

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **Kent College, Canterbury**

The junior school/preparatory department and Early Years Foundation Stage were inspected at the same time and a separate report published. The same applies to the International Study Centre.

Full Name of the School	<b>Kent College, Canterbury</b>
DCSF Number	<b>886/6053</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>307844</b>
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Telephone Number	<b>01227 763231</b>
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Email Address	<b>enquiries@kentcollege.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Dr David Lamper</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Geoff Connolly</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009</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, May 2007 and February 2009.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. 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 can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

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.....	3
	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils .....	4
	The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment).....	5
3.	THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS .....	7
	The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils.....	7
	The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community .....	8
	The Quality of Boarding Education .....	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 Kent College is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged three to eighteen. The senior school for pupils aged eleven to eighteen and Kent College International Study Centre (ISC), for newly arrived students from overseas, are located together on a large site on the outskirts of Canterbury with teaching accommodation at the centre and boarding houses distributed around the site. The Kent College Junior School at Vernon Holme is approximately a mile from the senior school and ISC site. The college owns Moat Farm which is close to the campus and is managed by staff and pupils. The school was founded in 1885 and acquired by The Board of Management of Methodist Schools in 1920. Originally a boys' school, it has been co-educational since 1973.
- 1.2 The school welcomes pupils of all faiths and none and upholds Christian values within the Methodist tradition. It fosters a spirit of openness and tolerance and seeks to maximise the potential of all pupils and provide a broad curriculum. It aims to enable pupils to be confident and responsible citizens with a personal faith to guide their lives.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the school has undergone an extensive building programme improving facilities significantly. Kent College Senior School is attended by 391 boys and 281 girls, of whom 106 boys and 44 girls are boarders.
- 1.4 Standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils covers a wide range; however, the majority of pupils' abilities are above the national average in Years 7 to 11 and average in Years 12 and 13. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results will be above the national average for maintained secondary schools in Years 7 to 11 and in line with this average in Years 12 and 13. The school draws pupils from a range of urban and rural backgrounds. Most of the pupils come from families with professional or business backgrounds. Most pupils proceed to higher education.
- 1.5 The school has identified 60 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD); it provides specialist learning support for sixteen pupils. No pupils have a statement of special educational needs. There are 142 pupils for whom English is not their principal language (EAL) and, of these, 59 receive support for their English. Almost all pupils proceed to higher education.
- 1.6 The previous inspection by ISI took place in 2003 and the previous inspection of boarding was undertaken by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in 2006.
- 1.7 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 The school provides an excellent quality of education. This is entirely consistent with the school's aims to provide a broad and balanced education that values equally academic, musical, artistic and sporting abilities. The quality of education provided has improved further since the previous inspection.
- 2.2 The curriculum provided for Year 7 to 9 pupils places due emphasis on the development of language. Sufficient English lessons are provided and all non EAL pupils study French from Year 7 and either German or Spanish from Year 8. Integrated science is taught in these years and from Year 9 separate sciences are taught. In Years 10 and 11 a substantial core of compulsory subjects is complemented by a wide range of optional subjects. All pupils select at least two science subjects. Science courses are available in a suitable range of options to cater for pupils of different abilities. Land-based science is available and is located at the school farm. Design and technology comprises resistant materials and graphics. All pupils study information and communication technology (ICT) which leads to the Award in Digital Applications. Those with a particular aptitude can take the Certificate in Digital Applications which is equivalent to two GCSEs. In keeping with the central beliefs of the school, all pupils study religious education through either the short or full GCSE courses. All pupils participate in physical education and games. Pupils with EAL or LDD in addition to learning support choose a modern foreign language and five optional subjects. The school is able to adapt the curriculum to suit the learning needs of individual pupils; for example, a bespoke curriculum has been provided for pupils who are musicians or athletes. The sixth-form curriculum provides a substantial range of subjects and courses which enable pupils to choose a suitable selection of courses for subsequent study.
- 2.3 The excellent provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE) has been consolidated and extended since the last inspection. Pupils enjoy and benefit from a comprehensive programme within weekly lessons, complemented by a citizenship course taught during weekly tutor periods throughout Years 7 to 11. Lessons focus on discussion and collaboration. Teaching materials are stimulating and fresh; issues arising from discussion are well pursued. Planning and delivery are sensitive, and informed by the aims of the school. The PSHE curriculum is well balanced and imaginatively embraces physical and emotional health, moral and behavioural issues. PSHE continues into the sixth form under the name of key skills, an initial focus on study skills prior to preparation for university application takes place halfway through Year 12.
- 2.4 A wide-ranging, well-balanced programme of extra-curricular activities is provided at lunchtimes, in the evenings and at weekends. A high level of participation is ensured, with regular monitoring and recording. Where possible, particular activities are provided in response to pupil demand. The dedicated weekend activities programme for the boarders is well-supported by staff and pupils. Sport and music enjoy the greatest number of participants. Other particularly well-supported pursuits include dance, science and Young Enterprise. Work on the school farm is a popular option and a distinctive feature of the school's extra-curricular provision. It is a valued educational resource for the local community and is visited by many parties of school children during the course of the year.
- 2.5 The school takes an active part in the life of the local community. Organisations and schools make extensive use of the facilities, particularly the sports facilities in the evenings. The school also hosts events such as athletics and cross-country championships. The choristers frequently perform in the area, local organisations are the beneficiaries of charitable giving.

Community service is undertaken by the pupils opting for that Wednesday afternoon activity, by the Millennium Volunteers (now VSU) and by the many Gold Award participants in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. Fund-raising ventures in support of specific charitable causes take place at frequent intervals. A new ecological project has been undertaken to improve a local woodland area.

- 2.6 On the wider front, the school does active charitable work in Limbe, Cameroon, under the auspices of the Methodist Relief and Development Fund and a link has recently been established with a sister Methodist school in America.
- 2.7 Careers education and guidance are taught by specialist teachers. The careers programme starts in Year 9 and is a logically structured course. Self-evaluation across the whole year in Years 9, 11 and 12 encourages pupils to plan for their future. All pupils are interviewed by members of a careers advisory service. Weekly sessions from February in Year 12 initiate consideration of higher education which focuses on the process of applying to university.
- 2.8 In the period after the end of the GCSE examinations Year 11 pupils have the opportunity to undertake work experience. For those who participate, arrangements are made by the school or individuals themselves or by an external agency.
- 2.9 Considerable support is provided for pupils with EAL and LDD. A blend of experienced and specialist tuition in a small group setting is used, alongside regular help given by mainstream staff in subject specific clinics. Individual education plans outline the nature of the learning difficulty with clear targets. They are reviewed annually with parents. This ensures an integrated approach with positive results. Some pupils have been identified as either gifted or talented and teachers provide appropriate challenge and support for these pupils.
- 2.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.11 The school achieves its aims to enable pupils to maximise their potential and to attain high levels of achievement. Standards have risen since the previous inspection.
- 2.12 Pupils demonstrate well developed critical thinking skills. They are creative, particularly in the arts where exceptionally high standards are achieved. Pupils exhibit good understanding throughout the curriculum. Most pupils are articulate, and speak confidently to adults and on public occasions. They listen attentively to teachers and pay close attention to each other in discussion. Most pupils absorb information readily by listening carefully. Pupils read widely for pleasure and information; library records indicate pupils borrow substantial numbers of books. The library is used for study and recreation. Most pupils write clearly and accurately, but presentations, spelling and grammar are not of a consistently high standard. Pupils use their mathematical skills well in subjects such as the sciences, humanities or technology. Across the curriculum, pupils demonstrate well developed logical thinking skills and work well on independent work, particularly extended project work. Pupils are confident and competent users of ICT and make wide and appropriate use of ICT applications across a range of subjects.

- 2.13 Pupils of all abilities achieve well with no significant differences in relation to gender or ethnicity. Pupils with EAL and LDD make rapid progress. Pupils of above average ability including those the school has identified as gifted and talented achieve high standards.
- 2.14 Pupils' attainment in GCSE is good in relation to their abilities. Results are well above the average for all maintained secondary schools. Pupils' attainment at A level is good in relation to their abilities. Results in examinations taken by Year 13 over the last three years have been above the national average for all maintained schools. Externally validated data indicates pupils make substantial progress in almost all subjects.
- 2.15 Pupils achieve high standards in activities. Individuals and groups of pupils have achieved distinction across a wide range. The junior choir choristers came second in the final of the 2008 BBC Radio 3 Choir of the Year competition. In sport, a remarkable number of representative honours have been won. For instance, over twenty hockey players have been capped at county, divisional or national level. Furthermore, in the various age groups five hockey teams are county finalists, the Under-16 girls are the winners of a national competition and the Under-13 boys are the national runners-up. Other particularly well-supported pursuits include dance, science and Young Enterprise.
- 2.16 Pupils take and organise their notes well but coursework folders are sometimes disorganised in Years 12 and 13. Pupils work well independently and participate productively in group or team work and are quick to focus, and maintain their concentration well. They persevere and enjoy their work and leisure activities at the school.

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

- 2.17 Pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This is significantly better than the previous inspection and is fully consistent with the school's Methodist aims.
- 2.18 The pupils demonstrate a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose within a system that gives them opportunities to explore values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and the way in which they affect people's lives. They think about these issues in the classroom, especially in religious studies, drama and PSHE, where they respect one another's opinions.
- 2.19 The chapel worship, classroom teaching and values which characterise the life of the school enable pupils to show appropriate awareness of the spiritual dimension of human beings. The assemblies, some religious and some secular, provide pupils with opportunities to develop personal insights into the meaning and purpose of life. In addition to a full programme of worship, highlights such as the carol service in Canterbury Cathedral, with its candlelit procession and a chapel presentation by a member of the Chinese Christian fellowship are spiritually elevating. The creative and performing arts departments provide much rich stimulus and, on frequent occasions, spiritually uplifting experiences. For instance, music, dance and charitable giving were all features of the 'Joy to the World' concert and the Choristers were much in demand by the wider community over the Christmas period. A sense of awe and wonder is evident among pupil visitors to the farm, especially in seasons such as lambing time.
- 2.20 Pupils demonstrate well developed moral awareness. Central to the educational philosophy of the school is the belief that everyone should be treated as a valued individual, and this guides relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils. The demeanour and behaviour of pupils are clear indicators of a community whose members have an excellent and well-developed sense of right and wrong. Proud of their school and affectionate towards

it, the pupils conduct themselves in a courteous and civilised manner. They respect school property and equipment. The relaxed, friendly atmosphere is a distinctive characteristic of the school.

- 2.21 Pupils show high levels of social development. Pupils take initiative and responsibility willingly. Year 9 pupils act as mentors for Year 7; this scheme is in its second year and has proved to be highly successful. Pupils gain a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England through the well organised PSHE programme which includes a substantial element of citizenship.
- 2.22 Cultural development is strong. With twenty-three different first languages in the school, pupils are able to associate with contemporaries from an unusually wide range of ethnic backgrounds and cultural traditions. Annual French, Spanish and German exchanges provide valuable cultural enrichment. The school successfully fulfils its stated aim of promoting tolerance and openness. Cultural diversity is celebrated in various ways, such as the festivities at the Chinese New Year and specific presentations in morning assemblies. While the pupils co-exist harmoniously and companionably, the school continues to take steps to achieve fuller social integration.
- 2.23 Holiday trips take pupils not only to European destinations, such as Berlin and Gibraltar, but, as far afield as Beijing and Hong Kong. The pupils' responses to these ventures show that they gain markedly in knowledge and understanding of different cultures. The creative and performing arts provide significant cultural enrichment for the pupils. The quality of the concerts reflects the large number of talented musicians in the school. Art is strong and the drama department stages a varied programme of productions, the most recent being *Annie* in the week before the inspection.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.25 The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is now of high quality. Assessment is sound, but some inconsistency remains in the quality of teachers' marking. The quality of teaching overall is high and is consistent with the school aim to enable its pupils to maximize their potential.
- 2.26 Teaching is enthusiastic, engaging and challenging. Prominent are the warmth and encouragement given by teachers. Such teaching is authoritative, inspires confidence, and enables all pupils to progress well. Lessons are thoroughly planned and contain a varied range of activities, supported by suitable educational resources. ICT, particularly in the form of interactive whiteboards, is used well. Work is either set at varying levels of difficulty or pupils are encouraged to respond at levels commensurate with their abilities. Teachers pitch questions at suitable levels to enable all pupils to respond. They make good use of visual communication for those with limited English. High expectations of work and behaviour are the norm. Opportunities for pupils to think for themselves have increased and are features of the best teaching. Excessive homework was a concern of parents and pupils in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The school was informed of this and steps have already been taken to address this.

- 2.27 The quality of teaching provided for pupils with EAL or LDD when they are taught separately is high. Pupils' learning needs are thoroughly assessed at the outset and an individual educational plan is drafted which guides the teaching for each pupil. Careful records are maintained to ensure that individual pupils' progress is monitored and promoted. Periodic reviews enable parents and staff to take stock of progress. Training for mainstream staff to enable them to cater for the needs of pupils with EAL has been beneficial, with teachers making suitable provision for these pupils.
- 2.28 Pupils receive plenty of useful spoken feedback from their teachers, but the quality of marking varies widely in quality. At its best it is positive in tone, encouraging and informative and sets achievable targets or objectives for pupils. These are usually well received and acted upon by the pupils. Conversely, some marking is irregular and superficial and sometimes negative.
- 2.29 Record keeping has improved with pupils' attainment and progress entered on the school information management system. Pupils who are making good, sound or unsatisfactory progress are swiftly identified and appropriate support is provided. Pupils receive regular feedback through grade cards and reports. An element of pupil self-assessment and target setting ensures that pupils maintain a close focus on their performance. Increasing use is being made of standardised data to monitor progress in subjects and across the curriculum. Support and where necessary challenge, through the annual review process ensures high rates of progress are achieved.
- 2.30 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 The quality of pastoral care and the provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. It fully supports the school's aims to provide a family community, committed to the development of the full potential of each individual.
- 3.2 The school has a highly effective pastoral management structure which enables the staff to provide excellent support and guidance for all pupils. Communication between senior staff and heads of year and between heads of year and their teams of tutors is of high quality. They are most ably supported by boarding house staff, medical centre staff and the school counsellor.
- 3.3 A strategic planning meeting is held termly to allow senior pastoral staff to reflect upon current practice, evaluate its effectiveness and introduce new initiatives. Weekly pastoral meetings ensure that problems with individual pupils are shared with staff and dealt with effectively.
- 3.4 Tutor groups are small and pupils are well known by their tutors. Pupils feel they are able to talk to their tutors if they have a difficulty. The performance, management and review system ensures that all staff are aware of their pastoral responsibilities and receive appropriate training as part of their professional development.
- 3.5 The tutorial programme has much improved since the last inspection. It is drawn up by heads of year, dovetailed to complement the school's PSHE programme and suited to the particular needs of each year group. Topics include advice on university applications in Year 13, study skills for GCSE pupils, and a range of citizenship issues and current affairs for Years 7 to 13. The programme is monitored and modified in the light of evaluation and review by year heads and tutor teams.
- 3.6 One of the two tutorial periods each week is devoted to the checking of the pupils' academic diaries. These provide a useful channel of communication between home and school with regard to monitoring pupil organisation and ensuring that homework is completed on time. Parents can readily see where credits have been awarded or if detentions have been necessary. The timing of grades and reports has been altered to allow tutors to track academic progress more closely.
- 3.7 The school has developed an effective system of mentoring. Years 9 and 10 pupils are trained by a qualified member of staff to provide support for new pupils in Year 7. It is intended that this scheme will be developed to include Years 12 and 13, linked to the role of the senior prefects. The school council also provides opportunities for pupils of all ages to discuss issues of common interest. It is clear that the school listens and responds to the views of the pupils.
- 3.8 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils is extremely positive; pupils speak well of their teachers and appreciate the support and help they provide. Pupils are polite to visitors, conduct themselves in a positive manner around the school and work co-operatively with each other in lessons. The pupils' code of conduct lays down the school's expectations of high standards of behaviour, and a clear system of sanctions and rewards is in place. Although some concern has been expressed by a minority of pupils that the distribution of rewards and punishments is unfair, the inspection team found no evidence

- to support this. The distribution of credit certificates to pupils in Years 8 and 9 during a chapel service shows the emphasis the school places upon praise and rewards.
- 3.9 The school's anti-bullying policy and procedures ensure that incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. Cyber-bullying is fully addressed in the anti-bullying policy.
- 3.10 The child protection policy and procedures are of a high standard and suitable in-service training is attended by staff to keep them up to date with current requirements. Appropriate steps have been taken to reduce risks from fire and other hazards; suitable policies and procedures and suitable staff training is in place. Pupils' attendance is good and admissions and attendance registers are properly maintained. Many of the staff have attended first-aid training, some to the higher level. The medical centre provides a high quality service for pupils when they are ill, medicines are properly stored and dispensed and first-aid arrangements are effective.
- 3.11 Health and safety arrangements are thorough. Portable appliance testing has been carried out and thorough records have been maintained. The school has undertaken a disability access audit and has a plan, thereby complying with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.
- 3.12 The school effectively encourages pupils to eat healthily; the meals are nutritious and varied and provide well for pupils' differing dietary needs. The school does not teach food technology, but nutrition is dealt with in science and a sixth form short course teaches students how to eat well on a limited budget.
- 3.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

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

- 3.14 The overall quality of links with parents and the community are outstanding and fully consistent with the school's aims to be a Christian family community. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the parents' questionnaire expressed positive opinions about the school. A few were concerned about excessive homework, the school is aware of this and is taking appropriate action.
- 3.15 Plenty of opportunities are provided for parents to be involved. The Friends of Kent College raises considerable funds through its extensive programme of social functions. The current project is the refurbishment of the school tuck shop. Activities such as buffets for families of pupils and staff develop a strong sense of community. Communication with the parents of pupils from overseas is good; the school warmly welcomes overseas parents when they visit the school and maintains open lines of communication with agents by email and telephone. Links with the Old Canterburians have been further strengthened by recent initiatives such as the Kent College Times, a newsletter circulated to former and present pupils.
- 3.16 High quality information is provided for parents about the school; prospectus, publications and the web-site provide parents plenty of useful information. Grade cards and reports are frequent, informative and constructive. Parents' evenings are suitably scheduled for further discussion. Parents are welcome to contact the school at any time if they have concerns. Parents' concerns or complaints are addressed efficiently; the school adheres to its policy and procedures so that response is prompt and properly recorded.

- 3.17 The school takes an active part in the life of the local community. Outside organisations and other schools make extensive use of the facilities, particularly the sports facilities in the evenings. The school also hosts events such as athletics and cross-country championships. The choristers frequently perform in the area. Community service is undertaken by the Millennium Volunteers and by the many Gold Award participants in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. A new ecological project is being undertaken to improve the Blean Woods. The Friends of Kent College organise fund-raising events in support of charitable causes.
- 3.18 Pupils benefit considerably from participating in active charitable work in Limbe, Cameroon, under the auspices of the Methodist Relief and Development Fund and a link has recently been established with a sister Methodist school in America.
- 3.19 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].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.20 The quality of boarding education is excellent and consistent with the school aims for boarding to develop the whole person and create an atmosphere of openness and tolerance. The school continues to maintain the high standards reported in the previous inspection of boarding in 2006.
- 3.21 Relationships are positive between boarders and with boarding staff. The pupils are happy and content and a happy community is evident. Overseas students happily coexist with English students. With most of the overseas students arriving in Year 12, the school has to work hard to achieve rapid integration. The school is aware of the need to develop integration further and has effective strategies in place, such as trips and community service which do much to strengthen the sense of community. House parents are committed and rigorous in providing and monitoring care. An atmosphere of respect is evident and a homely atmosphere is achieved. Housekeepers and resident staff are highly efficient and respected by the pupils. Liaison with pastoral staff in the main school is strong. House staff are fully informed as to pupils' academic and pastoral needs by attending the weekly pastoral meetings. Each of the boarding houses has its own identity. Boarders are appreciative of the high standards of care.
- 3.22 Supervised study time enables pupils to concentrate on their work. An imaginative programme of extra-curricular activities, in addition to the programme for day pupils, keeps pupils busy. Sport is popular and local resources and further afield are enjoyed, as is the diverse and exciting programme of trips, skating, shopping or cultural visits to Covent Garden or Paris.
- 3.23 Accommodation is generally of high quality: it is spacious, comfortable and in good decorative order. Pupils take pride in their boarding houses and take their shoes off in Austen house when indoors to keep the carpets clean. The bedrooms are clean and well decorated and have sufficient storage space. Suitable cooking facilities are provided for snacks.

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The school benefits from high quality governance. This is even better than the previous inspection; governance ensures that the school achieves its objectives.
- 4.2 The governing body is appropriately constituted and linked to the Board of Management of Methodist Independent Schools. It includes governors with a wide range of useful expertise for the school, such as educational, business or financial skills. Governors are highly committed to the school and many have long associations with it. They have attended relevant training and are up to date with current issues and legislation. Four sub-committees, education, development, marketing and finance, estates and personnel meet regularly and inform the twice termly meetings of the board of governors. Minutes and agenda indicate that suitable issues are thoroughly discussed and well-informed decisions are taken.
- 4.3 The governing body are fully aware of their responsibilities and are fully involved in the planning process. The development committee is fully integrated with the school development planning process. The annual review forms the basis of subsequent planning and takes into account views taken from staff, parents and pupils. This results in a clear plan of action and suitable allocation of human and material resources. A strong sense of partnership with the school staff is widely evident, relationships are positive and the governors provide appropriate challenge for the school if necessary. They attend functions and are well known to staff and pupils.
- 4.4 The governing body oversees all of the parts of the school well, nursery, junior school, senior school, international study centre and farm. The education subcommittee maintains a close watch on examination results, policies, and development planning and the outcomes of annual reviews of departments. The financial committee maintains a vigilant oversight of financial planning and expenditure. The governing body carries out its responsibilities for child protection and health and safety fully.

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

- 4.5 The quality of leadership and management has improved since the previous inspection and is now of high quality. A clear focus on the central aims of the school guides all that it does. A clear sense of direction is evident and a positive ethos and high morale permeate the school.
- 4.6 The management structure is straightforward and effective, with each member of the senior management team having responsibility for a well-defined range of areas and line management of the relevant staff. The senior management team works well together, relationships are positive and the skills of each complement each other. It is a strong team. Sufficient, suitably scheduled meetings ensure that information is shared and decisions are taken corporately.
- 4.7 The school development planning process is exemplary. Each department evaluates its own performance each year as part of the annual review cycle. This is a rigorous process that involves analysis of pupil performance data, such as examination results in comparison with standardized test data, a review of teaching and learning and educational provision. Broad objectives for the school are formulated by the governors in partnership with the senior management team and a robust whole-school development plan is drafted. Each department then prepares a departmental development plan which details how each of the relevant

whole-school objectives will be addressed in their department. The performance management and review process for each teacher includes relevant whole-school objectives for particular members of staff. Such a coherent approach ensures that whole-school objectives are taken forward at appropriate levels. Training needs, be they for the school, departments, or individuals are identified through this process and all receive relevant in-service training. This results in a high level of up to date staff expertise and contributes significantly to staff morale.

- 4.8 Sufficiently suitably qualified staff have been appointed and are appropriately deployed. The backgrounds of staff have been fully checked. All teachers who are new to the school benefit from a thorough induction and those new to the teaching profession benefit from induction arrangements that are in line with The Independent Schools Council Teacher Induction Programme (ISCTip).
- 4.9 Sufficient books, equipment and materials are provided. Beneficial investment has been made in ICT, interactive whiteboards are widely used and pupils and staff make extensive use of ICT. The central library has improved considerably and now has an impressive stock of books and other resources such as DVDs, video materials and periodicals. Pupils are keen readers and some use the library for research or recreation. Accommodation and facilities are of high quality and in some areas, such as music and the farm, outstanding. The school is well maintained. Grounds are well kept. Catering and cleaning staff provide an excellent service to the school. The administration of the school is excellent and ensures the school operates smoothly in all aspects.
- 4.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.11 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 aims to enable pupils to maximise their potential and to attain high levels of achievement. It provides an excellent quality of education. Pupils demonstrate excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The school provides high quality teaching; it is enthusiastic and inspires confidence, and enables all pupils to progress well. Assessment is sound, but some inconsistency remains in teachers' marking. Pastoral care and the provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are outstanding. Links with parents and the community are excellent, as is the boarding education. The school benefits from the high quality of governance and of leadership and management.
- 5.2 The school has made considerable progress since the previous inspection. It has developed strategies to make the teaching more challenging and now places greater demands on pupils, according to their individual abilities. It has successfully devised systems for pupils in each age group to develop effective skills of independent learning, including the use of ICT. The school is now aware that the marking of pupils' work is still inconsistent. It now provides appropriately demanding targets and monitors pupils' progress systematically. The school is well placed to improve further.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses but should consider the following areas for development:
1. improve the consistency in the quality and regularity of teachers' marking to ensure pupils receive high quality written feedback;
  2. ensure more consistency in the quality of literacy across the curriculum with particular reference to presentation, handwriting and spelling.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## **6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2009. 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 boarding houses and the medical centre. 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 Una Stevens	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Stuart Brant	Director of Studies GSA school
Mrs Julia Burns	Headmistress GSA school
Mr Ben Edwards	Head of Department HMC school
Mr Paul Spillane	Former Headmaster HMC school
Ms Dot Stone	Head of Department HMC school
Mr Mark Twells	Head of Department HMC school