual pupils and they prepare useful resources such as flash cards to promote their learning.
- 3.17 Assessment of pupils' progress and the marking of their work are good. Systems for the collection and analysis of assessment data are being enhanced and made more consistent across the school. Where the data to analyse pupils' progress is being used fully, the information is used to guide future lesson planning. Frequently, pupils are able to assess how well they think they have understood the topic, which helps the teacher to plan for the next lesson. In the best examples of marking, excellent feedback is given to pupils through positive praise and guidance for further improvement, leading to rapid progress. However, such practice is not consistent across subjects and year groups.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school successfully achieves its aim of creating a community where every child is treated equally, respected, happy, fulfilled and secure. Pupils have an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave the school.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The school has a strong Christian ethos, enabling pupils to benefit from chapel services and assemblies in which they are able to reflect quietly on the themes presented. Pupils welcome the celebration and acknowledgement of the success of others. The pupils appreciate and make good use of the uplifting school environment, the spacious school grounds and the chapel. Pupils are confident in expressing their feelings and have empathy for others, particularly those less fortunate than themselves. For many, their work with the elderly and the handicapped is a deeply personal and fulfilling experience. They develop a strong understanding of those with different backgrounds and circumstances. Pupils are emotionally mature for their age.
- 4.4 The moral awareness of the pupils is very strong. They understand the school rules and their purpose, and respect them. Their awareness of moral responsibility for themselves, for others, and the wider world, is well developed through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) and Highreach programmes. Pupils have a good understanding of moral issues and a keen and innate sense of right and wrong. They understand the need for the high standards of behaviour expected of them. Pupils in Year 5 had a very worthwhile and thought-provoking debate on dealing with bullying. Pupils appear genuinely pleased at the success of others. Older pupils are aware of some of the moral dilemmas facing mankind such as climate change and nuclear energy. Pupils are aware of, and support enthusiastically, the school's charities.
- 4.5 Social development is outstanding, and pupils of all ages have excellent social skills, becoming confident in dealing with those they have not met before and enjoying their company. Pupils show a great sense of responsibility and self-discipline, and co-operate well with each other. They develop great initiative and self-reliance through the activities programme, and they grow in self-confidence through the many opportunities to perform and speak in public. Year 8 pupils take great pride in their leadership roles as monitors. They are good ambassadors for the school, particularly evident when they show parents around the school. Through the PSHE programme, pupils gain an understanding of what it means to be a good UK citizen. Pupils take an obvious pride in their school, and they show care and consideration for others. They enjoy the social interaction at meal times.
- 4.6 The pupils' cultural awareness is good. They appreciate and understand their own Western cultural tradition, shown in the quality of their art and music and, for the older pupils, in the study of English literature. Regular visits to France give pupils a wide-ranging understanding of French culture. This was further emphasised by their detailed projects displayed around the school. The younger pupils' cross-curricular topic 'Around the World in 80 Ways' enhances their understanding of a variety of cultures, including Africa, where the topic 'Under the Africa Sun' resulted in a vibrant performance. Pupils gain some awareness of other religions and their cultural

differences in religious studies lessons, but their understanding of the multi-cultural nature of contemporary UK society is underdeveloped.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for the pastoral care of pupils is excellent.
- 4.8 Outstanding support and guidance for pupils ensure that they feel safe and happy at school, and contribute to fulfilling the school's aims. The school's pastoral care system is based around the form tutors who know their pupils very well. The form tutor is the first point of contact for pastoral and academic issues. The daily staff briefing, efficient record keeping, and the weekly pastoral committee meetings ensure that all staff are aware of any pastoral issues that arise. An independent school counsellor is available to support the pastoral care system. Form tutors meet pupils each morning, although this pastoral time is not always well planned.
- 4.9 Relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves are excellent. Boarders and day pupils are very well integrated. During interviews pupils indicated that they are confident to approach staff if they have a problem.
- 4.10 Through the PSHE programme, pupils gain a secure understanding of what is required for a healthy lifestyle, including the importance of nutrition and healthy eating choices. They have excellent opportunities for regular exercise during playtimes, physical education lessons, swimming, games and extra-curricular sporting activities.
- 4.11 The school has a clear anti-bullying policy that is understood by pupils. In the questionnaire, a very small minority of pupils and parents said that the school has not always dealt with bullying satisfactorily. Interviews and scrutiny of the school's detailed records showed that different strategies for resolving conflict are effectively implemented, and pupils spoken to all confirmed that staff continue to deal appropriately with anti-social behaviour between pupils. Pupils report that rewards and contributing to the success of their houses motivate them to work hard and behave well. The school uses a proportionate and low-key system of sanctions to respond to any misbehaviour. A few questionnaire responses by pupils indicated that rewards and sanctions are not always fairly administered. Inspection evidence, including discussions with staff and pupils and a study of the school's records, could not support this view. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.12 A small minority of pupils in their questionnaire responses indicated that they did not feel that their opinions were listened to. Inspection evidence does not support this view. The school council is run by pupils and minutes are published. Pupils state that it works well and cited a number of improvements that had resulted from its work. Suggestion boxes around school are used well.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of the arrangements to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.14 Many aspects are excellent and support the fulfilment of the school's aims. However, weaknesses exist in achieving full and efficient implementation of safeguarding arrangements.
- 4.15 The school's safeguarding policy has full regard to the latest official guidance. Staff readily pass on any concerns about pupils' well-being and welfare, and appropriate action is taken by senior staff. Good relationships have been forged with local child protection officers. Appropriate training in safeguarding has been provided to staff both through external agencies and as part of the induction process for new staff. However, attendance at such training is not systematically or efficiently recorded. Some staff have been allowed to start work at the school before completion of the required medical fitness checks and, in a few cases, before receipt of satisfactory references.
- 4.16 Measures to minimise risks from fire and other hazards are comprehensive, efficient and carefully documented. Electrical equipment is regularly tested. Suitable risk assessments are carried out for the school's premises and working practices, and for activities and off-site trips, and necessary action monitored.
- 4.17 Arrangements to provide medical and healthcare for pupils are excellent, and day pupils benefit from the provision of the health centre for boarders, staffed by qualified nurses.
- 4.18 The school has appropriate provision for registering pupils' attendance and registers are maintained correctly and stored as required. The school keeps an admission register that meets requirements.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.20 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. They are polite, well informed and engaging and, through the boarding experience, become well-balanced, self-assured and self-reliant pupils. Boarders are extremely happy, are supportive of each other and aware of the needs of those around them. Boarders are quick to acknowledge the work and support of not only the boarding staff in general, but also that of the medical staff and matrons. Boarders report that they feel safe within their boarding houses and the staff operate strict routines and vigilance for the control of visitors entering the house. Boarders use suggestion boxes and the house council to express their views. They are happy that the staff take time to listen to them, although some Year 8 pupils would appreciate a greater role in decision making. Overall, boarders are extremely happy with life in the boarding houses and believe they have every opportunity to flourish socially as well as academically. In their questionnaire responses, virtually all boarders stated that they enjoy boarding, and this was also supported by the parent questionnaire responses.
- 4.21 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. All boarding staff are committed to offering the highest levels of care and support to the boarders. Along with the matrons, they ensure the houses are well maintained, clean and homely environments. Boarders have access to the extensive school grounds and facilities

and benefit from an appropriate amount of structured and free time. They play a full part in representing the school in sport and other activities, and enjoy the extensive range of evening and weekend recreational activities. They particularly appreciate using the outdoor cinema in the woods. Boarders have appropriate access to and information about the world beyond school. The school operates efficient and detailed policies covering general healthcare, first aid, and storage and administration of both prescribed and non-prescription medication. The health centre is staffed by two registered nurses who implement an excellent provision for boarders who are unwell. Communication between nurses and boarding staff and medical record keeping are excellent. The school has good relationships with the local medical surgery, and a routine clinic is held weekly at the school. Boarders' meals are of a good quality and provide appropriate variety and nutritional balance. In their questionnaire responses, some boarders expressed concerns about the quality of food and the availability of snacks and drinking water outside meal times. First-hand evidence of food quality and discussion with boarders did not support this. Boarders have access to water and are supplied with additional sustenance three times each day. Boarders describe their boarding houses as warm and welcoming. Staff encourage boarders to personalise their rooms or bed spaces. Good sleeping accommodation, common rooms and recreational areas are provided. Bathrooms have been upgraded to provide hygienic facilities with good privacy. Houses take every opportunity to display photographs of students, and a unique feature is the 'handprint' galleries of former students. The school has recently introduced a new 'buddy' system and a 'Steps to Boarding' programme, which help young and new boarders to settle quickly. Boarders of all ages are complimentary about the laundry process, enabling clothes to be washed daily and returned promptly. In the questionnaire, some boarders voiced concern about the security of their belongings and about contact with parents and friends. Although dormitories do not provide lockable cupboards, boarders provide their own lockable tuck boxes, and staff keep other valuable items securely for boarders as needed. Boarders have access to email and telephone and the school allows overseas boarders some access to mobile phones when required.

- 4.22 The effectiveness of the arrangements for boarding welfare and safeguarding is good. The school's designated person for safeguarding has updated all boarding staff on the most recent guidance and initiatives in safeguarding and child protection. Boarding policies and procedures are reviewed at least annually. However, the school has not completed some staff recruitment checks promptly in the recent past. Boarding staff have undertaken appropriate training in child protection, first aid and some in handling medication. Boarder's safety is of paramount importance. House risk assessments are robust and reviewed regularly, and regular fire drills are held. All boarders are aware of the school's commitment to safeguarding and child protection and know who to approach and in what circumstances if they have a problem. An external independent listener is available to them. A high level of staff supervision is provided, appropriate for the ages and needs of the boarders. Frequent roll calls take place outside school hours and staff are acutely aware of the need to monitor the whereabouts of boarders at all times. Boarders have a clear understanding of the behaviour policies and expectations of the school and the houses, and they understand that the school pursues its anti-bullying measures rigorously. The boarders report that there is little if any bullying in the school and they are quick to explain that staff deal quickly and effectively with any such issues. The behaviour of the pupils in the boarding houses is exemplary.

- 4.23 The quality of leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. A well-defined management structure for boarding works well. The boarding staff, led by the head of boarding, work as a strong and effective team. Regular meetings between boarding staff, and with the wider pastoral team, enable information to be shared and the boarders' personal and academic lives to be integrated. In recent years, the school has undertaken a significant review and evaluation of all aspects of boarding and this has produced a number of new initiatives to enhance the boarding provision. The head of boarding prepares an annual boarding development plan. All boarding staff participate in a self-review and evaluation process. House staff maintain excellent communication with parents and a complaints procedure is available. Since the previous inspection, the school has rectified all aspects of recording medication, treatment and first aid, and resolved issues relating to the public use of facilities causing potential conflict with boarders' use. The boarding community at Highfield is enhanced by dynamic and responsive management and leadership which meet the school's aims and boarding principles. Boarders are well supported by a highly committed and caring team of professional staff.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The proprietor is assisted in the task of governing the school by a board of directors of which he is chairman. The board includes the two heads, as well as three others who have a long-standing association with the school and provide valuable professional and educational expertise. Apart from periodic formal board meetings, governance and oversight of the school's work is achieved very effectively by monthly meetings of the proprietor's finance committee. Further meetings of the projects and marketing committees allow the proprietor to keep in close touch with issues concerning premises and resources, and the promotion of the school. Financial control and planning is efficient and well managed, and enables the school to benefit from the provision of sufficient physical and human resources to provide a high quality of education for its pupils.
- 5.3 The school's governance ensures that a clear sense of purpose and direction are identified and promoted. The proprietor's commitment, vision and ambitious strategic thinking underpin the school's life and work, and provide support, stimulus and challenge for the school's continued success. He has a very clear insight into the day-to-day working of the school and is known well by staff.
- 5.4 The proprietor and the directors are very conscious of the need to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety. Together, they ensure that policies and procedures are monitored and regularly reviewed. The directors assist the proprietor in carrying out the required annual review of the safeguarding policy and its implementation. Although this review is led by the proprietor in his role as safeguarding governor, the board's minutes do not clearly indicate the process undertaken or that the proprietor himself has formally discharged this responsibility.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management throughout the school is good.
- 5.6 Most aspects are excellent and make a major contribution to the successful achievement of the school's aims. However, the school has made insufficient progress in rectifying all of the omissions in the staff recruitment process identified at the previous inspection. Although improvements have been made, the process is still not fully rigorous.
- 5.7 The current academic year has seen changes in the school's management structure and two senior staff are now separately responsible for the very effective leadership of the academic and pastoral life of the school. This has enabled the school to be highly responsive to pupils' needs. The work of heads of department and the newly appointed heads of year enables policies and practice to be effectively implemented and reviewed. Many new initiatives such as an improved management information system, a more thorough tracking of pupils' progress and a more rigorous system for monitoring and evaluating teaching quality have been introduced. This represents a good response to the recommendation of the previous inspection. Although not all

initiatives are fully embedded into daily school life, they provide an inducement to maintain a high quality of education.

- 5.8 The leadership promotes a strong and clear ethos and sense of purpose, and ensures that teaching and non-teaching staff share a commitment to provide the very best child-centred experience for pupils. As a result, outcomes for pupils are strong, as shown by their excellent achievement and personal development. Channels of communication and sharing of information among staff are highly effective, and enable teachers and form tutors to ensure that pupils' needs are met.
- 5.9 The school actively promotes a culture of self-improvement, professional reflection and an evaluation of standards and the effectiveness of systems and structures. Staff and managers have contributed fully to the identification of targets and priorities for future improvement that are outlined in the school's ambitious development plan.
- 5.10 The committed teaching staff are well deployed and give their time and energy generously. Graduate teaching assistants are very effectively used. An annual appraisal system, co-ordinated by the head, involves a self-assessment process, a lesson observation and the setting of targets. The new peer observation system allows staff to observe lessons of colleagues and provide feedback and a sharing of teaching strategies. In-service training for teaching staff has focused recently more on academic matters, and less on pastoral issues. Staff are trained in relevant health and safety issues and child protection, but training records for staff are fragmented and do not permit easy review of future needs. All current staff and adults working with pupils have undergone all the required recruitment checks, including a criminal records check. However, a few of these were not completed promptly enough in the recent past.
- 5.11 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents showed high levels of satisfaction with the amount of information that the school provides. The wide range of information includes 'Inside Story', a particularly helpful guide for parents, and information booklets for each year group. Prospective parents also have an attractive prospectus which has a clear overview of the school's provision. The questionnaires also showed that parents are particularly pleased with the range of subjects and extra-curricular activities on offer. Almost all the parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that their children were happy at school, were safe and well looked after.
- 5.12 The website is comprehensive in its coverage of material about the school and its policies, and up-to-date news items. Reports are sent home at the end of every term and interim grade sheets at half term. Parents can consult teachers at parents' evenings each year, and twice in Year 4. The reports have a positive tone, make clear a child's level of attainment and contain helpful guidance for future improvement. The boarding community has an excellent web blog which keeps parents in touch; it is sent home every week and compiled into an attractive annual book. Parental support for the school is strong and there is an active parents' association that meets with the head twice each term. Many parents volunteer their help, including listening to children read, helping with social events and activities and running the school library. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents were very positive about this aspect of the school's relationship with them. Parents also have numerous opportunities to attend concerts, plays and sports matches, and do so in good numbers.

- 5.13 The school prides itself on its communication with parents and parental concerns are handled with care, including those that come to the head from the parents' association. The school's response to these are published and sent to all parents. Concerns and complaints are carefully logged in school, and the actions taken recorded. The school's official complaints procedure rarely needs to be used beyond the stage of informal resolution.

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