



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

OUNDLE SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Oundle School

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

Full Name of School	Oundle School
DfE Number	928/6007
Registered Charity Number	309921
Address	Oundle School Oundle Peterborough Cambridgeshire PE8 4GH
Telephone Number	01832 277142
Fax Number	01832 273564
Email Address	admissions@oundleschool.org.uk
Head	Mr Charles Bush
Chair of Governors	Mr Julian Tregoning
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	1110
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (644 boys; 466 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 252
Number of Boarders	Total: 858 Full: 858 Weekly: 0
Inspection Dates	04 Feb 2014 to 07 Feb 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 March 2008.

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.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mr George Fisher	Reporting Inspector
Mr Philip Capes	Team Inspector (Former Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Christine Edmundson	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Antony Faccinello	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr David Forster	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr Chris Hall	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Nigel Hunter	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Alasdair McBay	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mrs Kate McCarey	Team Inspector (Former Assistant Head, HMC school)
Mr Simon Northcote-Green	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr John Parsonage	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr David Pritchard	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Ian Yorston	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mrs Pamela Leech	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Paul Johnson	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Senior Housemaster, HMC school)
Mr Simon Leyshon	Team Inspector for Boarding (Headmaster, ISA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Oundle School is a co-educational boarding and day school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18. The school is set in Oundle, Northamptonshire, with the school buildings distributed throughout the town. The school was established in 1556 when William Laxton, Master of the Worshipful Company of Grocers, endowed and re-founded the original Oundle Grammar School. The school is run as a charitable trust and is administered by a governing body, which includes several members of the Grocers' Company and operates through seven sub-committees; one is for Laxton Junior School (LJS), a day school for pupils between the ages of four and eleven, which is part of Oundle School.
- 1.2 The school's aims include the creation of informed, confident, enthusiastic, well-rounded and independent adults with intellectual curiosity and a strong moral sense. Since the previous inspection, there has been a restructuring of the senior management team and a refurbishment of the Cripps Library and the Adamson Centre for modern languages; additionally, a social centre for pupils has been created.
- 1.3 There are 1110 pupils in the school, with 644 boys and 466 girls. There are 394 pupils in the sixth form. There are 252 day pupils, so that they comprise around one-quarter of the total school population. Most pupils come from professional and business backgrounds. The majority of boarders' families are based in the UK, but the school is also home to pupils from over twenty countries overseas. A small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Pastoral care is based around provision within the houses. Boarders in Years 7 and 8 are housed in a combined boys' and girls' boarding house. From Year 9 upwards, boarders belong to one of eight boys' and five girls' houses. Day pupils from Year 7 to Year 13 are members of Laxton.
- 1.4 Day entrants into Year 7 come mainly from local independent schools together with the vast majority of LJS leavers. Boarders come from a mixture of schools across the UK and overseas. Overall, the average ability of the pupils, including within the sixth form, is above the national average. The school has identified 73 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 32 receive support from within the school. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs. There are 106 pupils for whom English is not their first language (EAL), and 25 of these receive help from the school, either through one-to-one tuition, or group work with specialist staff.
- 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.

Senior School

School	NC name
1st Form	Year 7
2nd Form	Year 8
3rd Form	Year 9
4th Form	Year 10
5th Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Oundle School is highly successful in meeting its aims and pupils' overall achievement is excellent, as demonstrated by their high levels of performance in public examinations and lessons, and within extra-curricular activities. Pupils, including those with SEND and EAL and the most able, make good progress overall, with high rate of progress to GCSE level. The curriculum which underpins pupils' learning is broad, well balanced and offers choice and challenge at all stages. It fully meets the needs of academically able pupils and is enriched by an outstanding range of societies and clubs, many within the 'Voluntaries' programme of extension courses. The extra-curricular provision is outstanding, including the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE). The levels of performance in music, art, drama and sport are excellent and enhance pupils' experience significantly. Pupils demonstrate excellent learning qualities. They are receptive, alert, articulate and highly motivated. They show creativity and imagination and written work is well presented and organised. Highly-developed research skills and independent thinking are evident, particularly amongst older pupils. The quality of teaching is excellent and has improved since the previous inspection. At its best, it is characterised by inventive approaches, teachers' energy and enthusiasm, and the excellent rapport between teachers and pupils. Sometimes the teaching methods and styles used are too restrictive and this limits the progress made within lessons. Assessment methods are effective and thorough.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. The boarding houses provide a stable, supportive and stimulating environment in which to live. The houses have their own individual characteristics, this individuality being much valued by pupils and staff. The quality of boarding accommodation has improved since the previous inspection. Pupils are friendly, happy and self-reflective and show genuine concern and respect for both their peers and staff. The quality of care provided by the school is excellent and pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Healthy living is successfully promoted. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a minority of pupils expressed a view that sanctions were unfairly administered, and inspectors found that rewards and sanctions are not always awarded evenly or consistently. The opportunity for boarders to make their views known concerning the catering has improved since the previous Ofsted inspection.
- 2.3 Governance is good and there is very strong and far-sighted financial management. Governors maintain a clear, strategic role in shaping the development of the school, and meet their responsibilities in ensuring the safeguarding of pupils. Governors feel welcome within the school and they are supportive of school events. Leadership and management are excellent; senior leadership is particularly strong and is supported by effective middle management. Staff are more aware of the importance of risk assessments than at the time of the previous inspection. Links with parents are excellent and their endorsement of the school and its values was evident in their positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Share the excellent practice observed within some teaching, in order to extend the range of teaching styles to all staff.
 2. Implement a consistent approach to rewards and sanctions across the whole 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' achievement and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Throughout the school, pupils show excellent development of knowledge, understanding and skills, both within lessons and in extra-curricular activities. Pupils are highly articulate and have well-developed listening skills, seldom needing to be told something twice. They read fluently, both in their own and in other languages. Very high standards of literacy are evident, for example within the pupil-written newspaper, the *Oundle Chronicle*.
- 3.3 Pupils can think logically and develop sophisticated arguments, as noted within formal debates and within classroom discussion. They can also readily apply prior knowledge to novel and complex situations. High standards of creativity are evident in the art work around the school, and within the design area. Pupils' mathematical skills are excellent and are used effectively across the curriculum. Pupils participate very successfully in a wide range of sporting areas, displaying a high level of achievement in physical skills.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve notable successes in academic competitions, for example in mathematical and scientific challenges, in Olympiads and in regional and national competitions in English, economics, computing and languages. Significant numbers of pupils have gained prestigious diplomas and awards in music and design and technology.
- 3.5 Achievement in extra-curricular activities is excellent and sometimes outstanding, for example within the CCF or the DofE, where 80 pupils achieved the gold award in 2013. Additionally, the vast majority of pupils are involved in raising money for charity.
- 3.6 Pupils are very successful in obtaining places at highly selective universities, with a very large majority obtaining places at universities of their first choice. Pupils with EAL are also very successful, both within academic competitions, and in working towards the required levels in the International English Language Testing System to move on to degree-level study.
- 3.7 The following analysis uses national data for the years 2010-12, the most recent period for which comparative statistics are available. Results at GCSE have been well above the national average for maintained schools, and above the national average for maintained selective schools. Girls' results in 2010 were exceptional in relation to the average for girls in maintained schools. Results in IGCSE are higher than worldwide norms, and, overall, higher than UK norms. A-level results have been well above the national average for maintained schools, and above the national average for maintained selective schools.
- 3.8 The level of attainment at GCSE, and nationally standardised measures of progress that are available, indicate that pupils make progress in the senior school that is high in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The level of attainment at A level indicates that pupils make progress in the sixth form that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Within lessons, pupils were seen to make good progress overall. Pupils with SEND and EAL also make good progress,

evidenced by their success in public examinations, and in winning subject-specific year-group prizes. The most able make strong progress within the academic extension programme.

- 3.9 Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning and apply themselves with great determination, often making notes unprompted. Pupils' work is highly organised and well presented. They settle to tasks quickly and want to get involved in the wider life of their community. They value education and the acquisition of knowledge for its own sake, and they engage enthusiastically and with enjoyment in the many opportunities for cultural and intellectual enrichment outside the classroom.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 The school is highly successful in its aim of providing a flexible and innovative curriculum, which is strong in the traditional disciplines. The provision is well planned to enrich and extend pupils' experiences across all areas of learning, and makes a successful contribution to pupils' achievements. The required areas of learning are complemented by extension courses, called the 'Voluntaries', which cater well for all tastes and successfully spark the enthusiasm of pupils. The most able receive a significant stimulus through these additional classes. Pupils with SEND and EAL receive highly effective and well-coordinated help, largely through specialist support, including language help, and often on a one-to-one basis. The school makes good use of individual education plans to support pupils with SEND, with a regular review of targets. The required provision is made for those pupils with statements of special educational needs.
- 3.12 Classical languages successfully promote a rigorous approach to learning, with pupils studying Latin until at least the end of Year 9, and choosing between Greek and German in Year 8. Since the previous inspection, Russian and Arabic have been introduced, so broadening the choice of languages, and an increased number of pupils are studying Chinese. There has also been a move towards examination courses which emphasise thinking and learning, rather than being simply assessment-driven, which is particularly successful for the more able pupils. For example, many subjects now follow IGCSE syllabi, and, in the sixth form, nine subjects have adopted the Cambridge Pre-University (Pre-U) course. At all stages pupils benefit from the flexibility to choose subjects freely.
- 3.13 About 80 lower-sixth pupils are taking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which develops their skills of research and independent learning. Additionally, twenty Year 9 pupils have chosen to do a Level 2 EPQ, demonstrating the school's desire to extend independent learning at all levels. Pupils speak with enthusiasm about their subjects and appreciate the range of opportunities available through the curriculum. The well-stocked libraries are highly effective in supporting pupil research and learning, and in promoting a culture of scholarship.
- 3.14 Careers and university advice is highly effective, with good use being made of parental expertise at Year 11 in 'Ask the Expert' events. Support is provided for pupils applying to American universities as well as destinations with high entry standards in the UK. Suitable work experience, aptitude tests, and interview practice, are also provided.
- 3.15 The extra-curricular programme is outstanding; it is extensive, wide-ranging and imaginative and supports pupils' personal development very well. It fully meets the

school's aim to provide opportunities to develop character, creativity, initiative and enterprise. It is also responsive to the needs and interests of the pupils, and promotes a culture which encourages pupils to look upwards and outwards at every turn.

- 3.16 The school encourages 'sport-for-all'. Participation is nearly universal and is reflected in the breadth and number of representative teams which are fielded on any given Saturday. Specialist coaching is available across the full range of sports and this enables the most talented pupils to train and compete at national and international level in many sports including hockey, netball, rugby and triathlon.
- 3.17 The CCF and DofE awards are both well run and enable pupils to develop both teamwork and leadership qualities. Musical provision is also very strong, both in its quality and its range, and it includes performances in partnership with the Royal College of Music. The curriculum is further enriched by numerous overseas trips to places as diverse as the Vatican, Chicago and China.
- 3.18 Links with the community are active and effective, including the wide-ranging provision for drama. The school's commitment to 'Community Action' within the local area is extensive both in term time and in the holidays. The *Oundle Chronicle*, written and produced entirely by pupils, returns a profit, which is then used to support local charities.
- 3.19 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire demonstrate an extremely high level of satisfaction with the curricular and extra-curricular provision.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.20 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.21 Teaching is highly effective in supporting the school's aims to promote academic excellence and develop informed, enthusiastic and well-rounded young people. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and understand their individual needs. Pupils with SEND and EAL receive valuable, well-targeted support from specialist teachers, and, in the most effective lessons, specific attention and guidance in the classroom.
- 3.22 Teaching fosters interest and, in the best cases, a real love of the subject, which leads to the production of some outstanding work, from presentations and discussion in German, to a very sophisticated debate about euthanasia in religious studies. It makes a strong contribution to pupils' excellent achievements. It also helps to develop an increasing level of independence, exemplified by the enthusiasm with which pupils in the sixth-form undertake EPQ and Pre-U assignments. The best teaching within the sixth form is of the highest quality.
- 3.23 Lessons are carefully planned and often skilfully aligned to the abilities of a group, including the setting of appropriate amounts and levels of homework. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils expressed a view that their workload was excessive. However, inspection evidence, including interviews with pupils, does not support this view, and staff were found to be flexible in adjusting the demands on pupils where necessary. In most lessons, time is effectively managed and a brisk pace is maintained throughout. Resources to support effective teaching are plentiful, and a comprehensive range of visual and verbal stimuli is used to promote learning. All teaching benefits from excellent subject knowledge and teachers are able to convey this coherently to pupils, for example when attempting

to explain difficult concepts, such as calibration in biology or gerundival attraction in Latin. Teachers are also very generous in providing additional assistance outside regular class time to any pupil who needs it, and this is much appreciated by the pupils.

- 3.24 Teachers deploy a range of methods to promote learning. A particular feature of the teaching is the open, and sometimes far-reaching, exchange of question and answer between teacher and pupils. In the best teaching, the more able pupils are challenged through a high level of intellectual demand. However, in a few cases, especially where the teaching style allows for too much teacher talk in the lesson, impetus and interest can be lost and learning is thus diminished. A rigorous approach to the teaching of literacy and subject skills enables pupils to construct well-argued and structured essays, reason lucidly and justify their opinions. They are sometimes inspired by the teaching to carry out research through their own interest, and to show initiative, for example in revising material not fully grasped.
- 3.25 Teaching encourages good behaviour and it is evident that many pupils both enjoy their lessons and play an important part in their effectiveness. Most marking is regular, offers detailed comment, and gives pupils a clear idea of how to improve performance. Additionally, much useful feedback is given orally. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teaching has improved significantly. In particular, the sharing of ideas has been promoted along with increased use of assessment data to inform the setting of targets. Best practice is now widespread and a significant minority of lessons is outstanding. Pupils with statements of special educational needs receive the stipulated provision.

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 pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school strongly fulfils its stated aims to create well-rounded and independent adults with intellectual curiosity and a strong moral sense. The spiritual development of pupils is excellent. The pupils' strong sense of service is underpinned by Christian values which are central to the ethos of the school. Pupils benefit from the support of the chaplaincy team who regularly visit their houses as well as the chapel which provides a focus for worship within the school. Other faiths are also represented and embraced by the school community, in line with the school's aims. Pupils are reflective and have a noticeable sense of identity and self-worth which is nourished within school, enabling them to leave as articulate and mature young adults. Pupils appreciate very well the non-material aspects of life, for which opportunities abound in music, art and drama, and they confidently explore religious and ethical questions in class and in extra-curricular activities.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is outstanding. They have a clear sense of right and wrong, developed through activities such as debating and taking part in the 'Community Action' programme. Pupils are given valuable opportunities to discuss moral dilemmas and gain a sophisticated understanding of ethical issues through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Pupils behave in an exemplary way, and senior pupils within houses help to develop the moral sense of younger ones, both through the example which they set, and by supporting them as they move through the school.
- 4.4 The social development of pupils is outstanding and senior pupils are well regarded by younger ones. They live in strong house communities, learning the value of living alongside others, and then using this grounding to serve the community beyond the school. Pupils are noticeably confident and at ease with adults. In response to the pre inspection questionnaire, a minority of pupils indicated that they felt they are not given the chance to take on responsibility. Inspection evidence shows that pupils do have opportunities within houses to take responsibility, for example as prefects and as mentors of younger pupils, and pupils themselves speak highly of the value of these roles. Pupils engage extremely well with the local community, for example by providing help for elderly people, and within special and primary schools. Pupils also enhance their social skills through the PSHE programme, which includes both small group sessions and lectures by visiting speakers. The programme is constantly being developed as new issues emerge, and it helps pupils to develop an awareness of the wider society in which they live and an understanding of political and economic institutions. All pupils understand the importance of charitable actions, both towards those closest to them and those farther afield. There are numerous charitable initiatives which pupils support with great enthusiasm.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. They value the diversity of their community, and their strong understanding of other cultures is further developed through work in the classroom, in voluntary activities and within the visiting speaker programme. They also benefit from their many experiences of culture in music, drama and art within and beyond school, and from overseas travel and development work, particularly the long-term links with schools and an orphanage in Kenya.

- 4.6 Pupils have an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave the school. They are articulate and outward looking, have a strong social awareness, and an appreciation of the wider world. Pupils are mutually supportive and recognise each others' strengths. They are noticeably proud of their school.

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

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Academic and pastoral staff provide a very high standard of support and extremely effective guidance, in accordance with the school's aim to have a pastoral care system which is comprehensive, sensitive and responds to the needs of the individual. The quality of pastoral care contributes extremely well to pupils' personal development.
- 4.9 The school's pastoral arrangements are based on securely embedded policies and procedures, and effective monitoring by senior pastoral managers ensures that the needs of individual pupils are met successfully. In the case of serious concerns, prompt and effective action is taken by the recently appointed Child Protection Welfare Group, through which an individual care plan, appropriate to the needs of the pupil, is produced.
- 4.10 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is excellent, as are relations amongst pupils, with older pupils having mentoring responsibilities for younger ones. Pupils feel well looked after and valued. Food is nutritious, and there is plenty of choice with pupils encouraged to eat healthily. The extensive sporting opportunities encourage good health through regular exercise.
- 4.11 The school successfully promotes pupils' good behaviour, and guards against harassment and bullying. Pupils report that bullying is rare and that staff respond quickly and effectively to reported cases. Pupils have a good understanding of what is expected of them, inside and outside the classroom, and serious punishments rarely need to be given. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a minority of pupils expressed a view that teachers were not fair in the way that they gave rewards and sanctions. Inspection evidence, including interviews with pupils, and examination of handbooks, policies and behaviour logs, supports a view that there is some unevenness and inconsistency in the ways in which both sanctions and rewards are administered.
- 4.12 In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a majority of pupils expressed dissatisfaction with the school's willingness to ask for their opinions and to respond to their views. Inspection evidence shows that pupils' views are represented and listened to effectively within houses, but less so across the whole school.
- 4.13 The school has an appropriate and recently updated three-year plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.14 The school's arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent.
- 4.15 These arrangements make a strong contribution to the pupils' personal development. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive and implemented rigorously. All staff receive regular and effective child protection training, including

on internet safety, and it is updated regularly. Pupils feel very safe in the school environment. The child protection welfare group monitors carefully all potentially vulnerable pupils in the school.

- 4.16 All necessary measures are taken to minimise the risks from fire and other hazards. Full and detailed records of fire evacuation drills are maintained, including night-time drills in boarding houses. All main areas of the school have designated, trained fire marshals. Call points, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and electrical equipment are regularly tested and maintained by qualified personnel. Risk assessments associated with the premises, and with school trips and activities, are appropriately detailed, identifying the hazards and the controls needed to minimise those, and carefully monitored. Staff are much more aware of the importance of risk assessments than at the time of the previous inspection.
- 4.17 The medical centre, where doctors and well-qualified nursing staff are available to assist any pupil who becomes ill or sustains an injury, ensures that the welfare of pupils, including those with SEND, is a priority. Suitably qualified staff with first-aid training are readily available throughout the school.
- 4.18 Pupils are registered four times per day in their boarding houses, and twice a day in the day house. Lateness and absence are recorded centrally. The admission register and the attendance register for day pupils are properly maintained, and correctly stored for the previous three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The quality of boarding education is excellent.
- 4.20 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders' personal development is closely nurtured through their boarding experience and pupils are confident, articulate and well-mannered. Boarders are proud of the school and of their boarding house. They are able to influence the boarding provision through house meetings, food committees and by easy and informal communication with staff. Boarders and staff enjoy relaxed and positive relationships and boarders feel individually valued and supported. They are self-reliant and demonstrate tolerance and integrity in their friendships with each other. Boarders mix well with each other and relish the family feeling created by house communities of older and younger pupils. They are very loyal to their own house but also value the friendships they make with boarders across the school. Overseas boarders feel welcomed and are quickly integrated into the life of their house. All are able to participate fully in house life, either as prefects, or by taking part in the multitude of inter-house competitions. Many contribute to the smooth running of their house by establishing rotas for tidying, or sharing in cooking extravaganzas. Boarders are encouraged to be fit and healthy. The atmosphere of mutual trust and respect allows boarders to thrive, and behaviour in the houses is exemplary.
- 4.21 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Houses are welcoming, well-maintained, clean and comfortable. Each house has well-stocked, individual kitchens for different year groups and laundry provision is generous. Houses have excellent recreational facilities, with additional common rooms where boarders may entertain visitors from other houses. All houses have music practice rooms, up-to-date and attractive libraries, and a wealth of computers. Many houses also have a gym with various keep-fit machines. Boarders relish the wide range of activities which is available to them. Bedrooms for older boarders have study desks, while

younger boarders use special study rooms. Many boarders choose to personalise their areas with posters and family photographs. A small minority of boarders who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed concern about the provision for the safe keeping of their belongings, but inspection evidence found that all boarders have lockable spaces and that house staff are happy to look after any valuables. Small purchases of personal items may be made from house supplies, and boarders may also use the local shops. All houses have sufficient toilets, bathrooms and showers, with plentiful supplies of hot water and appropriate privacy. Drinking water is readily available and supplies are correctly labelled. The extensive extra-curricular programme offers boarders a wide choice of activities in addition to the organised house visits and trips. A small minority of boarders felt they did not have sufficient free time, but inspectors found that the quieter weekend programme for those who wish it allows boarders many opportunities to unwind and relax. Boarders keep in touch with parents through a range of modern communication systems and mobile phones; all houses have phone boxes.

- 4.22 New boarders benefit from a thoughtful induction programme of activities and support. House notice-boards display a comprehensive range of contact details for external agencies and boarders are fully aware of the wide range of adults to whom they can turn for advice and guidance. 'House Friends', adults who live locally and are employed by the school, make weekly visits to each house and the chaplaincy provides additional pastoral support. All pupils, including boarders, have access to confidential counselling. Two independent listeners provide a further opportunity for boarders to speak to an adult, in addition to house staff.
- 4.23 The medical centre is pleasant and welcoming with excellent facilities for sick boarders. Qualified nursing staff provide 24-hour care, with additional medical cover on match days. Doctors visit regularly and there are several rooms where boarders may receive treatment from physiotherapists. All medication is correctly and appropriately stored and dispensed, with parental consent given as required. Records are properly maintained. Arrangements for self-medication are robust and the confidentiality and rights of boarders are scrupulously maintained. A significant number of boarders, in responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire, expressed unhappiness with the catering provision, but inspectors found the food to be of a high quality, nutritious and plentiful, and with a wide choice available. A recent initiative by the school in response to the previous Ofsted boarding inspection, to which both pupils and staff have contributed, has encouraged greater pupil input, with boarders now helping to determine menus and participate in active food committees. Excellent provision is made for those with special dietary needs.
- 4.24 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding of boarders are strong. Boarders feel safe and well cared for. The school's safeguarding arrangements are thorough and a comprehensive safeguarding policy has been written. The anti-bullying policy is robust and effective. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a minority of boarders said that they did not feel that rewards and sanctions were always applied fairly. Inspection evidence, including meetings with boarders, did reveal an inconsistency of practice across the houses. House staff work hard to establish an atmosphere of trust and respect in houses and boarders know when and how to report concerns. They have confidence that their concerns will be taken seriously and dealt with properly. House staff are aware of boarders' whereabouts and maintain excellent systems for signing in and out. Staff are available at night, should boarders need assistance, and they can easily be contacted. The policy in the unlikely event that a pupil should go missing is clear and understood by all staff. Appropriate risk assessments are undertaken and regular fire drills take place in boarding time.

Effective measures ensure that staff and parents communicate clearly, ensuring the safety and welfare of boarders.

- 4.25 The leadership and management of boarding is excellent and strongly supports the pastoral aims of the school. While the fourteen boarding houses each retain their individual character, management systems ensure a consistently high quality of care for all. House staff are well supported by senior managers and meet regularly to review arrangements to ensure that changes and developments have a positive impact for boarders. Staff benefit from rigorous appraisal and professional training opportunities, sharing fresh ideas and good practice through frequent, residential staff meetings. The strong tutorial system further enhances the provision for boarders and communication between pastoral and academic staff is highly effective in encouraging boarders to fulfil their potential at all levels. There are clear priorities for development, and the school has taken seriously the recommendation in the previous ISI inspection by continuing to improve the quality of housing in all boarding areas. Policies are reviewed annually and are properly implemented. The school has a comprehensive complaints policy for parents. Where there have been welfare issues, the school has responded quickly by organising comprehensive support structures for all concerned.
- 4.26 A small minority of parents who responded to the questionnaire said that they would like more official exeats during the school year. In discussions with boarders, inspectors found that most boarders are content with the school's existing policy. All parental concerns are considered seriously, with appropriate action being taken. The vast majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were delighted with the provision and care which their children receive.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing body includes a valuable range of expertise, which is appropriately deployed across the seven governors' committees. Individual governors are readily available to provide support and advice in specific areas such as financial matters and health and safety. Leadership of the board is committed and dedicated, and maintains close contact with the headmaster.
- 5.3 Governors show a clear understanding of the school's aims and are highly effective in ensuring that the school has the necessary financial, staffing and other resources available. Governance provides appropriate challenge, encouragement and support to the school to fulfil its aspirations. It is kept well informed about the school's work through exceptionally high quality reports from the senior management team and other agencies, such as the auditor, the school doctor and the chaplaincy. Academic standards, especially examination performance and university entrance successes, are carefully reviewed by the planning committee.
- 5.4 Governors meet all senior staff over the course of the year and there are informal opportunities for them to meet with other staff at social and school events. Although in the past, policies have not always been monitored and scrutinised with sufficient rigour and regularity, the recent arrangements provide an effective system for the systematic monitoring of key policies, including safeguarding and welfare, health and safety. This enables governors to ensure the school's compliance, and thus gain a better oversight of the school.
- 5.5 The arrangements for governor induction are comprehensive, and governors are alerted to relevant training opportunities, with several taking advantage of these. Biennial child protection training is given and governors have also attended external courses to facilitate effective discharge of their responsibilities, including the annual review of safeguarding.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent.
- 5.7 The senior leadership is highly committed to promoting the aims of the school, especially to create informed, confident, enthusiastic, well-rounded and independent adults with intellectual curiosity and a strong moral sense. Since the previous inspection, a restructuring of the senior management team has brought fresh purpose and vigour to the leadership of the school. Roles are clearly defined and members are very active in the discharge of their duties. They work closely together with a strong collective vision for the future development of the school, focused closely on the needs of the pupils.
- 5.8 A culture of self-evaluation and reflection helps the school to progress. Planning is effective at all levels, emanating from a wide-ranging, five-year strategic development plan. This identifies suitable time-scales for action, with key personnel

taking responsibility for the individual elements. A process of annual review and evaluation is also included. Additionally, there is a clear pastoral strategy, which has evolved through effective self-appraisal; priorities identified include a refinement of the provision and support for vulnerable pupils, the movement towards smaller pastoral units for day pupils, and an emphasis on collective responsibility for encouraging good behaviour.

- 5.9 Leadership and management of academic departments is strong overall, but lacks consistency and rigour in some areas, for example with regard to subject-specific strategies for providing for the needs of pupils with SEND and the most able. Departmental development planning shows clear ambition and is focused on well-defined educational outcomes. The budgetary process is effective in ensuring that sufficient resources are available within departments.
- 5.10 Pastoral management is particularly strong and policies are implemented highly effectively. Initiatives such as a rolling programme of visits to the houses by the senior management team indicate the importance given to regular contact and discussion about pastoral development. Housemasters and housemistresses, well supported by tutors, matrons and support staff, give a strong directional lead, setting the tone and ethos for a thriving community. Senior management regularly reviews strategies and is actively involved in its approach to developing controls and actions to minimise risk. A sensible and effective division of responsibilities within pastoral management ensures that significant time is allocated to consideration of the care and welfare of all staff and pupils. Every full-time member of the teaching staff is involved in the life of a house.
- 5.11 The senior management team is highly successful in appointing and motivating high-quality staff and ensuring they are suitably trained. The procedures for inducting new staff are well thought out and effective. Newly qualified teachers receive excellent mentoring. Recently appointed staff speak particularly highly of the help they receive when joining the school. Staff have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and are strongly encouraged to continue their professional development externally, as well as participating in a well-managed programme which enables all staff to refresh their understanding and practice. An effective appraisal scheme is carried out, which includes all staff and the headmaster.
- 5.12 All staff receive appropriate and regularly updated training in safeguarding and also in matters of welfare, health and safety. Support staff are fully integrated into the school community and play an important and active role in supporting its work. The arrangements for checking the suitability of staff and governors prior to appointment are suitable and the central register of appointments is meticulously maintained.
- 5.13 The quality of the school's links with its parents is excellent. The school maintains a highly constructive relationship with its parents and meets fully its aim to communicate widely and with clarity and integrity. Parents are able to communicate with members of staff directly by email, and contact between parents and house staff, in particular, is both regular and productive.
- 5.14 A very large majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed a high level of satisfaction with the education which the school provides. They cited as particular strengths the range and appropriateness of its curricular and extra-curricular provision, the progress that their child makes and the support given to the most able pupils. They also appreciated the high standard of the boarding arrangements and the quality of the leadership and management. Almost all parents

indicated that they felt that the school keeps their child safe and achieves high standards of behaviour. A very few parents indicated that they were not always satisfied with aspects of school provision for children with SEND. The evidence derived from inspection showed that the school was aware of individual concerns and consistently acts within relevant procedures. A very small minority of parents stated that when they raised concerns these were not always handled well by the school. Through scrutiny of the school's records of concerns and complaints, which were suitably comprehensive and other inspection documentation, the inspection team concluded that the school addressed concerns with appropriate care. This was exemplified through examples of actions taken following representations.

- 5.15 The school provides a wide range of opportunities for parents to become involved in school life. Many join the Oundle Society, which offers a valuable cultural and social link with the school. Events organized by the society are well supported by parents. Parents are also encouraged to attend open days, dramatic productions, concerts, sports fixtures and house-based events, such as a hog roast, and to take part in charitable fund-raising activities.
- 5.16 The school provides parents of current and prospective pupils with comprehensive, high-quality and relevant information about the school, its policies and its work. The school website is a particularly informative resource, as are its magazines, newsletters and booklets, such as *About Oundle*. Year group meetings with staff are held regularly, and parents receive clear, detailed reports twice a year, which contain helpful, subject-specific information about each pupil's progress, as well as suggestions about how they might address areas for further development.

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