



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
WOODBIDGE SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Woodbridge School

Full Name of School	<b>Woodbridge School</b>
DfE Number	<b>935/6054</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1110964</b>
Address	<b>Woodbridge School Burkitt Road Woodbridge Suffolk IP12 4JH England</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01394 615002</b>
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Email Address	<b>hmsec@woodbridge.suffolk.sch.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Neil Tetley</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Roger Finbow</b>
Age Range	<b>4 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>796</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (396 boys; 400 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): <b>20</b> 5-11: <b>177</b> 11-18: <b>599</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>740</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>56</b> Full: <b>56</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Karen Spalding</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Boys and Girls</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>17 Nov 2015 to 20 Nov 2015</b>

## PREFACE

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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://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.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI boarding intermediate inspection was in October 2012 and the previous ISI integrated inspection was in November 2009.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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.

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

### **Inspectors**

Mrs Colette Culligan	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Annabelle Hancock	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Malcolm Gough	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Ruth Loveman	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr James Fowler	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Francie Healy	Team Inspector (Headmaster, SOH school)
Mr Graham Letley	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Miss Phillipa Message	Team Inspector (Senior Deputy, HMC school)
Mr Matthew Mostyn	Team Inspector (Second Master, HMC school)
Mr Bill Rogers	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Ms Alana Davidson	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Ms Susan Rix	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Woodbridge School is part of the Seckford Foundation, which was created in the reign of Queen Elizabeth I by Thomas Seckford to provide education for the young and care for the elderly in Woodbridge and the surrounding area. The school is a registered charity overseen by the trustees of the Seckford Foundation, who delegate responsibility for some areas of school governance to the school committee. The school, which occupies an extensive site on the edge of the town of Woodbridge in Suffolk, provides for pupils aged from 4 to 18. It became fully co-educational in 1974. Boarding provision is offered for pupils aged 13 to 18. The Queen's House Pre-Preparatory School, situated on the main site, caters for those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) to Year 2. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 attend The Abbey Preparatory School, which is located in its own building close to the town's market square and a short walk from the main school site.
- 1.2 The school aims to create an environment in which supportive relationships contribute to an atmosphere that encourages pupils to develop into happy, confident, resilient and caring young men and women. It sets out to provide a high quality education that enables pupils to enjoy their schooling and to become independent, curious and confident learners who can fulfil their academic potential. It aims for all pupils to discover, through its curriculum and extra-curricular activities, things that they are good at and which boost their self-esteem, while preparing them for the rapidly changing world of work.
- 1.3 There are 20 children enrolled in the EYFS and a total of 41 in Years 1 and 2. The Abbey currently has 136 pupils and the senior school 599, with almost equal numbers of girls and boys. There are 196 pupils in the sixth form. Most pupils have at least above average ability and in the senior school some have ability that is well above average. There are 64 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), including the majority of boarders, and the school provides specialist support for 58 of these. Of the 101 pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs or disabilities (SEND), 63 require extra support from the school, mostly for learning difficulties such as dyslexia. There is one pupil with an educational, health and care (EHC) plan.
- 1.4 The majority of day pupils come from white British families living in Woodbridge or the surrounding villages and towns. The 56 boarders all live in School House, which is on the main school site. They mostly come from overseas, predominantly Mainland China and Hong Kong but also a small number from other Asian and European countries.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 Woodbridge School is successful in meeting its aims, notably in providing a high quality education. Pupils' achievement and learning are good throughout the school. Children in the EYFS enjoy their learning, the majority reaching or exceeding the levels expected for their age. Older pupils in all sections of the school articulate their ideas fluently. They manipulate mathematical and technological concepts confidently and enthusiastically participate in the wide range of physical activities open to them. Provision for pupils with SEND or EAL supports such pupils' progress effectively and the most able pupils also make appropriate progress. The school provides an excellent curriculum and range of extra-curricular opportunities. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of parents and pupils expressed satisfaction with, and appreciation of, the curriculum and activities available. The structure of the timetable can be a factor limiting pupils' learning in a few lessons. The quality of teaching is good, and particularly strong in the senior school, enabling good progress and academic attainment. Some of the inconsistencies in teaching standards and marking identified in the previous report remain.
- 2.2 Pupils throughout the school reach an excellent level of personal development. They are thoughtful, considerate and kind, qualities that develop from pupils' early days in the EYFS. The children co-operate and enjoy each other's company. As they move up through the school, pupils become increasingly self-confident, and they willingly undertake responsibility and support each other. Sixth-form pupils are notably mature, and well-prepared for the challenges of the next stage of their education. The quality of pastoral care is excellent. Behaviour throughout the school is outstanding, with tolerance and respect always evident; incidents of inappropriate behaviour or bullying are rare. Staff are highly committed to their charges' well-being, and relationships are highly positive. Measures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent, with all staff trained as required in safeguarding matters. Rigorous procedures ensure that pupils are kept safe from preventable harm and that premises and facilities are maintained to a very high standard. The quality of boarding is excellent. The boarding community is characterised by warm friendliness and growing self-sufficiency and pupils benefit considerably from their boarding experience.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent. Governors have established measures to ensure a thorough understanding of the school and are now rigorous in their oversight of the legally required policies. The leadership and management of the school are good. There have been significant and very recent changes in the senior leadership of the junior and senior schools, resulting in the creation of new procedures and launching of new initiatives. Some progress has been made in meeting the recommendations of the previous report regarding monitoring of policies and of standards of marking but some inconsistencies in teaching remain. All the recommendations of the previous report concerning boarding have been met. Oversight of boarding at senior management level is not sufficiently formalised to ensure that senior leaders have a thorough grasp of boarding procedures and development. There is a clear educational vision and direction and discussions between governors and senior staff are currently underway to formulate a clear development plan. The vast majority of pupils say they like being at the school and almost all parents say they would recommend it to others.

**2.(b) Action points****(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

**(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Finalise discussions and implement decisions about the structure of the school day, in order to create a timetable that better supports the pupils' learning.
2. Ensure that there is robust monitoring and evaluation of the recently introduced initiatives in all areas of school life, to support the school's achievement of its identified priorities.
3. Ensure that the implementation of recent changes in the boarding setting is appropriately supported, monitored and evaluated at senior level.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 Pupils in all sections of the school are well-educated in accordance with the school's aims and they develop into confident and resilient individuals. They enjoy their education and demonstrate good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill in a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a very large majority of parents and almost all pupils said that they are pleased with the progress pupils make.
- 3.3 The children in the EYFS achieve extremely well, making strong progress from their starting points according to their abilities and needs. By the end of Reception, most children reach the developmental levels expected for their age and some exceed them. Children with particular needs also make at least good progress thanks to carefully individualised programmes and support.
- 3.4 Reception class children can write phonetically correct words and basic sentences and carry out simple addition. They demonstrate excellent language development and communicate well, showing a growing confidence as their vocabulary increases. They approach activities with great energy and independently extend their learning, for example writing speech bubbles on the outdoor chalkboard. They explore and investigate enthusiastically and concentrate well, as when constructing a home for an owl from sticks and leaves. They are able to work independently, think critically and are creative.
- 3.5 Throughout the remainder of the school, pupils speak eloquently, argue cogently and show good listening skills. At a level appropriate to their age, they write and think clearly, use information and communication technology (ICT) and mathematical skills well and enjoy developing their physical abilities. Many junior school pupils are awarded academic scholarships to secondary schools and the majority of the sixth-form pupils achieve places at their first choice university; many undertake demanding courses.
- 3.6 Pupils across the whole school achieve exceptional standards in a range of activities. Chess remains popular and high standards have been maintained, with junior school pupils competing at regional level and senior pupils in recent years representing their countries in tournaments.
- 3.7 In the junior school, more than 100 pupils learn a musical instrument, achieving high standards in grade examinations. The Abbey chapel choir was invited to sing at the Royal Albert Hall. The junior pupils participate in many local art and drama festivals, with distinctions awarded to pupils in several categories including poetry writing, Bible reading and prose speaking. Sporting successes for junior teams are notable, with regional successes in hockey, tennis, equestrianism and athletics, as well as excellent team and individual achievement in other sports. Many pupils win scholarships to the senior school for music or sport.
- 3.8 In the senior school, high standards are reached in many areas. Music continues as a strength of the school, with exceptional standards achieved in instrumental and choral work. Many pupils reach grade 5 or above, several reaching diploma level; each year several are selected for regional and national music groups. Speech and

drama successes are equally strong. In recent examinations, more than two-thirds of pupils received distinctions. Sports teams regularly reach regional or national finals in a several disciplines including hockey, netball, rugby, equestrianism and athletics. The sports leadership programme is a popular activity, with several pupils each year attaining the highest level available. There is enthusiastic participation in The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, some pupils complete the gold level whilst at school, and the large Combined Cadet Force (CCF) contingents achieve considerable success in national competitions.

- 3.9 There are good levels of attainment throughout the school. In the junior school, this cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests. However, on the evidence available, including the data produced by the school's tracking and the work seen in books, lessons and displays, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related norms. This level of attainment indicates that all pupils, including the most able, make good progress in relation to pupils of similar abilities. Pupils with SEND or EAL are appropriately supported to make equally good progress.
- 3.10 The following analysis of data is for the years 2012 to 2014, the most recent three years for which comparable data is available. Results at GCSE and at A level are above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Results in IGCSE are higher than worldwide norms. Results at A level showed a slight decline between 2012 to 14, but in 2015 there was a relative improvement. Pupils' performances at GCSE and A level show that they make good, and sometimes excellent, progress in relation to those of similar ability in other schools. Results in examinations and the school's own tests show that the more able pupils make excellent progress and that the support provided for pupils with SEND or EAL ensures that they make good or excellent progress in relation to their starting points.
- 3.11 At all levels of the school, pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They have naturally enquiring minds, eagerly express their own perceptive opinions and question probingly to seek consolidation or clarification. They are enthusiastic and willing learners, with a thirst for knowledge. They take pride in the presentation of their work and show initiative in researching issues. They are equally well focused whether working independently or in co-operation with their peers. Their excellent attitudes strongly support their progress.

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

- 3.12 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.13 Excellent programmes and activities in the EYFS cover the seven areas of learning extremely well. The children benefit from a curriculum enhanced by specialist teaching in Spanish, physical education, drama and music. Their learning is effectively supported by the use of ICT. An excellent range of activities to support child-initiated learning is provided both in the classroom and the outdoor areas. Detailed planning is based on the children's interests and abilities and is skilfully adapted to cater for each child's needs, so that almost all the children reach the expected levels of development across all areas of learning. Effective attention is given to promoting the children's communication, literacy and numeracy skills. Children with SEND make good progress because staff cater for their needs by providing extra support or resources. More able children are given stimulating challenge and extension tasks. There are suitable extra-curricular activities that

enrich the children's learning and provide further challenge. An excellent range of events is organised at the school to broaden the curriculum. These include visits by authors, themed days and a teddy bears' picnic.

- 3.14 The curriculum throughout the school fully supports the aim of enabling pupils to become independent, curious and confident learners who enjoy their education. The school provides a curriculum which meets the needs of all its pupils, including those with SEND or an EHC plan. It covers all required areas of learning, and extends beyond these to provide a fully-rounded, stimulating education.
- 3.15 Creative and expressive subjects have a high priority in the curriculum, with excellent opportunities in sport, drama and music. The curriculum provides for thorough knowledge and understanding of British values, especially through the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programmes. The school actively encourages reflection on the inappropriateness of discrimination and the importance of the rule of law in a democratic society. The recently upgraded SEND provision throughout the school, including the development of new facilities in the senior school, allows for effective support for those with learning needs and for pupils with EAL.
- 3.16 In the junior school emphasis is placed on core skills of literacy and numeracy and extra breadth is provided by specialist teaching in music, physical education, modern languages and drama. Opportunities to extend pupils' use and knowledge of ICT are adequate. The senior school curriculum extends beyond the required subjects with extensive provision for languages, including Mandarin, Latin and Ancient Greek. A wide range of option subjects at GCSE enables pupils to follow their interests, reflecting the school's commitment to provide support and encouragement for the most able pupils and also for those who are passionate about a subject. Sixth-form pupils choose from 28 subjects and they may also take the Extended Project Qualification to add to their academic portfolio. Careers awareness is encouraged throughout the senior school, and sixth-form pupils speak appreciatively of the support they are given when considering career choices and applying for university.
- 3.17 The benefit which pupils gain from these excellent curricular opportunities is sometimes limited by the organisation of the timetable. In the junior school, there is sometimes a lack of focus on core subjects during morning lessons. Single lessons in all sections of the school are short, especially in the senior school; this means that opportunities for pupils to explore ideas fully or to develop their work in appropriate depth within lessons are limited. The school has recognised this issue and is taking steps to address it.
- 3.18 The strong and wide-ranging extra-curricular programme remains a significant strength of the school and provides excellent support for the learning and achievement of pupils. The activities available for all pupils include music, drama, sports, as well as a range of academic extension clubs. These are enthusiastically supported by pupils and they achieve high standards. The Seckford Scheme allows all pupils from Year 9 upwards to choose activities, including involvement in the CCF, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme or many other personal or artistic endeavours. Large numbers of pupils also choose to join in the Model UN or undertake Young Enterprise programmes. Pupil-led initiatives, such as a thoughtful lecture on the problems posed by the migrant crisis, further enrich the range of opportunities available. This reflects the school's commitment to providing a balanced political view to pupils.

3.19 The curriculum is further supported by numerous trips and exchanges. These include local places of interest such as Framlingham Castle and, for older pupils, opportunities for visits and exchanges to international destinations such as Australia, South Africa, Japan and India. Links with the local community are developed effectively through the community service programme, and also through regular concerts and other performances both inside school and in outside venues. Work experience and talks given by parents and former pupils, as well as other local figures, enable pupils to understand life beyond the school gates.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

3.20 The contribution of teaching is good.

3.21 Teaching at all levels meets the aims of the school by enabling pupils to enjoy their schooling and to become independent, curious and confident learners who can fulfil their academic potential.

3.22 The staff in the EYFS are highly knowledgeable and expertly engage and motivate the children in their learning and development. Adult-led sessions to introduce a topic are followed up by a range of stimulating activities. For example, during the inspection an introduction to counting to 20 and simple addition was reinforced by a practical activity where the children counted model owls on real branches, making their own addition sums. Staff make regular, detailed assessments of the children's knowledge, skills, understanding and interests and use these highly effectively to plan the next steps in the children's learning.

3.23 Staff in the EYFS visit the children's previous settings to ensure they have a good understanding of the children's starting points. The children's progress is carefully tracked and analysed. Children with particular needs or strengths are identified at an early stage and they are supported in making strong progress by skilfully adapted tasks during activities or by individual support. The staff further support the children's learning by closely involving the parents, who are invited into the class each week to share in their children's activities. The stimulating learning environment provides a wide range of resources that effectively enhance the children's learning.

3.24 In Years 1 to 6, teaching is almost always of a good standard and much is excellent. A few inconsistencies in the standard of teaching, as identified in the previous report remain. Many lessons are characterised by good planning which meets the full range of learning needs. A brisk pace, that stimulates and challenges pupils, is maintained, building on pupils' eagerness to learn. This was seen in an English creative writing lesson, resulting in the pupils independently producing outstanding work. In a few lessons, teaching does not sufficiently consider the needs of pupils with specific learning needs or provide enough challenge for the most able pupils. In such lessons the use of limited teaching strategies, inappropriate planning and inconsistent classroom control restricts pupils' learning and achievement. Marking of their work is generally thorough, helpful and enables pupils to understand what they need to do to improve.

3.25 In the senior school, teaching is almost always at least good, often excellent, with a stimulating and scholarly approach that thoroughly captures pupils' interest. Teachers demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. Lessons are well-structured and use an interesting and stimulating range of well-chosen tasks and activities. In most lessons, planning indicates a keen awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of all pupils, providing appropriate support and challenge. The learning

support department provides useful information on the specific needs of pupils with SEND, including those of pupils with EHCs, and EAL. In many lessons, these needs are met by sensitive planning and the use of carefully designed resources. On a few occasions, planning is less effective in meeting the needs of all pupils in the class and so progress is slower than expected. Often, but not always, the most able pupils are challenged by targeted questioning and extension tasks. Usually, a challenging pace and skilful questioning successfully engages the pupils and deepens their understanding. There is real encouragement to think critically, and to provide robust evidence to support their ideas. Teaching consistently encourages tolerance and respect for others' views, ensuring that any political issues arising are treated in a balanced way.

- 3.26 Teaching benefits from excellent relationships between pupils and staff, characterised by respect and good humour. Pupils' behaviour is usually good and control is maintained with a light touch. On a few occasions, irrelevant chatter is insufficiently challenged. The purposeful atmosphere generated, supported by frequent praise and encouragement, enables good progress. Pupils question confidently and contribute happily to the lesson.
- 3.27 The marking of senior pupils' work is good overall. However, some inconsistencies remain, as at the time of the previous inspection. This is especially the case in marking below the sixth form. Most is clear and helpful. On occasion, the marking does not provide adequate guidance for pupils on how to improve their work. Marking at A Level is often constructive, clearly linked to assessment criteria and provides useful advice. The school is aware of the remaining inconsistencies and has recently introduced a new procedure for the scrutiny of work intended to correct the issue.
- 3.28 Pupils comment appreciatively on their teachers' willingness to give them additional help beyond lesson time individually and in subject clinics. In the questionnaire a small minority of pupils said they did not find their homework helped their learning. The work observed and homework set during the course of the inspection did not support this view. Inspectors judged that the tasks set usefully extend the work done in the classroom and is not inappropriately onerous.

## **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 In the EYFS the children co-operate and share extremely well. High standards of courtesy are consistently and effectively promoted. Independence, responsibility and appropriate behaviour are encouraged throughout the setting. There is a suitable PSHE curriculum and circle time is used effectively to encourage discussion and reflection. For example, in a lesson on helping one another the children acted out a story and then went on to work with huge enthusiasm on a range of cooperative activities, wrapping parcels, building towers and constructing puzzles. Confidence and self-esteem are supported through good manners certificates, daily reward systems such as stickers and 'Wow' moments.
- 4.3 The children in EYFS are all highly aware of the school's golden rules and of the importance of following these so all can feel safe and happy. Through this they are able to understand in a simple way how a democratic society functions. The children are very well prepared for their transition to their next class and for life in wider British society.
- 4.4 The older pupils' behaviour and dealings with each other demonstrate an excellent inherent awareness of the importance of tolerance, respect, individual rights, fairness and social justice. Pupils are open-minded and respectful of others' views. They have a clear understanding of the dangers posed by extremist views, as witnessed in senior pupils' responses to recent international events.
- 4.5 Pupils of all ages are honest, spirited yet reflective and sensitive to the non-material aspects of life, reflected in the displays and art work around the school and their responses to beauty in art and music. They are mature, confident and self-aware. Regardless of personal faith, pupils show respect for the clear Christian values and ethos that underpin school life. Senior school pupils respond sensitively in assemblies held in the chapel, reflecting in thoughtful silence when invited to consider anything that had gone wrong in relationships recently and how they could set things right. Pupils participate willingly in occasions with spiritual and communal significance, such as singing at evensong in the parish church and the town's Remembrance Day service.
- 4.6 The moral development of pupils is excellent, with strong ethical values evident. Their behaviour is very good. Children in the junior school understand the moral code and behavioural expectations of the school and the younger pupils readily and proudly recite daily their commitment to make efforts to "become the person I need to be." As pupils move through the school, a clear sense of right and wrong continues to develop and pupils enjoy discussing the moral issues raised within lessons. Pupils' collective responsibility is clear and their care for one another's well-being is evident. As they mature, they demonstrate an increasing awareness of the importance of law and justice, including the civil and criminal law of England, knowing that these are fundamental to the success of the community. Pupils are courteous and considerate to each other, to teachers and to visitors and the school has a distinctive feeling of warm collegiality.
- 4.7 Pupils' social development is very strong. Pupils spontaneously told inspectors that the school makes them feel valued and they are highly conscious of their

responsibility to contribute to the school and local community. In conversations with inspectors, many pupils commented on the kindness and supportiveness of their peers. They undertake responsibility willingly, whether as class leader or librarian in the junior school or as prefect and class mentor in the senior school. Pupils at all levels engage enthusiastically in fund raising ventures; annually pupils' efforts raise considerable sums for a range of local, national and international charities. Older pupils enjoy their voluntary work in local schools in disadvantaged areas and also their involvement with the Seckford Foundation's almshouses. Pupils show a broad knowledge of English public institutions and services and respect for the democratic process. Sixth-form pupils are very conscious of their responsibility to understand political issues before voting for the first time.

- 4.8 The pupils' understanding of a range of cultures and faiths is evident. At all ages they are enthusiastic and supportive of each other's traditions and beliefs, enjoying learning from their peers. Their sophisticated understanding of Western culture is evident in their own achievements in drama, art and music. Relationships between those of different groups are friendly and relaxed, with a strong commitment to equality of respect for all.
- 4.9 The pupils' personal qualities demonstrate the school's success in meeting its aim to help them grow into happy, confident, resilient and caring young men and women. By the time they leave school the pupils have developed into self-assured, articulate individuals who are well prepared to face the challenges of an increasingly global environment with confidence and a clear set of values.

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

- 4.10 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.11 Staff are committed to providing a happy, caring and purposeful environment for the children in the EYFS. They know the children extremely well and sensitively guide them to develop respect for one another, to share and co-operate so that they develop positive relationships with their teachers and with each other. All children have a key person who ensures that their needs are met. Children are given the opportunity to talk individually to their teachers if they have any worries or are upset. Play times are carefully supervised and older children act as playground friends to the younger children.
- 4.12 Children are helped to understand the importance of healthy eating. Lunches are nutritious and there are careful guidelines on healthy snacks. Good manners are consistently encouraged. There are many opportunities to be physically active both in adult-led sessions and in outdoor play. Children respond well to encouragement to be independent in dressing and organising their belongings. The children are welcomed at the school entrance each day and happily go to their classes independently, demonstrating their confidence that they are safe and secure.
- 4.13 The rest of the school is also highly successful in creating a supportive atmosphere in which pupils of all ages can discover their own strengths and develop self-confidence. Staff know their pupils extremely well and are committed to supporting their development. In questionnaire responses, a very large majority of pupils and their parents agreed that pupils are well supported and guided by the staff. The pastoral structures have recently been reorganised to strengthen further this area, focusing, for example, on the effectiveness of the use made of the PSHE programme and of tutorial time, which is sometimes inconsistent.

- 4.14 Relationships between pupils and staff and between the pupils themselves are excellent. An atmosphere of mutual warmth and respect is clearly evident throughout the school. Comments from pupils such as, 'everybody smiles,' and, 'people here don't realise just how kind they are to newcomers,' are testament to the success of the school's pastoral care.
- 4.15 In questionnaires, a minority of pupils expressed dissatisfaction with the food. Inspection evidence drawn from interviews, a scrutiny of menus and sampling of meals does not support these views. School meals are well-balanced and nutritious, encouraging healthy eating habits. The school is aware that the queues for lunch can be long and is monitoring the situation. Pupils are active, enthusiastically participating in the many opportunities for exercise provided in the curriculum and extra-curricular activities.
- 4.16 A highly positive ethos exists in which all recognise that bullying, harassment and inappropriate behaviour are unacceptable. A very small minority of pupils and parents suggested in questionnaires that incidents of bullying are not always followed up. Inspectors found that thorough records of pastoral concerns are kept and appropriate action is taken in response to any incident. For example, investigation of a recent incident had been rigorous and the strong action taken was in line with the seriousness of the situation. The rare instances of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with robustly.
- 4.17 In the questionnaires, a small minority of pupils said that the school does not listen to their views. The school acknowledges that structures for this have not always been effective, especially in the senior school. A restructured school council has recently met twice. Resulting suggestions are yet to be finalised and therefore it is not possible to judge the full effectiveness of this initiative.
- 4.18 The school has an appropriate plan for improving educational access for pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.19 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.20 The procedures in the EYFS to ensure the children's well-being are excellent. Safeguarding procedures, including the requisite training and employment checks, are robust and understood by all staff. Children's attendance is monitored carefully. Careful attention to health and safety requirements and regular risk assessments ensure that the children are cared for in a welcoming, safe and stimulating environment. Off-site visits are thoroughly planned and risk-assessed. All EYFS staff are trained in paediatric first aid. There are careful arrangements ensuring children's safety when they are collected at the end of each session. There are effective procedures for accident reporting and the administration of medicines.
- 4.21 Safeguarding policies and procedures applying to the whole school have been updated to reflect recently changed official guidance. The senior staff with specific responsibility for safeguarding attend the necessary training and have established excellent relationships with local welfare agencies. Safeguarding training for all other staff is carried out at the required intervals and their understanding of their responsibilities is carefully checked by means of short questionnaires. Their training includes the prevention of radicalisation and extremism. The school's recruitment procedure is thorough and ensures that all required checks are carried out prior to

staff taking up their posts. Information is clearly and accurately recorded as required.

- 4.22 The school takes all necessary measures to minimise the risk of fire and other hazards. Regular fire evacuation drills are held and recorded, and comprehensive logs are maintained of all equipment checks. There is a good risk assessment policy, reflected in the thorough risk assessments carried out for the wide range of activities, both on and off site.
- 4.23 The junior and senior sites each have a matron who cares for any pupil who is ill or injured. Effective first aid provision ensures that minor injuries are treated quickly and safely. The needs of any pupils with identified care plans are fully supported. Whilst methods of recording medical matters are inconsistent across the school, all matters are recorded in detail and kept securely. Thorough procedures for the administration of medicines are in place. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of those with specific physical or learning needs.
- 4.24 The electronic registration of pupils is undertaken carefully and any unauthorized absence is followed up efficiently by office staff. Admission and attendance registers are maintained and stored as required.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.25 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.26 The boarding experience contributes highly effectively to the boarders' excellent personal development and outcomes for boarders are excellent. Despite the linguistic limitations of some, boarders are confident, eager to communicate and considerate towards others. Boarders display courtesy and warm respect for each other and staff and say that they feel safe in boarding.
- 4.27 Boarders do not feel discriminated against in any way. They contribute to the running of their community by informal daily communication with staff. The relatively small size of the house and accessibility of staff means that boarders can suggest improvements to the running of the house, as well as formally through regular house meetings. There is a catering committee, the remit of which has recently been redefined. In response to boarders' comments in questionnaires that they do not feel listened to, systems have now been put in place to ensure that there is clear feedback on their suggestions. Boarders lead on house initiatives such as organising the Christmas party. The subdividing of the house into four 'families' has ensured a homely feel to boarding and boarders say that one of the best things about boarding is they genuinely feel like part of a family. They place a high value on the friendships that they form in boarding and speak with genuine fondness of the school and the home that it provides during the term. Boarders have a range of adults whom they feel they can approach about a problem. Notes from boarders to the house staff evidence their gratitude for the care and guidance that they receive.
- 4.28 The quality of provision and care for boarders is excellent. Boarders generally feel welcomed into the school community, enjoying the 'buddy' system which has been set up to help their integration. Pupils involved in this initiative are infectious in their enthusiasm and it has resulted in some day pupils visiting boarding and boarders visiting the families of their day 'buddies'. Care is taken to treat boarders as individuals so that their personal social and academic needs are addressed. Arrangements for sick or injured boarders are excellent. There is a clear structure to ensure that any individual medical needs are carefully managed. All boarding staff

- have received at least the one-day first aid training. There are strict protocols for the storage, administration and recording of medication.
- 4.29 Robust arrangements are in place to ensure that boarders are safe and protected from harm. Fire procedures are strong and evacuation drills are carried out termly. Risk assessments for boarding accommodation are reviewed annually and are comprehensive. Premises and facilities are very well maintained and any repairs necessary carried out promptly by a highly efficient estate management team. Access to boarding is secured from unauthorised visitors. Boarders sign in and out whenever they leave the house. On returning in the evening, they are also expected to make direct contact with one of the staff who will ask them about their day.
- 4.30 The school has extended the range of choices available at supper and the variety in the snacks supplied to the house, responding to the recommendation of the previous intermediate inspection. The catering department makes every effort to provide a varied, appetising and nutritious range of dishes at meals. Inspection evidence does not support the views of a minority of boarders who complained about the food or the snacks now provided.
- 4.31 Laundry arrangements are efficient. Boarders have lockable facilities to keep valuable possessions securely. Easy access to the town allows them to obtain personal items. In their free time boarders have use of the school's facilities and speak with enthusiasm about being able to do shooting and archery, use the sports dome and visit nearby towns. Overseas boarders commented on their enjoyment of a visit to a typical English seaside town and of the beauty of historic places such as Cambridge. Boarders play a part in the local community by visiting old peoples' homes and volunteering in charity shops.
- 4.32 School House is a bright, homely space with comfortable, warm and pleasantly decorated bedrooms. Boarders enjoy their large, welcoming and cheerful common rooms, equipped with a range of recreational equipment such as table football, pool and televisions. There is a house telephone which boarders may use, although almost invariably boarders choose to use their mobile phones or internet technology to contact their parents. There are suitable restrictions and internet filters to detect unsafe use. They report difficulties in internet connectivity, over which the school has limited control.
- 4.33 Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were unanimous in their satisfaction with the boarding provision and care given to boarders, reflecting the views of a very large majority of the boarders.
- 4.34 Procedures for the welfare and safeguarding of boarders are excellent with all required policies now including specific references to boarding. Recruitment procedures are robust so that all necessary checks are carried out as required, including those upon adults living on site. They also have suitable residence agreements and have suitable guidance as to their role. The school places a high priority on safeguarding boarders. All boarding staff are correctly trained in this at required intervals, the most recent update training including reference to the prevention of radicalisation. There are always suitable numbers of staff on duty, easily contactable by boarders at night.
- 4.35 A light-touch approach ensures that boarders understand and accept the house behavioural expectations, so that sanctions rarely have to be applied. A very large majority of boarders agree that staff treat them fairly and that boarders get on well

together in the house. There are well-understood policies for searching, restraining or looking for missing boarders, which staff have had no reason to use.

- 4.36 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of boarding is good, as is evidenced by the smooth running of the house and the confidence and happiness of the boarders. The excellent quality of care for boarders is ensured by a small team of caring staff who clearly know the boarders as individuals and are committed to supporting them in line with the boarding principles. All boarding staff complete a comprehensive induction programme in the course of their first half term. In response to the recommendation made in the previous intermediate inspection, there is now a structured system in place for appraisal of boarding staff. However this has been introduced so recently that it is not yet possible to assess its impact on the boarding provision.
- 4.37 There is regular communication between the academic staff and the boarding house regarding the boarders' achievements and the support each needs for their academic lessons. Teachers visit the house in the evening to provide much appreciated extra support.
- 4.38 Governors understand their responsibility for boarding. All the essential policies now meet requirements and are being implemented. Record keeping is sound; the procedures for recording academic and pastoral concerns, whilst detailed, are not in line with those for day pupils. However, formal monitoring of the boarding provision and oversight of its work by senior leaders is not consistent, meaning that they do not always have a sufficiently thorough awareness of boarding issues.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The Seckford Foundation and the school committee provide highly effective governance, discharging their responsibilities for oversight of the school well. Structures have been put in place since the previous report to allow governors to develop a thorough understanding of the whole school and for the monitoring of the implementation of policies. Governors regularly visit the school and have carried out departmental reviews, scrutinised work and interrogated data to enrich their understanding of progress.
- 5.3 The governing body is well-informed about the specific requirements of the EYFS. Governors are supportive in their visits to the setting and regularly monitor policies and procedures, so that all regulatory requirements are met. A governor with specific responsibility for the EYFS has very recently been co-opted onto the governing body. A nominated governor works closely with the school with regard to safeguarding, reporting on findings to the full board. Governors accept corporate responsibility for discharging of all legal responsibilities, and carry out an annual review of the policy and procedures.
- 5.4 In conjunction with school leadership, governors have recently embarked on a full review of all aspects of the school's provision. This has accurately identified areas for improvement, and taken the initial steps to meet the issues addressed. A detailed development plan is evolving as a result of these intensive discussions and governors are poised to support the new leadership in the implementation of future strategic decisions.

### **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.
- 5.6 Leaders in the EYFS have a thorough grasp of regulatory requirements. Policies are reviewed and updated regularly. Careful induction of new staff, regular staff training at the required intervals and the strong attention to safeguarding procedures ensure that staff are highly vigilant towards the safety of the children. Careful monitoring of the education programmes and assessments of the children's academic and personal achievements ensures the children thrive in a welcoming, safe and secure environment. Regular staff discussion and supervision meetings enable staff to identify areas for their continuing professional development. Staff take full advantage of relevant courses to help them promote the children's learning further. Equality, diversity and other fundamental British values, such as respect and tolerance, are actively promoted throughout the EYFS and are embedded in the setting's Golden Rules.
- 5.7 Since the previous inspection the setting has developed thorough procedures for self-evaluation. EYFS staff all contribute to this process through regular discussion, assessments, analysis of data and consideration of parents' views. Strategies to enable improvements are detailed in pertinent termly action plans, although their

outcomes are not evaluated. There are ambitious long-term plans for future developments to premises and a vision for further improvements to children's learning and development. The EYFS development plan is not yet at a stage where these are clearly articulated.

- 5.8 Across the school, leadership and management are successful in meeting the aims of the school. This is evident in the pupils' good achievements across a broad range of curricular and extra-curricular areas. In particular, the pupils' excellent personal development is a direct consequence of the high quality of the pastoral care and support which is given to them all, from the very youngest to those in the sixth form. Values that encourage a respect for others, and the democratic process are evident throughout the school.
- 5.9 The inspection took place at an evolutionary point in the history of the school, with considerable changes recently in all sections. There has been a rigorous self-evaluation and identification of priorities for the future, as well as of those characteristic features which the school wishes to retain. Several new initiatives, including pastoral procedures and a teaching approach aimed at encouraging pupils' independence and their ability to take responsibility for their own learning, were launched shortly before the inspection. Whilst initial indications are positive, at this stage it is not possible to judge the impact of these many changes. It is clear, however, that there is a strong and unified educational vision in place for all sections of the school which senior leaders articulate clearly and staff understand. There is a sense of optimistic determination amongst managers at all levels as they start to implement new ideas.
- 5.10 Senior leaders are in the process of intensive discussions with governors on the future direction and development of the school. There is an interim development plan currently in place; this lacks details such as success criteria and costings. It is intended that a more detailed plan will be in place by the end of this academic year. This means that, whilst there has been some progress towards meeting the recommendations of the previous report regarding development planning and achieving a consistently high quality of teaching and marking, some work remains to be done.
- 5.11 Leadership at all levels places a high priority on the safeguarding of pupils and there is thorough monitoring of the effectiveness of this and other required welfare, health and safety policies. Lines of communication between senior and middle management are clear. All major policies have recently been reviewed and all staff are trained to ensure they carry out their responsibilities with regard to safeguarding, welfare and health and safety correctly. Safe recruitment procedures are carefully observed, ensuring that all required checks on new members of staff are correctly undertaken.
- 5.12 Senior leaders have been successful in recruiting and training well-qualified staff and there is a thorough induction programme for new staff, including comprehensive training in safeguarding, welfare and health and safety matters. There is a good programme for professional development, which motivates staff to develop their teaching and supports the key strategic initiatives established by the leadership.
- 5.13 Middle managers are more effective in monitoring their departments than at the time of the previous inspection. Excellent monitoring, development, quality assurance and planning have been established within some departments. Inconsistencies remain, however, particularly of teaching standards in the junior school and of the

quality of marking in the senior school. A new appraisal system is currently being launched, based on self-evaluation and rigorous gathering of evidence, to ensure there is greater monitoring of the application of agreed policies and procedures. It is, however, too early to judge the effectiveness of the newly extended management teams in overseeing academic and pastoral matters more broadly. The monitoring of boarding does not receive the same degree of formal attention from senior leaders as the academic departments.

- 5.14 Staff in the EYFS work highly effectively with parents and with external agencies, such as speech and language therapists, to ensure relevant interventions are provided for children needing particular support. Parents are welcomed into the school. They are able to be highly engaged with their children's learning through the many opportunities provided by the school, such as working with their children in class, parents' meetings and reports, curriculum and information evenings and regular exchange of information about their child's progress.
- 5.15 The school is highly successful in maintaining excellent links with the parents of older pupils. Pre-inspection questionnaire responses indicate that almost all parents are satisfied with the school's curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, its pastoral care and the leadership of the school. Parents are highly supportive of the school and appreciate the wide range of excellent information provided in numerous ways, including the school website, emails, newsletters and texts. All required information for current and prospective parents is available either on the website or from the school.
- 5.16 The school actively seeks the views of parents and is responsive to issues raised. A very few parents feel that their concerns have not been handled well, but inspection evidence found that the school responds sensitively to concerns and acts in accordance with its published procedures. An open door policy ensures most concerns are dealt with informally and to the parents' satisfaction.
- 5.17 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in the work of the school. There is an active parents' association which helps welcome new parents to the school and provides many opportunities for the parents to socialise. This organises several functions each year to raise funds for the school. Parents are invited to attend numerous activities in which their children are involved, such as drama productions, assemblies and presentations in which their children's achievements are celebrated.
- 5.18 Parents' evenings are held each year and staff are readily available for informal discussion on pupils' progress. There are regular meetings to explain various aspects of the curriculum and subject choices for pupils. Parents receive regular and clear reports on their children's progress. These provide useful information on how pupils may maintain strong progress in specific subject areas.

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