



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BANCROFT'S SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Bancroft's School

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

Full Name of School	Bancroft's School
DfE Number	317/6063
Registered Charity Number	1068532
Address	Bancroft's School 611-627 High Road Woodford Green Essex IG8 0RF
Telephone Number	020 85054821
Fax Number	020 85590032
Email Address	office@bancrofts.org
Head	Mrs M E Ireland
Chair of Governors	Prof Philip Ogden
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	856
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (460 boys; 396 girls)
Inspection dates	19 Nov to 22 Nov 2013

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 March 2010.

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. 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.

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

Inspectors

Mr George Fisher	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Cleary	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Julian Johnson-Munday	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mr Peter Kelly	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Janet Mander	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr William Norton	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mrs Sue Sowden	Team Inspector (Former Headmistress, GSA school)
Mr John Watson	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bancroft's is a selective, co-educational independent day school for pupils aged between 7 and 18 years. It was founded in 1737 in the East End of London and moved to purpose-built accommodation on its present seven-acre site in Woodford in 1889. Since its foundation, the school has been supported by the Worshipful Company of Drapers. The school is a charitable trust with a single governing body and the head of the senior school, who was appointed in January 2008, has overall responsibility for the whole school. A new chairman of governors was appointed in September 2013.
- 1.2 The school has a total of 1115 pupils. It comprises two sections, each with its own head. The preparatory school is for pupils aged 7 to 11 years, and occupies its own self-contained building. The senior school consists of 856 pupils, of whom 242 are in the sixth form. Boys slightly outnumber girls. Pupils are drawn mainly from the surrounding area and come from families of a wide range of social, economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The school admits pupils of all faiths and those of none. Since the previous inspection, capital development has seen the building of an art centre, a sixth form library, an information and communication technology (ICT) suite together with new laboratories and classrooms. Courses in GCSE drama and Russian have been introduced and Mandarin is now offered within the sixth form. Communication systems with parents and pupils have been modernised, and the latter now have access to the school's virtual learning environment (VLE).
- 1.3 The school aims to be a centre of excellence which provides the highest academic standards and an educational experience which is enriched by a vibrant cultural environment. Further emphasis is placed on fostering self-motivation, mutual respect and a strong sense of social responsibility, enabling pupils to be successful adults who will make a difference in the 21st century world and in the communities in which they live.
- 1.4 The ability of the pupils is well above the national average, with very few having an ability that is less than above average. One hundred and thirty-six pupils have special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and receive specialist learning support; in most cases this is to support dyslexia. There are six pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL) but all are proficient in written and spoken English and do not need support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Third form	Year 7
Remove	Year 8
Lower Fourth	Year 9
Upper Fourth	Year 10
Fifth form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Bancroft's is highly successful in its aim of enabling pupils to achieve academic excellence, together with high standards of personal development. All pupils benefit from a broad and challenging curriculum which provides scope for individual choice as well as an outstanding range of extra-curricular activities, including many which have a specific academic focus. Examination results and evidence gained during the inspection show that pupils achieve at a very high level and make good progress, including within the sixth form. Pupils' achievements in art, music and sport are notably strong, as is their commitment to the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE). Pupils are good listeners, are extremely articulate and have highly developed analytical skills. The quality of teaching is good with teachers demonstrating excellent subject knowledge and a real enthusiasm for their subject. In a small number of lessons, teaching does not transfer sufficient responsibility for learning to the pupils, or systematically plan opportunities to stretch the most able. While much marking is detailed and constructive, and oral feedback is welcomed by the pupils, there is variation in the quality of marking both within and between subjects.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. They have a keen spiritual awareness, a strong sense of right and wrong, and a deep-rooted respect for other faiths and cultures. Older pupils act as excellent role models for younger ones and there are many opportunities for pupils to take responsibility. The pastoral care provided for pupils is excellent and is developed through a vibrant and highly effective house system, together with the chaplaincy and the medical centre. Good behaviour and healthy living are actively fostered and pupils are encouraged to express their views and bring about change within the school through the school council and other, less formal mechanisms.
- 2.3 Governance is good overall, and the governing body discharges its statutory duties well. However, it took some time before the school complied with the action point of the previous inspection on recruitment checks. By the time of this inspection, all staff had been suitably checked, and a system is in place that ensures that all checks are now done in a timely manner in all cases. There is an effective committee structure which enables governors to ensure appropriate oversight of the school, including monitoring of academic standards and financial planning. Designated governors take a particular interest in safeguarding and health and safety, and the governing body receives regular reports from school staff. Overall, governors have a higher profile within the school than at the time of the previous inspection. Leadership and management are good, with a light touch approach which empowers staff and middle management. However, there is insufficiently rigorous monitoring of academic policies and processes and the recommendation of the previous report is not met in this regard. Pastoral management is exceptionally strong. Links with parents are excellent and have strengthened since the previous inspection.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. ensure that there are clear and regular monitoring processes at all levels of the school that identify the best practice in its work, and implement it in a timely manner across the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils demonstrate a high level of knowledge, understanding and skills across a wide range of curriculum subjects so supporting the school's aim of being a centre of academic excellence.
- 3.3 Pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners who enjoy study. They respond well to academic rigour and are keen to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. They articulate clearly, listen attentively, assimilate information rapidly and are capable of constructing coherent arguments. In collaborative work and discussions they participate readily but are respectful of other views. Written work is thorough, well organised and presented. Independent learning and research are evident in the pupils' work.
- 3.4 Mathematical skills are exceptional and their use is demonstrated in other subjects, notably physics. Pupils have gained considerable success in mathematical competitions, including Olympiad events. In science, pupils are inquisitive with highly developed reasoning skills. Creativity and flair are evident in art and music and have enabled individuals to gain awards in national competitions. Pupils use ICT confidently to research and present work.
- 3.5 Almost all pupils transfer to the sixth form after GCSE, and a high proportion of them continue to higher education following A levels. The school has a large number of able, gifted and talented pupils and these are stretched and challenged primarily through an optional programme of extension clubs and societies. Not all teaching is planned sufficiently well to allow them to maintain progress through the whole of a lesson. Pupils with SEND are well supported to ensure they achieve their academic potential. Academic progress of the pupils with EAL within the school is monitored carefully and all achieve in line with their potential.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 to 2012. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are available. At GCSE, results have been well above the national average for maintained schools and also above the national average for maintained selective schools, with just over four-fifths of all grades either A* or A. In 2010 and 2012 the results were exceptional. Over the same period pupils' performance at A level has improved and results have been consistently well above the national average for maintained schools and also above the national average for maintained selective schools with just over four-fifths of all grades in the range A* to B. This latter level of academic achievement enables virtually all pupils to secure their first choice places, on a wide range of prestigious courses, and at highly selective universities.
- 3.7 Although the ability profile of the pupils at entry is well above the national average the high level of attainment at GCSE indicates that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Similarly the excellent A-level results, together with other inspection evidence, show that pupils make good progress in the sixth form although the school does not use any standardised testing at this stage.

- 3.8 Pupils excel in extra-curricular activities. In DofE, large numbers of pupils gain gold, silver and bronze awards each year. Pupils play regularly in prestigious orchestras and ensembles, and accomplished drama productions have been staged at school and at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Sports teams and individuals perform at high levels. Boys hockey, cricket and tennis teams have all achieved county success and qualified for regional finals and this feat has been replicated by girls hockey, netball and athletics sides.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 It fully meets the school's aim to provide an educational experience that is enriched by a vibrant cultural environment. The curriculum is strongly academic, appropriate to the needs of the highly able intake and provides effective coverage of all requisite areas of learning. It is broad and provides an appropriate balance. The timetable operates efficiently on a two-weekly cycle that allows flexibility in the allocation of curriculum time. Curriculum development is steered very effectively by a curriculum committee, which monitors existing provision as well as, for example, the structure of the working week.
- 3.11 Personal, social and health education is provided for all pupils up to Year 11, and physical education (PE) and games throughout. The wide-ranging curriculum for Year 7 has recently been revised. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 now follow a programme that includes the core subjects of English, mathematics and three separate sciences, together with geography, history, religious studies (RS), drama, music and design and technology. In Year 7, both German and Spanish are studied by all pupils; French is introduced in Year 8, thereby allowing pupils to make an informed choice of any two languages chosen from French, German and Spanish with which to continue in Year 9. Latin is part of the Year 8 curriculum, and, in this year, pupils have an element of choice over creative and technological subjects.
- 3.12 All pupils study English, mathematics, and the three separate sciences to GCSE level, typically taking ten subjects at examination. In addition to this core, pupils add one or more foreign language; the school plans to include Russian from September 2014. Further options are chosen freely from a range that includes electronics and Ancient Greek, in addition to more mainstream options from the humanities and arts. Mathematics, French and science are setted by prior attainment, with early entry for GCSE at the end of Year 10 for the most able mathematicians and, currently, the top sets in French. Accelerated entrants in mathematics then take an extension qualification (FMSQ) in Year 11; those in French study critical thinking.
- 3.13 There is a wide and appropriate range of optional subjects at A level, including subjects not offered lower down the school such as PE, economics or government and politics. A flexible approach to timetabling means that choices are almost unrestricted. In the sixth form, pupils choose to study four or five AS subjects, usually continuing with three or four of them to A level. Those taking three subjects also choose a further option from a broad and imaginative programme of additional provision, including computer programming, Mandarin and financial studies.
- 3.14 Curricular provision is supported and enhanced by a rich programme of educational activities, including trips and visits and external speakers. This programme makes a major contribution to the development of those pupils who are identified as being

more able. The needs of those who have SEND or EAL are met by specialist tutors, either individually or within small groups.

- 3.15 There is an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities that is very broad in its range and scope. Pupils' extra-curricular commitments are monitored by periodic audits and, whilst there is no formal requirement for pupils to participate, most choose to do so, and they greatly appreciate and value the opportunities provided. A small proportion of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that the school did not take sufficient note of the level of work they were expected to do. Inspection evidence did not support this view. For example, the school demonstrates the value it places on these enrichment opportunities through a policy of not requiring a homework deadline to fall on the day after the work is set. There is an extensive and varied sporting provision which caters for pupils of all standards. This includes team sports and opportunities for more individual pursuits, such as fitness training, swimming and self-defence. General interest clubs thrive, alongside a wide variety of musical groups - orchestras, small ensembles, choral groups, a concert band - and art and drama activities. There is a high level of participation in DofE and a thriving CCF contingent, both of which serve to enhance links with the community, as does a scheme to provide support for Oxbridge entry to pupils from local maintained schools.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.17 Teaching largely supports the school's aims of providing the highest standards of teaching and learning, within a broad, balanced, high-quality and forward-looking curriculum.
- 3.18 The well-qualified and experienced teachers know pupils well and have excellent relationships with them. Teaching is uniformly supportive and encouraging. In almost all lessons, teachers have high expectations of pupils, enabling them to make good progress. For example, in one lesson, the teacher paired higher and lower attaining pupils, which led to all achieving good learning outcomes. In most cases, time is used well and the quantity and frequency of homework is appropriate, the work helping the consolidation of learning.
- 3.19 The good range of teaching approaches promotes progress. Teaching often makes good use of ICT in lessons, blending it successfully with other activities. Sometimes, learning approaches can be very creative, as in a PE lesson where pupils discovered attribution theory by playing table football, providing a memorable introduction to the concept. Opportunities for pupils to work independently are evident in many lessons, including making good use of the excellent and well-stocked school library. Most teaching makes appropriate provision for the range of needs in the class, so that pupils of all abilities make good progress. Pupils with SEND and EAL are particularly well supported, but those who are AGT experience rather more variable provision. Some lesson plans highlight additional tasks for the most able, and these are used well to maintain the stimulus for these pupils. In a few cases, however, able pupils work on the same tasks as others throughout and so make less progress than they should.
- 3.20 In the small proportion of less successful lessons, time is not used well and pupils are not fully engaged in learning. In these lessons, teaching is sometimes over directed, and pupils become passive in their learning. In isolated cases,

expectations are not sufficiently high, limiting the progress that the pupils can make. Effective assessment is carried out regularly. Pupils' work is marked in line with broad guidelines set out in the school policy, but the frequency and level of detail varies within and between departments. At its best, marking is frequent and includes careful correction and comments to help pupils improve; but in some cases it is less full and frequent. Pupils speak highly of the helpful oral feedback they receive when work is returned in lessons. For the most part pupils understand mark schemes, grade boundaries and departmental expectations. Teachers are conscientious in submitting the tasks set to the virtual learning environment (VLE).

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 The school meets its aim to foster self-motivation, mutual respect and a strong sense of social responsibility, within an educational experience which is enriched by a vibrant cultural environment.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Pupils are very mature and highly self-aware. They appreciate the encouragement they receive to be self-critical and to reflect on their own strengths and areas for development. Their confidence, maturity and self-awareness are fostered by the excellent nature of the relationships between pupils and staff.
- 4.4 Pupils readily engage in the exchange of ideas on issues of faith and in the exploration of their own spirituality, showing an outstanding sensitivity to those of other faiths and an excellent knowledge of other belief systems. Although at times some pupils can appear to be disengaged during services, they design and lead well thought out, multi-faith Chapel services. This multi-faith understanding and celebration is fundamental to much of the pupils' personal development.
- 4.5 The pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils reveal a strong sense of fairness and right and wrong as they debate and learn to make sound judgements. For example, Year 7 pupils suggested sophisticated ideas on the advantages and disadvantages of globalisation and transnational corporations, whilst sixth form students wrestled with the ethics of the bombing of Hiroshima. Pupils have a good understanding of the principles underpinning the school's rules and a strong moral compass. Their behaviour around school is impeccable and they are helpful, polite and courteous.
- 4.6 Social development is outstanding. Older pupils show a strong sense of responsibility to the school and to younger pupils through the prefect system, the mentoring of Year 7 pupils by the sixth form and by making full use of the opportunities for assuming responsibility which are provided by the house structure. They are keenly aware of the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves and respond through a wide variety of actions to support people in the local community and the wider world, through the DofE scheme and charity fund-raising. This is highlighted by Taal, an initiative involving members of the school community, created by the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist and Muslim Society which brings together dance, drama, food, creative writing and music in an annual, pupil-led event, which raises as much as £13,000 for charity. Pupils show an increasingly sophisticated social, political and economic awareness; this is developed through the PSHE scheme, within tutor time and via less formal mechanisms.
- 4.7 Pupils' cultural development is also excellent. They have an outstanding awareness and understanding of, and respect for, other faiths and the Western cultural tradition as well as the traditions of other cultures, something which flows naturally from the school's multi-cultural nature. The pupils are proud of their community and of the fact that the diversity is simply not an issue. As a result, they demonstrate harmonious relations with those from families different to their own. Pupils broaden their understanding of global issues in formal debates, informal discussion and through trips abroad.

- 4.8 By the time they reach the sixth form, pupils already show an excellent level of personal development and this is a great strength of the school. They are self-assured, well-rounded individuals, who are outstanding ambassadors for the school.

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

- 4.9 The school's arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.10 The pastoral structures meet the needs of all pupils very effectively, and fully support the school's aims. Pupils receive strong guidance and support from a wide range of staff, including very effective advice on curricular choices and university entrance. Pupils are confident that there is always a member of staff to confide in, including access to the chaplain, matron and a counsellor. Very good communication amongst house staff and with senior management ensures that provision is fully co-ordinated and recorded.
- 4.11 Relationships between staff and pupils are typified by ease, mutual respect and friendliness. The excellent relationships amongst the pupils themselves are characterised by tolerance and encouragement for each other's achievements at all levels. Pupils feel secure and happy and well cared for. The peer mentoring scheme is highly valued by both older and younger pupils. Prefects and sixth form pupils who act as heads of house serve as very effective role models for younger pupils. The school's extra-curricular programme provides a wide variety of events where pupils' strong sense of community involvement produces a notable degree of mutual support.
- 4.12 The pupils have a clear understanding of how to stay healthy through diet and exercise. The food provided by the school is popular and healthy, and the wide range of organised extra-curricular activities and sports within the curriculum ensures that all pupils take regular exercise. The PSHE programme in Years 7 to 11 also makes a significant contribution.
- 4.13 The school is very effective in promoting excellent behaviour. Pupils report that bullying is not a feature of school life and are confident that the school will deal firmly with any cases that arise. Minor incidents are dealt with quickly and effectively. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils questioned the fairness of the school's use of rewards and sanctions but inspection evidence, including scrutiny of school documentation and discussions with pupils, does not support this view.
- 4.14 The school employs effective measures to listen to the views of the pupils. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of pupils did not agree that the school asks for their opinions and responds to them, but inspection evidence does not support this view. Inspectors found that the school has responded recently to several ideas and concerns raised at school and food council meetings, including the introduction of a rock climbing activity and certain aspects of the VLE.
- 4.15 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils identified as having SEND.

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

- 4.16 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.17 The policy to safeguard pupils' welfare is comprehensive and is accurately reflected in current practice. The designated person for child protection ensures that all teaching and non-teaching staff have a thorough knowledge of their responsibilities for safeguarding, and attends regular update training with the local authority, with whom the school has very effective links. New staff receive high quality safeguarding induction training. A designated and suitably trained governor takes particular responsibility for matters of welfare and safeguarding matters. At the time of the previous inspection, there were shortcomings in the way in which prospective staff were checked. All staff within the school have now been checked and the results have been properly recorded, although some of these checks were, in the past, completed after the appointment date. Rigorous procedures are now followed for undertaking the necessary recruitment checks on all new staff prior to appointment.
- 4.18 The implementation of a suitable health and safety policy is overseen by a committee which includes a governor and meets each term to review all health and safety matters. The fire policy clearly defines emergency procedures; fire drills are conducted regularly, the results recorded and any problems put right quickly. Firefighting equipment is checked regularly, and electrical checks are carried out. Risk assessments for activities taking place off-site are detailed, but those which refer to on-site activities are still being developed.
- 4.19 Pupils who are sick or injured are cared for by the school medical centre. Medical records are comprehensive and accidents are recorded appropriately. Medicines are stored and dispensed correctly.
- 4.20 The school's admission and attendance records are maintained correctly and stored securely.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governance is effective in overseeing the work of the school, drawing upon the considerable expertise and experience of the governing body's members. Governors undertake a thorough programme of induction on appointment and receive periodic update training. Detailed work is undertaken by means of a suitable committee structure, leading to thorough monitoring of the school's key outcomes and finances.
- 5.3 Governors visit the school regularly and are further informed about issues facing the school through presentations by senior staff to the governing body. In addition, designated governors make focused visits to the school and report back to the whole board on a termly basis. These processes, including regular attendance at school events, and involvement in development planning and self-evaluation, ensure that governors can both challenge and support the work of the school. Governors now have a much higher profile than at the time of the previous inspection.
- 5.4 Governors ensure that they carry out their statutory responsibilities properly. They conduct regular monitoring of the impact of policies, including, as a body, carrying out an annual review of the effectiveness of the safeguarding and child protection arrangements. Following the previous inspection, it took some time to ensure all of the necessary checks on some staff were made. However, these historic anomalies in vetting staff were corrected, and checks were carried out and recorded appropriately for all those who needed them. The current system ensures that the proper checks are carried out in a timely manner, and as a result, all recently appointed staff have been checked appropriately.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good overall.
- 5.6 Leadership and management at all levels make a strong contribution to the school's vision to be a successful centre of excellence. There is unambiguous commitment to achieving the school's ambitious aims and to ensuring the care and safeguarding of pupils. Senior leaders provide purposeful educational direction and support, apparent in the high-quality outcomes of pupils' education and in their excellent standard of personal development. They are dedicated to the efficient operation and improvement of the school, and work energetically to engender a collegiate environment, where staff are valued and where pupils feel happy. They have developed clear lines of communication and accountability, are self-reflective and have a shared vision for the future of the school, as clearly conveyed in a detailed self-evaluation report.
- 5.7 Good progress has been made towards achieving the objectives of the school development plan for the period 2010-13, but the quality and depth of departmental improvement planning remain variable, and the link with whole-school priorities is insufficiently strong.

- 5.8 Procedures exist for the professional review of staff, the annual scrutiny of pupils' work and an annual analysis of examination results, but the school has been only partially successful in meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection to improve the effectiveness of management by establishing rigorous monitoring procedures for all aspects of the school's work. A positive climate of professional trust pervades school management, and the school is about to introduce a system of departmental self-review. However, academic policies and processes sometimes lack incisive challenge and measurable implementation.
- 5.9 Pastoral leadership is outstanding and through the house system enables close monitoring of pupils' well-being and academic progress, including careful oversight of pupils' extra-curricular commitments. It contributes very effectively to the school's objective to provide inclusive systems for individual support.
- 5.10 Suitable arrangements for checking the suitability of staff and governors are now in place. The school is successful in attracting and retaining high-quality and well-motivated staff, who are committed to providing a rich and varied educational experience for pupils, both within and beyond the classroom.
- 5.11 The professional development of staff is encouraged; it encompasses the attentive induction of new teachers as well as ample support for development opportunities, including external courses and further study. A triennial appraisal scheme includes input from both academic and pastoral line managers, and provides a suitable focus for self-reflection. The leadership of a loyal and dedicated support staff is highly effective, and well organised teams make a valuable contribution to pupils' educational success and welfare. Staff are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all children, including in relation to safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. Financial resources are well managed and accommodation is attractive and very well maintained. This enables fulfilment of the school's objective to provide first rate facilities, which facilitate learning, both in and out of the classroom.
- 5.12 The school maintains excellent relationships with parents in accordance with its aims. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire demonstrated that parents are extremely positive about the quality of communication with the school and the provision and support provided for their child. Only a small number of negative comments were received. A clear policy exists for dealing with any concerns that parents may have. In the pre-inspection questionnaire some parents expressed concern at the speed and efficiency with which their concerns are addressed. Inspection evidence did not support this. Overall, the quality of links with parents has strengthened since the previous inspection.
- 5.13 Pupils receive good information about the school. The parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with all required information. The school website, online calendar and school publications are particularly informative. The weekly e-bulletin provides parents with up-to-date news and details of future events. Information is regularly sent to parents via email, including details of any changes in day-to-day school arrangements.
- 5.14 Parents have good opportunities to become involved in the school. They enjoy attending informal, social events such as house-centred family evenings and seeing their children speaking and performing in front of their peers and other year groups. The school has introduced head-teacher led parental meetings, and although attendance has been low at some of these events, they have resulted in a number of

changes within the school. Parents are invited to attend PSHE evenings and career talks, so allowing them to be actively involved in the work and progress of their child.

- 5.15 Many parents support a vibrant parents' association. It has its own page on the school website and has recently started sending out an association newsletter to inform parents of its functions, encourage participation and advertise future events. These events, for example a recent Bollywood evening, are aimed at raising funds to support the work of the school, including the buying of sports equipment or enhancing minibus provision. They also allow many parents to be closely involved with school functions and provide a further means of communication between school and home. As such, the parents' association has been a key factor in the increasing numbers of parents attending concerts, plays and sporting events. The relationship between the school and the parents' association is highly valued by both parties.
- 5.16 Parents are provided with good information about their child's progress. Annual parents' evenings are well attended. Reporting includes half-termly grade sheets for achievement, classwork and homework for sixth form pupils with the addition of a grade for attitude for pupils in Year 11 and below. Parents also receive full written reports twice a year which include internal exam grades where applicable. Written reports are clear, detailed and subject specific but, based on the sample of reports seen, only rarely make reference to ways of improving or extending the quality of work. Further insightful comments from the tutor, house master and head refer to general academic progress, pastoral issues and wider school involvement.

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