



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**TRURO SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	<b>Truro School</b>
DfE Number	<b>908/6079</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>306576</b>
Address	<b>Truro School Trennick Lane Truro Cornwall TR1 1TH</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01872 272763</b>
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Email Address	<b>enquiries@truroschoo.com</b>
Head	<b>Mr Paul Smith</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Martin Pearse</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>786</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (498 boys, 288 girls)</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>723</b>
Number of Boarders	Total: <b>63</b> Full: <b>52</b> Weekly: <b>11</b>
Inspection dates	<b>16 Oct 2012 to 19 Oct 2012</b>

## 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 May 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](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.

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

### Inspectors

Mrs Una Stevens	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Caroline Bateson	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Philip Capes	Team Inspector (Former Head, HMC/Society of Heads school)
Miss Katherine Greenwood	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school)
Mr Simon Morris	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mr Roger Tapping	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Tom Walsh	Team Inspector (Vice-Principal, ISA school)
Ms Olwen Wright	Team Inspector (Head of Senior School, ISA school)
Mr Geoffrey Link	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Truro School is a Methodist school. It strives to ensure that Christian values permeate school life. The school aims to challenge, inspire and support its pupils as individuals to grow intellectually, personally and spiritually, so that all of them can achieve their best. It seeks to ensure that high quality teaching will help pupils to realise their academic potential, but equally, to encourage pupils to acquire skills, confidence and leadership qualities through co-curricular activities.
- 1.2 The school is an independent, co-educational day and boarding school for pupils aged 11 to 18, which occupies an elevated site to the south of Truro. It was founded as Truro Wesleyan Middle Class College by Cornish Methodists in 1880. As numbers rapidly grew, the school moved to its current site in 1882. It was renamed Truro School in 1931. Girls were admitted to the sixth form in 1976 and the school became fully co-educational in 1990.
- 1.3 The school is a registered charity. It is one of a group governed by the Methodist Independent Schools Trust, which has compiled a list of over 50 mission statements that emphasise Christian values. The trust is represented on the school's local governing body of 18 governors. Since the previous inspection, the library, dining hall, most of the boarding houses and the sixth-form centre have been refurbished. An art gallery has been installed to display works by pupils, the artist in residence and local artists.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, the number of pupils on roll was 786 (498 boys and 288 girls), including 211 in the sixth form and 63 boarders, mainly in Years 10 to 13. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. Pupils are predominantly of white British origin. Day pupils attend from an area encompassing most of Cornwall. Pupils have a variety of family backgrounds, including the professions, business and farming. Of the 37 pupils, predominantly from Germany and south east Asia, who have English as an additional language (EAL), 27 receive additional lessons in English. The school has identified 92 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and provides specialist lessons to 70 of these pupils. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following table.

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

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

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

- 2.1 The school is successful in fulfilling its aims to promote quality in diversity, by challenging, inspiring and supporting its pupils to develop their unique gifts and talents within a Methodist ethos. Pupils achieve well in their learning, profiting well from the school's broad curriculum. They benefit greatly from a particularly rich co-curricular programme, which provides additional challenge and variety. Examination results and inspection evidence indicate that pupils make good progress. Achievement is strong in academic competitions, music, art, drama and sport. The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers' robust subject knowledge makes a substantial contribution to promoting pupils' learning. The quality of marking, assessment and target setting is inconsistent. Specialist teachers support pupils with SEND or EAL well, although provision for such pupils in class is of variable quality, as it is for able, gifted and talented pupils (A, G and T). Pupils approach all learning tasks within the taught curriculum, and in their co-curricular participation, with a high degree of motivation and considerable enthusiasm.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent. Pupils of all ages develop a genuine concern for others, a strong sense of right and wrong, and an appreciation of leadership and team-building qualities. Their increasing maturity is skilfully underpinned by excellent pastoral care. The school maintains a strong sense of community and service. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the challenge of fund raising, so that they actively support developmental projects in Africa and through the World AIMS programme. Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 2.3 The quality of the boarding experience is good, with some excellent features. It makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development, as it promotes confidence, independence and self-reliance. A targeted training programme for all boarding staff is not in place.
- 2.4 The school meets all regulatory requirements. Sound governance ensures that the Methodist ethos and aims of the school are firmly maintained. Governors have a clear understanding of certain key performance indicators, such as examination results. However, the school's development plan is not sufficiently evaluative or robust as a means of ensuring that governance oversees strategy and performance incisively, in order to offer appropriate support and challenge at all levels. The quality of leadership and management is good. Senior and middle leadership and management are dedicated, caring and supportive of the school's aims. They contribute strongly to the breadth and quality of the education provided. Leadership and management ensure effective links with parents. There is currently no formal appraisal system in place for teaching and boarding staff.

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

- 2.5 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 2.6 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

**(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Devise a coherent and rigorous system to ensure that governance, leadership and management implement and monitor all of the school's policies and procedures in a timely fashion.
  2. Improve the consistency of teachers' assessment procedures in class, in their marking and in target setting, so that all pupils know what they have to do to improve their learning.
  3. Introduce a formal appraisal system for teaching and boarding staff, and implement a targeted training programme for all boarding staff.



### **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 good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims to promote quality in diversity, by challenging, inspiring and supporting them to develop their unique gifts and talents. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop well. High quality extended writing was particularly evident in English and history. Pupils are articulate and self-confident, whether in discussion, as in the Year 13 debate in relation to life after death, or when sharing ideas informally. They demonstrate that they can think logically and coherently, manipulate numerical data and explain scientific concepts well. Pupils relish challenges to apply their knowledge and skills independently in new situations. They use information and communication technology (ICT) competently, for example to access useful resources on the school intranet. Pupils' strong creativity is evident in their excellent artwork, in a variety of media, as it is in drama. A group of pupils in Years 7 to 9 enthusiastically exchanged ideas for the production of a silent film, which they intend to enter for a regional competition. Many pupils have excellent musical skills. The school's concert for the public, observed during the inspection, was notable for its quality and the number of participants. Many pupils excel in graded music examinations, speech and drama. The standard of sport and physical activity is high.
- 3.3 Pupils succeed in a number of academic competitions, encompassing mathematics, science, literature and public speaking. A substantial number of pupils have achieved The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE), including gold level. Pupils compete with notable success at local, regional and national sporting events. Currently, ten pupils hold national fencing honours. The under-sixteen rugby and netball teams have won national championships, whilst the under-fifteen rugby team reached the final of a nationally sponsored competition in 2010. Sailing, surfing, badminton and tennis achievements are also strong.
- 3.4 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. Performance at GCSE has been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the average for maintained selective schools. Over this period, 60 per cent of pupils achieved A\* to A in 10 subjects. A-level results have been good in 2009 and 2010 in relation to the national average for maintained schools and high in 2011, with over 80 per cent of grades at A\* to B. They have also been above the national average for maintained selective schools. In the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) in 2012, just over 65 per cent of pupils achieved an A\*. Inspection evidence and standardised measures indicate that pupils make good progress in relation to their abilities. Specialist monitoring within the learning support department is supportive of pupils with SEND or EAL. However, provision for such pupils in lessons is of variable quality, as it is for A, G and T pupils. As a result, the progress of these groups of pupils is not always sufficiently rapid.
- 3.5 Pupils' positive attitudes to learning and their exemplary behaviour support their achievement strongly. They learn well independently and co-operate successfully. The vast majority of sixth-form pupils proceed to higher education, with 91% in 2011 and 65% in 2012 to their first choice of university.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.7 An excellent programme of co-curricular activities supplements the taught curriculum most effectively. The curriculum successfully addresses all the requisite areas of learning, and fully supports the school's aim to develop each pupil's unique gifts, responding to their individual abilities and needs. The curriculum committee assists with curriculum development and inter-departmental communication, by creating a regular time for discussion to ensure that the evolving needs of pupils are met.
- 3.8 Pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from a wide-ranging educational experience, including the study of two modern foreign languages and separate sciences. As a result, they are provided with an informed basis for choosing optional subjects at GCSE. Provision for the humanities is strong at GCSE and A level, including geology, in addition to geography. In the sixth form, a comprehensive choice of 22 subjects is offered, complemented by an imaginative and varied enrichment curriculum, designed to accommodate pupils' individual needs. This programme includes AS-level courses, spread over two years. The AS course in mathematics supports pupils studying science, while courses in modern foreign languages and art encourage the continuation of these courses for non-specialists beyond their GCSE studies. Since the previous inspection, the development of the highly successful EPQ, introduced in 2009, and other provision for extension studies have considerably enhanced the sixth-form curriculum, as has the recent introduction of the Community Sports Leadership Award.
- 3.9 The excellent range of co-curricular activities and the successes pupils achieve therein are major strengths of the school. The academic and physical education timetable is suspended on Wednesday afternoons to allow for more extended commitment to the co-curricular programme than would otherwise be possible. The extensive programme is characterised by its variety. It extends to weekends, with DofE expeditions, community service and challenging pursuits, such as that of the Ten Tors Dartmoor hike. In a recently introduced initiative, modern foreign languages exchanges include a week's work experience in the host countries.
- 3.10 Pupils and parents alike express praise for the educational, recreational and skill-building benefits of the co-curricular programme. It makes a significant contribution to the quality of pupils' achievements and to their personal development, preparing them very well for their future lives and enabling them to make an effective contribution to society.
- 3.11 Since the previous inspection, a programme for personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) has been thoughtfully devised and implemented from Years 9 upwards. However, the school recognises that a more detailed focus on the needs of pupils in Years 7 and 8 in this area has not yet been fully addressed, with which the inspection team agrees.
- 3.12 Pupils with EAL speak positively about the support they receive. Those with SEND appreciate the assistance they are given in one-to-one lessons, but say that specific support for their learning needs is inconsistent across subjects. Provision for A, G and T pupils is focused on participation in national academic and sporting competitions. It is inconsistent in class, in terms of sufficiently challenging tasks and opportunities for independent thinking.

- 3.13 The pupils appreciate the school's links with the local, national and international community, which successfully promote its ethos of giving, sharing and serving, including through the Methodist World AIMS programme.

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

- 3.14 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.15 It makes a notable contribution to the school's aim to inspire and support pupils to grow intellectually, personally and spiritually. Throughout the school, teaching is effective in providing a secure foundation for pupils to consolidate their learning, acquire new knowledge and understanding, make good progress and develop their skills. Generally, teachers have high expectations of their pupils, as reflected in the standards achieved in public examination results and in university destinations.
- 3.16 Teachers are well qualified and effectively deployed; many are highly experienced. Their specialist knowledge is consistently robust, which generally ensures good or outstanding pupil progress. The best teaching, observed in a number of subject areas, was characterised by meticulous planning, excellent time management and thoughtfully devised learning tasks, which built effectively on pupils' prior knowledge, understanding and skills. In such lessons, the pace was brisk and the teacher's enthusiasm was infectious, so that pupils' engagement and enjoyment were clearly manifest. Teachers' skilled open-ended questioning challenged pupils to aspire to the highest standards. In less successful lessons, a teacher-led approach predominated. The overuse of closed questions and lack of stimulating the pupils' sense of excitement in their learning resulted in limited pupil progress, a lack of additional challenge for A, G and T pupils and insufficiently targeted support for pupils with SEND.
- 3.17 The school is well resourced, though teachers use these imaginatively to varying degrees. In the best examples, they promoted pupils' good or excellent progress. In lessons such as those observed in geology, outstanding resources, based on primary data, an extremely well-equipped classroom, which serves as a small museum, and very well-integrated use of ICT combined to enthuse and challenge pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND.
- 3.18 Relationships between teachers and pupils are extremely positive; they are founded on mutual respect, which ensures a collaborative approach to learning. Pupils are confident to ask for help, safe in the knowledge that they will receive it. In the vast majority of lessons, the contribution of all pupils was valued and encouraged, so that positive peer support prevailed in the classroom.
- 3.19 The school now has considerable standardised data relating to pupils' ability and achievements. The use made of such data to inform planning and accelerate pupil progress is not yet fully disseminated across all departments. Thoughtfully devised pupil progress reports are issued regularly, but they are not used fully systematically to provide a focus for gauging improvement in subsequent weeks.
- 3.20 A significant amount of teaching demonstrates a good response to one of the recommendations of the previous inspection, to improve the consistency of marking and assessment of pupils' work. However, a recently updated marking policy has not been fully implemented in a consistent way across the curriculum, nor at different stages in the school. The quality and frequency of marking are not yet uniform across the school, nor within departments. Single terms, such as "good", are widely

employed, teachers do not regularly provide written strategies for improvement and pupils do not have sufficient opportunities for self- or peer evaluation.

- 3.21 A significant improvement since the previous inspection has been the school's introduction of the EPQ. The taught element of this qualification is extremely well structured and supervised, resulting in an excellent opportunity for senior pupils to develop their independent learning skills.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils are articulate and confident. They appreciate the value of learning collaboratively and of co-operation in all their endeavours, which they see as the most effective way to achieve a common purpose. Through the work of the chaplaincy, staff who lead assemblies, tutors and others, the school is highly successful in creating a harmonious, tolerant pupil body, in which all pupils have a genuine appreciation of the wide range of opportunities afforded to them.
- 4.3 The spiritual awareness of pupils is excellent. They think about different dimensions of their lives in tutor time, in chapel services and assemblies, where Methodist traditions remain at the heart of the school. During such services, pupils of all faiths and those of no faith are reverential and listen attentively. The chapel and the library offer places for quiet reflection during a busy day. Pupils gain an increasingly insightful awareness of non-material aspects of life, particularly through their study of religious studies and literature, and through the creative arts.
- 4.4 Pupils have a highly developed moral awareness. They have a keen sense of right and wrong, so that they expect sanctions and rewards to be issued fairly. Pupil questionnaire responses revealed that they do not always deem this to be the case, a view shared by the inspectors. Pupils use their reasoning skills, in line with the third Methodist mission statement, for example, to discuss ethical issues associated with gambling.
- 4.5 Pupils are very generous in giving of their time and money to help others. They have a keen awareness of those who are less fortunate than they are, as they help in local charity shops, nurseries and a Methodist church. They respond enthusiastically to the challenge of fund raising, and actively support developmental projects in Africa and through the World AIMS programme, to which the school has recently contributed £9,500.
- 4.6 Social development is outstanding. New pupils are warmly welcomed, not just by their peers but through the school's Advice, Care, Help and Empathy (ACHE) scheme, whereby sixth formers act as mentors and confidantes to pupils in the lower part of the school, a scheme highly valued by all. Pupils show an extensive social commitment to the well-being of one another by taking on roles within the school, such as joining the school council or sixth-form association. Senior officers and prefects are elected, take their responsibilities very seriously and discharge these in an exemplary manner. Sixth formers additionally assist in numerous ways in the school, including supervising mealtimes and preps. All pupils contribute to community life within the houses, which offers additional leadership possibilities, in addition to those available through the forms. Pupils of all ages represent their school with pride and confidence, locally, nationally and internationally.
- 4.7 The cultural development of the pupils is excellent. They are respectful of other faiths and cultures, which they view as enhancing their lives. Their understanding and appreciation of Western cultural traditions are clearly demonstrated throughout the curriculum. Equally, they relish exploring how different cultures respond to universal concepts. Their behaviour and comments reflect their heartfelt value of the

multi-cultural dimension brought to the school by boarders from Europe and overseas.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 This is pivotal in helping pupils to attain high standards of personal development. In accordance with the school's aims to care for its pupils as individuals, a strong culture of support, guidance, mutual trust and respect pervades the school. Relationships amongst pupils within and across year groups are warm and friendly. Teachers know their pupils well and pupils feel particularly well supported by them. Tutors and heads of year are seen as approachable; pupils mentioned during discussion that they could all identify a range of adults to whom they can turn for advice. The role of the chaplaincy in supporting pastoral care is exemplary.
- 4.10 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy and to take exercise. Pupils speak appreciatively of the food available; menus offer considerable choice and a variety of healthy options. Healthy lifestyle issues are explored through PSHEE sessions, delivered in tutorial time, although the limited time available for timetabled PSHEE means that these and other associated issues cannot always be dealt with in sufficient depth.
- 4.11 Robust systems are in place to prevent bullying and to ensure that pupils are safe. Any incidents of unacceptable behaviour are dealt with promptly, as confirmed by pupils. A culture of fostering individual talents and encouraging self-esteem is clearly felt within the school.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable plan in place to improve access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with appropriate timescales.
- 4.13 The pupil questionnaire responses indicated that a substantial proportion of pupils do not believe that they have adequate opportunity to express their views to the school. Inspection evidence indicates that there are a number of forums for pupils to do so, although such opportunities are greater in the older than in the younger year groups. The senior leadership team listens attentively to the views of senior officers and prefects, as it does to those of other senior pupils.

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

- 4.14 The school's arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.15 An effective policy for safeguarding pupils, which has regard to official guidance, is in place. The deputy head (pastoral) is the designated child protection officer. A review of the school's child protection policy, procedures and their implementation is conducted annually by senior management. All staff receive safeguarding training within the designated timeframes. The sixth-form pupils who participate as mentors in the ACHE programme also benefit from appropriate safeguarding training.
- 4.16 Health and safety policies and procedures are comprehensive. Since the previous inspection, considerable progress has been made, and regular internal and external audits are undertaken. Systematic testing of electrical equipment and fire safety equipment takes place. Fire drills are carefully logged and evaluated. Each academic department has its own health and safety policy, which ensures that associated risks are carefully identified; risk assessments are regularly reviewed and

updated as necessary. In areas such as technology workshops and science laboratories, copies of risk assessments are attached to machinery and tools. The wide range of external visits and trips is carefully planned, with detailed risk assessments. A review document is completed after each trip to identify the efficacy of the assessment.

- 4.17 Ill or injured pupils benefit from excellent care provided by staff in the medical centre, complemented by 23 staff who are trained in first aid. Accidents, illnesses and provision of medication are recorded carefully. Any significant injuries or incidents are reported appropriately.
- 4.18 The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and stored. Since the previous inspection, the school has implemented an effective registration system to cover Wednesday afternoon activities.

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

- 4.19 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.20 Boarding provision has some excellent features, and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. It promotes pupils' confidence, independence and self-reliance, and reflects very clearly the school's aim to create quality in diversity.
- 4.21 Boarding is becoming increasingly multi-cultural. Since the previous inspection, more nationalities have been represented within the boarding community. Boarders of the same nationality are spread amongst the houses. Boarders live in a community that encourages tolerance and respect for all, and that has established itself as an integral element of the school.
- 4.22 Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are strong. They are built on mutual respect throughout all the houses and age groups. All pupils interviewed emphasised the positive nature of relationships in the boarding section, and the support and direction that the staff give to them. Staffing levels are appropriate for the number and ages of boarders. Boarders state that their views are considered empathically. Should any concerns arise, they have recourse to an effective pupils' complaints policy. It works well in practice, as staff act quickly and effectively when issues are brought to their attention. House staff communicate readily with parents and guardians, whilst boarders can contact their families using mobile telephones, email and other electronic systems.
- 4.23 An almost unanimous opinion exists that pupils are happy boarding at the school. They say that they form strong, long-lasting friendships and that experience of boarding broadens their perspective on life. All boarders are inducted well, formally with organised activities such as a barbecue, which they attend with their parents at the end of the first day, and informally through the support and friendship of other pupils. A comprehensive range of activities takes place for boarders in the evenings, using the extensive facilities available in the school. At weekends, a well-planned programme of trips and excursions is appreciated and enjoyed by the boarders.
- 4.24 Malvern, which caters for girls aged 13 to 19, offers opportunities for older boarders to support those younger than themselves; they do this as older sisters, rather than as traditional prefects. The senior girls are excellent role models within boarding and in the school at large. As boarders mature, increasing opportunities exist for them to take more responsibility for all aspects of their lives, which pupils respect

- and value. However, support is always at hand; pupils confirmed that it is not only house staff who are available, but other adults, should they need assistance.
- 4.25 Boarding has undergone a transformation in recent years thanks to well-considered marketing strategies and the commitment of all staff involved. As a result, the houses cannot currently meet the demands from pupils wishing to board on a flexible basis. Such a demand is a testament to how positively the boarding experience is viewed in the wider school community.
- 4.26 The nursing staff run the medical centre most efficiently. All medical protocols are followed, in a well-equipped facility. Medical staff communicate effectively with resident house staff and parents to ensure continuity of care at all times. All fire records and procedures are maintained appropriately. All boarders knew house fire routines when they were asked about them. The CCTV system in use at the school does not intrude on pupils' privacy, but it provides extra security for the boarders in the grounds.
- 4.27 The vast majority of boarders praised the quality and variety of the food provided in the central dining area. The only suggestion for improvement was lunch provided on Saturday. On investigation, it transpired that this meal follows soon after a substantial brunch at 10.00 am, which was judged to be an acceptable arrangement, prior to a full meal in the evening. In pre-inspection questionnaires, a small number of pupils felt that they could not make snacks and drinks when they wish to. Inspectors found that additional food is provided in all houses each evening, and that boarders choose their preferred snacks twice weekly. House staff also provide food as treats at appropriate times, such as birthdays.
- 4.28 The quality of boarding accommodation is variable amongst the houses. Most is well decorated and maintained to a good standard. However, refurbishment of the senior boys' house is slow; whilst the pupils enjoy living in the house, the decoration is lacklustre. Plans are in hand to refurbish this house in the very near future. All houses are clean, well lit and warm. Boarders have areas they can personalise and areas where they can study in their free time. Toilet and washing facilities are sufficient for the numbers and ages of boarders, and generally of a good standard.
- 4.29 Parents' responses to questionnaires were almost universally in support of the boarding experience their children receive. The only concern that was raised related to the standard of some accommodation, with which inspectors concur. A small number of boarders raised concerns in their questionnaires about the safety of their belongings, but in interviews during the inspection this was not raised as an issue. All houses have lockable safes in boarders' rooms.
- 4.30 Whilst there is some evidence of a nascent performance management system for boarding staff, it is not fully functional in all houses or with all staff. Consequently, there is no evidence-based approach to deciding boarding development for the future. Appropriate in-service training is undertaken by some staff, but it is insufficiently co-ordinated and focused to facilitate improved performance for boarding as a whole.
- 4.31 All the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools are met, and effective measures are in place to ensure that child protection policies promote the welfare of pupils. The behaviour policy promotes positive attitudes as well as combating bullying effectively, as was confirmed by boarders. Staff recruitment checks are carried out in line with statutory guidance. People visiting school accommodation



are supervised at all times, and security arrangements work well. All recommendations from previous inspections have been met.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 Governors place a firm emphasis on the Methodist mission statements. Shrewd financial management has enabled them to discharge an ambitious programme of new facilities and refurbishment. Equally, governors take due care to recruit well-qualified staff.
- 5.3 Governors have a clear understanding of certain key performance indicators, such as examination results, but knowledge of other educational priorities is not yet cohesively developed. The school's development plan is insufficiently evaluative as a means of ensuring that governance oversees strategy and performance incisively. Regular meetings of the full governing body and of the various sub-committees take place, although attendance at these meetings is not uniformly high. Members of the staff committee visit the school twice or three times a year.
- 5.4 Governors are insightful about the differences between their role and that of leadership and management. They continue to place their trust firmly in the senior leadership team and other managers, of whom they are strongly supportive. However, they do not provide sufficient challenge to management to ensure that the educational direction of the school is appropriately stimulated and monitored.
- 5.5 The governors have appropriately reviewed the school's arrangements for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Their commitment to a regular review of other policies is not sufficiently rigorous.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.7 The school is well led and has faith in its ability to move forward successfully, fulfilling the trust's mission statements and its own aspirations. Dedicated, committed and supportive leadership and management at all levels serve the school well. They contribute effectively to the breadth of educational experience provided for pupils and the high levels of personal development they achieve, in a safe, friendly and orderly environment.
- 5.8 Members of the senior leadership have a common purpose in supporting the school's aims. They share an ambition for the school to continue to flourish. The day-to-day running of the school is delegated to the deputy heads, although some overlap of their roles exists, which can at times lead to a degree of confusion. Middle management is effective in promoting the school's aims and ethos, and some is exceptional.
- 5.9 Management has responded to all of the points relating to fulfilment of the regulatory requirements raised at the previous inspection, including a formal annual review of arrangements for safeguarding pupils' welfare and ensuring that all staff recruitment checks are fully completed. The single central register is meticulously maintained. All staff receive appropriate child protection training.

- 5.10 The school has all the required policies in place and some additional ones. Nevertheless, its commitment to a regular review of policies is not yet sufficiently formalised to ensure that the policies are monitored vigilantly and insightfully, so that their implementation can be accurately evaluated. Progress has been made in this area, which was highlighted in the recommendations of the previous inspection, but practices are not yet fully integral to the workings of the school.
- 5.11 Management appoints well-qualified, motivated teaching and support staff. Arrangements for the induction of new staff work well and are thorough. Newly qualified teachers are well supported and monitored effectively.
- 5.12 Departmental and pastoral leadership are good, and heads of department feel well supported in their roles. At the time of the previous inspection, plans for a formal review process of teaching staff were underway but these did not progress and so no such system currently exists in the school. Consequently, professional development needs are not systematically identified. Whilst members of the senior leadership team observe staff teach, intervals for doing so vary and systems of observation lack a formal structure. The school is committed to peer observation of teaching to share best practice, but this initiative is not yet fully developed. Ancillary staff are well organised in their work; they take a pride in their duties, which they fulfil conscientiously and effectively. A system for the formal review of these staff is in place.
- 5.13 The school has a strategic development plan, but this has not been regularly formally updated. It lacks prioritisation of its components, clear timescales and success criteria. In its current form, the plan does not facilitate accurate and incisive review by governors and members of the senior leadership team. Equally, it is difficult for middle managers to dovetail their departmental development plans into the overall strategic plan.
- 5.14 Individual departments plan effectively. Development of departmental initiatives in curriculum changes, such as the introduction of the International GCSE in some subjects, was effected in consultation with senior leadership. The curriculum committee is seen as a welcome new initiative. Financial resources are well managed. The senior leadership ensures that departments are well resourced, so that they feel adequately supported by budget allocation. Additional unplanned requests for funding are treated sympathetically by senior leadership and further resources are deployed where practicable. Since the previous inspection, the school has invested heavily in promoting the school's intranet, so that pupils can readily access material online to assist them in their studies and submit learning tasks for marking.
- 5.15 Links between the school and parents are effective. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that the vast majority of parents are satisfied with the information received about their children's progress. Parents particularly appreciate the wealth of co-curricular activities, the high standards of behaviour and the positive attitudes which the school promotes. Communication with parents has developed further since the previous inspection. The weekly Friday bulletin transmits news updates electronically to parents, whilst regular newsletters and the school website disseminate information and coverage of events and successes. Use of social media by the school has also allowed for daily updates of information.
- 5.16 The school warmly welcomes parents of current and prospective pupils for open days and visits, and provides them with appropriate information. Parents receive

good quality written reports at least once a year, which give a detailed indication of pupils' progress and include targets for improvement. The reports also contain comments on pupils' involvement in co-curricular activities. In addition to the reporting system, parents are invited to attend parents' meetings.

- 5.17 In their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, parents raised concern about opportunities to be involved in events and other aspects of the school's work. Inspectors found that parents have ample opportunity to attend numerous concerts and recitals, drama productions and prize giving, amongst other events. Parents also expressed concern about the school's handling of complaints. The school has continued to monitor the effectiveness of its complaints policy, particularly when an issue has arisen, and has made appropriate amendments to the policy and to procedures.

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