



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

SEVENOAKS SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Sevenoaks School

Full Name of School	Sevenoaks School	
DfE Number	886/6014	
Registered Charity Number	1101358	
Address	Sevenoaks School High Street Sevenoaks Kent TN13 1HU	
Telephone Number	01732 455133	
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Email Address	enq@soaks.org	
Head	Mrs Katy Ricks	
Chair of Governors	Mr Nicholas Gould	
Age Range	11 to 18	
Total Number of Pupils	1016	
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (493 boys; 523 girls;)	
Numbers by Age	11-18	1016
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	673
Number of Boarders	Total:	343
	Full:	343
Inspection dates	05 Feb 2013 to 08 Feb 2013	

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in December 2009.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the co-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 Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mr Kenneth Adams	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, The Society of Heads school)
Mrs Fiona Angel	Team Inspector (Head of Curriculum and Learning, HMC school)
Mr Ben Edwards	Team Inspector (Head of Sixth Form, HMC school)
Mr Edward Halse	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Michael Holder-Williams	Team Inspector (Head, The Society of Heads school)
Mrs Kathryn Macaulay	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Dr Tracey Martin	Team Inspector (Senior Teacher, HMC school)
Mr Alasdair McBay	Team Inspector (Senior Tutor, HMC school)
Mrs Elizabeth Skelton	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Miss Jean Walker	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mrs Pamela Leech	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Joss Williams	Team Inspector for Boarding (Deputy Head, HMC school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Sevenoaks School is one of the oldest educational establishments in the United Kingdom, having been founded in 1432. It is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 11 to 18. The school is set in a 100-acre site in Kent, around 25 miles from London. The site includes a range of buildings for teaching, sports and performance, and seven boarding houses. The school is a charity and a company limited by guarantee, overseen by a board of governors who are trustees of the charity and directors of the company. There is an additional, separate foundation charity, run by a board of trustees, which leases the estate to the school and responds to requests for development. Since the previous inspection the school has opened a new performing arts centre and revised its management and development structures.
- 1.2 The school aims to deliver an international education which reflects the range of nationalities in the school and the opportunities for visits abroad for cultural, academic and service activities it provides. It seeks to: stimulate able pupils within a broad curriculum that extends into the sixth form through study towards the International Baccalaureate (IB); foster an enjoyment of sport irrespective of talent and strive for standards of excellence so that pupils can compete as individuals and in teams at school, county or national level; encourage all pupils to develop interests and personal qualities outside the academic curriculum including through service to the community; provide opportunities for pupils to discover and develop interests in music, art, drama and creative activities; prepare pupils for adulthood and promote an international outlook.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 1016 pupils educated at the school, around a third of whom were boarders. There were 417 pupils in the sixth form. Around a third of the intake in Year 12 is new to the school, many coming from overseas. The average ability on entry to the school is well above the national average and that in the sixth form is similar. Most day pupils come from south London and Kent, from a range of social backgrounds. Boarders come from 40 countries, with overseas pupils comprising around a fifth of the school roll, including pupils from Africa, Europe and Asia. Many pupils come from homes where another language is commonly spoken in addition to English; 13 pupils receive support for English as an additional language (EAL). No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 100 pupils who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom 70 receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The pupils' achievement and learning are exceptional. Excellent standards are achieved consistently, including by those pupils with SEND and the more able. Pupils consistently achieve at levels beyond those expected for their age. These are complemented by outstanding participation in service, exceptional achievement in activities and unusually high levels of learning skills. A key feature is the outstanding level of collaborative learning evident at all ages to which is added great facility to learn independently. Pupils make excellent progress in response to a curriculum which makes unusually high demands, and to excellent teaching.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils show very high levels of confidence and are highly articulate. Mutual respect is a hallmark of the school community. Pupils show strong moral and cultural awareness, the latter stimulated by the school's successfully promoted ethos of internationalism. The pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care and arrangements to ensure their welfare, health and safety. Those pupils who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires were highly positive about the school. A small minority were dissatisfied with opportunities for the school to listen to and respond to their views. Inspection evidence shows that suitable opportunities are provided for the pupils' opinions to be voiced but that communication of the school's response is not always clear. The quality of boarding is excellent and contributes outstandingly to the boarders' personal development.
- 2.3 Excellent governance promotes the school's aims strongly and its support underpins the pupils' exceptional achievement and excellent personal development. Governors are well informed about the school's operations and needs, and provide excellent human and material resources. High quality building developments such as the performing arts centre support the ambitious aims of the school's educational provision. Governors fulfil their responsibilities for oversight in those areas where they have legal responsibilities well. The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection. Leadership and management are excellent, characterised by shrewd delegation and flexibility of response at senior level, and a forward-looking approach at all levels of management. In pre-inspection questionnaires parents expressed extremely high levels of satisfaction with the education provided throughout the school. Inspection evidence confirms these views.

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 2011.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the school's response to issues raised by pupils is communicated to them effectively.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is exceptional.
- 3.2 Pupils demonstrate extremely high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding, across all subject areas, which are frequently considerably in advance of those expected for their age. This reflects extremely high levels of response to an ambitious curriculum and excellent teaching. These are equally apparent in the achievement of all groups. More able pupils in the sixth form produce extended essays which display great depth and highly focused analysis, evaluation and argument. Such achievement is also evident at earlier stages in the school. In English, all pupils study complex texts for their age very successfully. This prepares them for the rigorous demands of the school's certificate in English literature at age 16. Highly advanced levels of mathematical problem-solving are similarly common. The pupils' scientific understanding is excellent. Extremely high levels of response are evident in a wide variety of modern foreign languages. Pupils of all nationalities, including those with EAL, show the highest levels of articulacy in written and spoken English. Those pupils with SEND achieve consistently at levels commensurate with their peers.
- 3.3 A key strength of the pupils' achievement is their development of high-order thinking skills. This, in turn, leads pupils to have high expectations of teaching, which are consistently fulfilled. This relationship underpins the pupils' success, only frustrated on occasion by the limited demands made by preparation for some examination courses in Years 10 and 11. Highly effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) is a natural element in the pupils' learning and encompasses sophisticated uses of technology in art and design. Pupils demonstrate the highest creative and performing skills in both drama and music; some perform demanding chamber works to a very high standard and others tackle ambitious dramatic concepts with élan. Excellent standards are attained in physical education (PE).
- 3.4 Pupils reach exceptional levels of achievement in activities. Membership of national performing groups in music and theatre is common, enabled by curricular arrangements to suit individual pupils' needs. Pupils perform plays on tour regularly to Germany and to the Edinburgh Fringe, with many productions directed or technically managed by pupils. A good number attain gold in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. Teams achieve highly at international level in the Model United Nations (MUN) programme and enjoy national success in foreign language debating competitions. Individuals participate in sports such as triathlon, badminton, shooting, sailing, fencing and women's cricket at the highest levels nationally and internationally. The level of attainment in sports teams is excellent. A highly significant aspect of the pupils' achievements is the service element in the IB. From Year 10 pupils achieve high standards in diverse activities such as performing in the community, writing stories and poems to raise money for orphans in Africa and India, and creating their own fashion shows.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been excellent in relation to the national average for pupils in maintained schools and were exceptional in 2009 and 2010. They are consistently above the average for pupils in maintained selective schools. Results in 2012 indicate similar attainment; the proportion of pupils gaining passes at A or A*

reached 88 per cent. Results in the IGCSE are higher than world-wide and UK averages. Results in the IB have been exceptional in relation to both the worldwide and UK averages. These results, considered alongside the pupils' work and achievement in lessons, indicate that they make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. The results of those pupils with SEND indicate excellent progress in relation to their starting points. Statistical evidence of their performance often shows progress above that of their peers to GCSE. Nearly all pupils proceed from Year 11 into the sixth form. Sixth formers consistently gain places at universities, in the UK, the USA and elsewhere, that have the highest entry requirements.

- 3.6 Pupils of all ages develop their learning skills to an unusually high level. This development is rapid. In lessons, pupils in Year 7 demonstrate in embryonic form, although not always unfailingly, the skills which consistently characterise learning in the sixth form. These are, typically, dynamic self-motivation, an extremely high ability to learn independently, a natural inclination to work collaboratively to excellent effect, and highly developed curiosity. All these are demonstrated within a learning environment which is characterised by enjoyment and good humour.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The school meets its ambitious curricular and co-curricular aims most successfully. It makes excellent, wide-ranging, demanding and enriching provision, supported by a suitable programme for personal and social development (PSD), for all ages. Identification of, and provision for, the needs of pupils with SEND or EAL are excellent, encompassing individual and classroom support. The most able receive stimulation and encouragement both within and without the curriculum. All pupils are enabled to rise to the ambitious academic challenges on offer. All courses demonstrate a strong focus on internationalism and cross-curricular links. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire demonstrate an extremely high level of satisfaction with the curricular and co-curricular provision.
- 3.9 The curriculum in Years 7 and 8 develops the key skills of co-operative learning and independence. Cross-curricular links are typified by a Year 8 visit to Normandy. A stimulating programme in Years 9 to 11 currently ensures access to traditional subjects in an ambitious and interesting way, alongside co-curricular and service elements. However, the school feels that the requirements of GCSE and IGCSE qualifications do not provide full preparation for IB and pupils agree that they would welcome challenges which better suit their style of learning. Therefore, pupils currently study the Sevenoaks School Certificate in English literature, recognised by UCAS, and similar courses will be introduced from September 2013 in art, art history, drama, music and technology. Such innovations typify the distinctive learning environment of the school.
- 3.10 In the sixth form, pupils study for the IB. This includes six subjects from varied disciplines, theory of knowledge, and commitment to 150 hours of creative and service activities over two years. These elements promote co-operative and leadership skills to a high degree. Pupils carry out an independent research project which leads to a 4000-word extended essay.
- 3.11 The higher education department has undergone extension and development since the previous inspection and provides pupils with extensive information on careers

and higher education, including that available internationally, with a focus on choosing ambitious destinations for study. Well staffed and resourced, an abundance of information and guidance is available. Support is supplemented by practice interviews, aptitude tests and informal advice from tutors and former pupils. Work experience is organised for most of Year 11 with participation in an enterprise project an alternative.

- 3.12 The curricular service element promotes many opportunities to work within the wider community. These include helping in local primary schools, teaching computing to young people with learning difficulties, and entertaining elderly members of the community in a boarding house. There is a strong emphasis on social responsibility and empathy. The school's annual Science Week involves staff and pupils in hosting an event attended, typically, by a total of 11,000 pupils from neighbouring Kent schools.
- 3.13 Co-curricular activities provide a rich and diverse programme for pupils of all ages. The school strikes an excellent balance between involving as many pupils as possible and facilitating opportunities for those with ambition in a particular area. The impact of the programme on the pupils' academic achievement and personal development is highly valued by them, from the deep thinking enabled in the astronomy club to the enthusiasm for phrenology inspired by the IQ club for younger pupils. Teamwork and leadership skills are fostered in the DofE scheme and in the combined cadet force (CCF).
- 3.14 Performance skills are developed in drama through plays performed by different age groups and a play performed by boarders; in music they are developed through a range of musical ensembles, with sufficient performers of the standard required to perform a Mahler symphony. The international dimension is greatly enhanced by a wide variety of overseas visits with 54 trips to 16 different countries being offered in a typical year. The school's aim to foster the enjoyment of and involvement in sport irrespective of talent is met very successfully. The depth of participation is reflected by the number of representative teams supported, which can rise to 43 teams on a single day. Opportunities to go on tour reinforce the depth of provision.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.15 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.16 Teaching makes an outstanding contribution to the pupils' progress. It supports with great success the school's aims of seeking to deliver an international education, and to stimulate able pupils in the classroom and in a wide variety of co-curricular areas.
- 3.17 Passionate and dynamic teaching demonstrates excellent subject knowledge; some staff are engaged in high-level scholarship and research. It provides challenging, exacting and exciting experiences which channel the pupils' energy into learning. Lessons are well paced and teaching makes focussed use of excellent resources, including on-line ICT resources and a large and well stocked library, to support unusually high levels of learning. Those identified with SEND and EAL are given excellent support by specialist teachers and by the wider teaching community to allow them to make excellent progress. Teaching stimulates creativity. Pupils are given opportunities to experiment and develop; for example, when using sophisticated computer software in areas such as art and design technology.
- 3.18 A striking quality of the teaching is how much the excellent rapport between staff and pupils enables all to enjoy lessons. Teaching encourages very good behaviour in

nearly all lessons. Very occasionally, when the most appropriate teaching techniques and classroom management skills are not employed, the over-exuberance of some of the youngest pupils makes them unable to engage fully with the tasks provided and to wholly make the progress of which they are capable. There is a clear focus on the development of collaborative skills and pupils learn to support one another in class. Pupils are encouraged to listen to, and treat each other, with respect and, as a result, articulate their ideas with skill, fluency and maturity.

- 3.19 Teaching challenges pupils to develop high order critical thinking, reasoning and learning skills so they become outstanding independent learners. They are encouraged to ask probing questions to further their understanding and interest. This stimulates the most able in particular and enables some to produce extended essays of extraordinary quality; for example, writing complex expositions of mathematical topics such as orbital mechanics and Lagrangian points.
- 3.20 Teaching is meticulously well-planned and is largely based on a clear understanding of the pupils' needs. It encourages pupils to think deeply, and kindles genuine enthusiasm for the subjects studied. Pupils are inspired by their teachers to explore areas beyond the syllabus and they also respond particularly strongly to the range of well-organised and challenging activities provided.
- 3.21 Marking is regular and frequently includes helpful comments for improvement. Standardised data concerning the potential and achievement of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is successfully analysed, and used by staff to track and facilitate excellent progress in the pupils' learning. The school's method of assessing the potential of pupils on entry to the sixth form allows their individual progress to be carefully observed on the school's data systems, including sometimes by individual pupils themselves. All pupils greatly appreciate and benefit from the effective monitoring and guidance that is provided.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 As a result of their experiences in class, and the extremely successful fulfilment of the school's aim that its pupils should develop personal qualities outside the academic curriculum, the pupils' personal development is excellent by the time they leave the school. They develop self-esteem and self-respect that allow them to be themselves, secure in the knowledge that they will be respected by others. They are proud of their school, enjoy showing it to visitors, and thrive on the vast range of opportunities on offer.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The ethos which exists within the school community allows pupils to grow and flourish into self-assured young adults with a strong sense of what they believe in. They demonstrate these qualities when dealing with the demanding challenges presented by their studies and in other aspects of school life, supported by the school's PSD programme. Art work around the school shows an imaginative approach to appreciating nature and the non-material aspects of life, together with well-developed emotional maturity. Pupils are highly confident and enthusiastic, deriving much strength from their performing and sporting experiences. Their self-esteem is strengthened by the emphasis the school places on valuing them as individuals and by the encouragement they receive to pass on their skills and talents to others.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is excellent. They have a strong sense of right and wrong. All pupils are aware of what is acceptable behaviour. In lessons their moral understanding is furthered through discussion on ethical and moral issues, notably in theory of knowledge lessons. The pupils' extremely diverse involvement in service provides a further dimension, complemented by participation in groups which support political prisoners and by talks from visiting speakers. The generosity of the pupils in supporting a diverse range of charitable events reflects the very high level of ethical awareness throughout the school.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate excellent social development. Pupils are friendly, polite and welcoming. Throughout the school they are active members of the community and assume roles of responsibility and service naturally, especially in the older year groups. As prefects and peer mentors they act as confidantes to the younger pupils. Some sixth formers also act as academic mentors in class to aid younger pupils' learning. In Years 7 and 8 small-scale responsibilities within tutor groups are amplified by opportunities to act as representatives on the lower school council. Pupils enjoy using their talents for the benefit of the school community, and their conduct towards each other and towards staff is consistently excellent. They are caring, tolerant and keenly aware of the needs of others. Pupils acquire a good appreciation of the public institutions and services of England through discussions in PSD lessons, and assemblies, in which they take an active part. This meets the recommendation of the previous report. Political awareness in the school is high, exemplified by the understanding shown by middle school pupils in a discussion on divided communities.
- 4.6 The pupils benefit from the wide range of nationalities, cultures and faiths within the school and this helps to develop their very strong cultural awareness, demonstrated by their success in the MUN programme. International boarders celebrate the varied

backgrounds from which they come by displaying a wide array of flags in their house and annotations on a map of the world. These are replicated in the dining hall. Pupils are sensitive to the customs and faith values of others. They understand the realities of other cultures through foreign language exchanges and study visits to Europe and beyond. These ventures greatly enrich the pupils' cultural appreciation and personal development. Their understanding of the Western cultural tradition is strong and wide-ranging, demonstrated by imaginative and original dramatic interpretations of Greek myths.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The school is characterised by high quality, warm and generous pastoral support and by well-considered guidance for pupils of all ages, both day and boarding. The school is acutely aware of the need to monitor and review its support for individual pupils regularly in an environment in which academic and co-curricular demands are heavy. It does this to excellent effect.
- 4.9 The school's pastoral arrangements are based upon comprehensive policies and procedures, the system being effectively co-ordinated and monitored by senior and middle managers. Pastoral meetings are held regularly between staff with direct responsibility for care. Effective communication, both formal and informal, ensures that concerns about pupils receive prompt action. Minutes are taken of meetings, records are kept, and pastoral responses are regularly reviewed and evaluated. The PSD programme provides additional support, meeting the needs of all pupils well.
- 4.10 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves is a strength of the school. Pupils are confident and relaxed with each other and with staff, and readily celebrate each other's strengths and successes. This is very evident in the classroom. Pupils say they feel safe in the school and that a member of staff is always at hand. Younger pupils value the contact they have with the Year 12 peer mentors assigned to their tutor group.
- 4.11 In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of pupils expressed dissatisfaction with opportunities for the school to listen to and respond to their views. Inspection evidence shows that pupil views are represented in the lower, middle and sixth form councils and through boarding and other committees, which provide excellent opportunities for pupils to voice their opinions. Communication of the school's responses, expressed in written minutes, is through tutors and/or committee members, but this system is not consistently effective.
- 4.12 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour, including procedures to guard against bullying, are very effective. Pupils confirm that bullying is not a significant problem in the school and, when an incident does occur, it is dealt with speedily and appropriately. Serious punishments need rarely be given. Pupils have a good understanding of the school's use of rewards and sanctions and feel these are applied fairly.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities.
- 4.14 The range and choice of meals provided is of high quality and supports a healthy lifestyle. The catering department promotes healthy eating prominently and it assists in educating pupils in this area. Innovative ideas range from pupils being

awarded food hygiene certificates to cookery competitions. Information on how to eat well is posted on the catering area of the school intranet for pupils. The extensive range of sports and activities available for all levels of ability and the emphasis placed on physical fitness successfully promote healthy living.

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

- 4.15 The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent.
- 4.16 The school's arrangements to safeguard the pupils' welfare are strong. Designated staff receive regular child protection and inter-agency training. Fruitful working relationships are maintained with local agencies and advice is sought appropriately. Child protection training for all other staff is similarly effective. Induction for new staff is prompt and thorough at all stages of the school year. Arrangements exist to ensure that temporary staff and volunteers are made aware of the procedures.
- 4.17 Registration of the pupils is undertaken carefully, including during lessons to ensure that the pupils' whereabouts are known across a large campus. Any absence is followed up quickly by office staff and the marshals. The school maintains an appropriate admission register electronically, which is backed up and stored appropriately.
- 4.18 Arrangements to ensure the pupils' health and safety are excellent and have due regard for the nature of the school's site. Pupils who feel unwell during the day are cared for by the medical centre. A comprehensive first aid policy includes good provision for particular areas of the school's activities such as sport. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of those with special physical or learning needs.
- 4.19 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are highly efficient. Regular drills are held and equipment checked appropriately. Assessments of risk are effective and wide ranging throughout the school.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.20 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.21 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders are confident, polite and articulate, and they demonstrate great pride both in their school and in their boarding houses. They are able to influence boarding provision through the boarders' council and the food committee, as well as through regular house meetings and informal contact with house staff. They receive suitable responses to their views on boarding provision. Relationships between staff and boarders and amongst boarders themselves are warm and sincere. Staff work hard to cater for individual needs and boarders feel very well cared for. They enjoy the challenge of leadership roles within their houses and eagerly celebrate the rich cultural diversity of the many different nationalities represented in the boarding community. Boarders are encouraged to be fit and healthy and they take advantage of the excellent facilities available to them. Behaviour in the houses is exemplary and boarders thrive in the atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
- 4.22 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Houses are warm, comfortable and well maintained. Each house has at least one kitchen; these are well-stocked. Laundry provision is generous. Houses have excellent recreational facilities with pianos, newspapers and libraries provided alongside computers and

games equipment. All bedrooms have desks for private study and lockable spaces for the boarders' valuables. Small personal items may be purchased from house stores or in the town. There are plenty of bathrooms, showers and toilets. Boarders benefit from the school's extensive programme of co-curricular activities and the comprehensive sports complex, in addition to many dedicated activities for them in the evenings and weekends. There is an exciting social calendar of boarding events, which include barbeques and boarders' quiz nights. A variety of electronic devices enable boarders to keep in touch with their parents, including across different time zones.

- 4.23 The induction programme for new boarders is robust and thoughtful, with many activities which help integrate new boarders into the community. Boarders are aware of the wide range of adults to whom they can turn for help and guidance; in addition to boarding staff, each boarder has access to confidential counselling, and chaplaincy services. All house notice boards display comprehensive information and contact details for outside agencies.
- 4.24 The catering provision is excellent with a wide choice of plentiful, nutritious and well-cooked food. Special dietary requirements are catered for with thought and imagination, and social events such as a Valentine's dinner and 'break-up' suppers are enhanced by the attractive menu options. The medical centre within the main school campus is staffed by qualified nurses. Boarders may attend at any time and a doctor visits each weekday. The atmosphere is warm and welcoming with appropriate facilities for sick boarders. There are excellent facilities for visiting practitioners such as physiotherapists. All medication is correctly and appropriately stored and dispensed, with parental consent in place. The arrangements for self-medication are effective and the confidentiality and rights of boarders are respected. Records are properly maintained.
- 4.25 Care for the boarders' welfare, health and safety is excellent. Boarders feel safe and valued. The school's clear and comprehensive safeguarding policy encompasses all staff, visitors and contract workers. The anti-bullying policy is robust and promotes an open and trusting atmosphere in houses. There is a clear system of rewards and sanctions, which is applied consistently across houses. The system is understood by all boarders and promotes excellent behaviour. Boarders know when and how to report concerns and they are extremely confident in speaking with house staff, secure in the knowledge that all their concerns are taken seriously and dealt with promptly.
- 4.26 The school has excellent systems for signing in and out and staff are aware of the boarders' movements. House staff are readily available overnight should help be needed, and boarders have contact numbers to ensure assistance or advice is accessible. The missing child policy is clear and understood by all boarding staff. Effective communication between boarding staff and parents ensures the safety and welfare of boarders. Appropriate risk assessments are in place. There are regular fire drills which take place in 'boarding time', and all zones and extinguishers are regularly checked. Fire logs are up to date and correctly stored. Emergency lighting is regularly checked and checks are logged appropriately.
- 4.27 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent and are reflected in the high quality relationships and personal development of boarders. Systems are excellent, and the monitoring of policies is good overall, though the review of documentation is inconsistent. The boarding aims are clearly stated and achieved without exception. The boarding team meets regularly to review arrangements for

boarding, ensuring that changes and developments impact positively on boarders. Strong house loyalties, together with friendly and positive relationships and atmosphere are nurtured by highly dedicated staff. Policy-making is clear and concise. There are clear priorities for development. The school has a comprehensive complaints procedure for parents. Parents who responded to the boarding questionnaire were extremely satisfied with the provision and the care their children receive. The boarders' responses were equally enthusiastic. Inspection evidence confirms these views.

- 4.28 The school has responded positively to the recommendations of the 2009 Ofsted boarding report.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governance provides strong support for the school's aims; it promotes the school's distinctive ethos wholeheartedly and enables the most successful fulfilment of its ambitious vision through highly effective governance structures. This maintains the pupils' exceptional achievement and excellent personal development. Three committees provide highly focussed challenge and support. There is clear acknowledgement of the distinction between the roles of governors and school managers. Governors view the school's work as an integrated whole and provide commensurate support for boarding. Governors are given good opportunities for training. Many attend external courses and all benefit from careful induction and from training provided to coincide with governors' meetings. The governing body includes an excellent range of experience and care is taken over the appointment of new governors. Regular presentations to governors by senior leaders provide the full body with high quality information about the school's activities and current educational issues, such as e-safety. Governors are regular visitors to school, including to lessons.
- 5.3 Careful and resourceful financial management has enabled the school to secure funding for regular capital projects, such the excellent, recently opened performing arts space. Governors support the school's development of key management objectives through well-informed strategic planning. The successes of the school in many areas are viewed as stimuli for further, ambitious improvement. Arguments about possible future paths are weighed up sensitively and realistically. Governors provide strong oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review welfare, staff recruitment, and health and safety arrangements regularly, including an annual review of safeguarding measures by all governors. The school buildings are maintained well, with those areas which show signs of age judiciously identified for renovation or as the focus of future plans.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, is excellent.
- 5.5 Excellent leadership and management ensure the most successful realisation of the school's ambitious aims. Its ethos of internationalism is strongly reflected throughout the curriculum and in the exceptional achievement this enables. It is manifest in the pupils' excellent personal development, particularly in the very high levels of cultural awareness they demonstrate, especially notable in boarding. Senior leaders promote a climate of excellent pastoral care, matched by strong arrangements to safeguard pupils.
- 5.6 Since the previous inspection the school has made significant progress as the full impact of following the IB exclusively in the sixth form has been felt. The school continues to evaluate the success of its educational provision with care. This perceptive self-evaluation has, for example, identified the need in Years 10 and 11 to institute courses which reflect similar educational principles to the IB more directly, a process already begun with the implementation of the Sevenoaks

Certificate in English literature. This forward-looking approach typifies the management of the school and is reflected in the planning and implementation of academic policy amongst middle managers. The development of teaching and learning, and of co-curricular activities, is enthusiastic and well informed at all levels. This contributes strongly to the extremely high level of learning skills demonstrated by pupils. Structures for pastoral care are highly effective and pastoral policies are generally clear and concise, although a small number of boarding policies do not consistently reflect the excellent practice in that area.

- 5.7 Development planning is ambitious and planning for capital projects is informed by educational priorities. Long-term planning for the school site follows clear principles but also responds to changing needs. The consolidated management objectives published for each academic year ensure clear focus and achievable goals, which are reflected in departmental planning.
- 5.8 The shrewd delegation of responsibility and a flexible approach to decision making are key elements in the smooth running of the school. Management of financial and estates areas provides strong support and recent changes in the management of personnel have provided additional benefit. Effective budgeting ensures that all areas of school life receive excellent human and material resources.
- 5.9 The school appoints staff of high quality, both teaching and non-teaching. Systems for biennial appraisal and professional development are clear and comprehensive, and work effectively at all levels of management. They are kept under continual review. The school's careful appraisal of individual teachers' responsibilities results in clear job descriptions and expectations for staff. Induction of new staff is particularly thorough. The recently instituted academic forum is an effective vehicle for discussing initiatives. Teaching and learning awards, which allow individual staff time and space to focus on particular projects, are effectively deployed to enhance professional development. The school makes optimum use of staff expertise to lead workshops and provide training. Arrangements to train staff in their roles to ensure the pupils' welfare, and for health and safety, are implemented effectively, including the training of all staff in safeguarding procedures. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are secure. Recording of checks is appropriate and meets the requirement of the previous inspection.
- 5.10 Administrative, catering, maintenance, medical and other non-teaching staff are integrated closely into the school's structures and provide a strong underpinning of the school's educational provision through their strong commitment and efficiency.
- 5.11 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. Parents report extremely high levels of satisfaction with the school's provision for their children's education in the pre-inspection questionnaire, with unanimous approval expressed for their children's progress alongside complete confidence that their children are supported. There were no areas of concern raised by significant numbers of parents. An appropriate complaints procedure is maintained, and correctly implemented on the very rare occasions this is necessary.
- 5.12 The school provides the required information for parents of current and prospective pupils, helpfully articulating the division of responsibilities between school and home. This includes lively and candid advice on living with teenagers as well as detailed joining instructions clarifying procedures and practicalities, available through the website. Parents are encouraged to become informed and involved, with the

Parents Association initiating contact with a welcome tea. This precedes an extensive programme of social events which also raise substantial sums for enhancements to learning, recently funding the purchases of a harpsichord, a projection screen and flooring to allow the tennis courts to be used for whole school events.

- 5.13 An extensive programme of guidance sessions ensures that parents are enabled to be fully involved in decisions about their children's education. Advice is offered at each stage, including meetings to introduce personal tutors. Tutors are then able to develop good relationships through regular meetings and their willingness to communicate even minor concerns. Parents of boarders can arrange to see tutors whenever they visit the school.
- 5.14 The parent portal is used to communicate news, with the daily bulletin supplemented by characterful reporting of events and achievements. Reporting of academic progress is also available online, including twice-yearly reports and interim grading. Reports have been improved since the previous inspection through adherence to directives which encourage concise assessment and suggestions for improvement even for the highest achieving pupils. These are expressed with directness and warmth, confirming that teachers know their pupils well. Reports clearly articulate achievement and any concerns or action points.

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