



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
ST MARY'S SCHOOL, CAMBRIDGE**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Mary's School, Cambridge

Full Name of School	St Mary's School, Cambridge		
DfE Number	873/6001		
Registered Charity Number	290180		
Address	St Mary's School, Bateman Street Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB2 1LY		
Telephone Number	01223 353253		
Fax Number	01223 357451		
Email Address	headmistress@stmaryscambridge.co.uk		
Head	Ms Charlotte Avery		
Chair of Governors	Mr Frank Morgan		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	658		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 144
	3-5 (EYFS):	17	11-18: 497
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	568	
Number of Boarders	Total:	90	
	Full:	84	Weekly: 6
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Kerry Owens		
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection Dates	01 Apr 2014 to 04 Apr 2014		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2010.

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

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

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. 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', 'requires improvement' 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 and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, assemblies and services. 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 Ian Newton	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Annabelle Hancock	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Neil Boulton	Team inspector (Former Director of Academic Administration, HMC School)
Mrs Perdita Davidson	Team inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
The Rev David Ibbotson	Team inspector (Former Director of Studies, HMC school)
Mr Peter Kelly	Team Inspector (Headmaster, ISA school)
Mrs Louise Robinson	Team inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Elaine Rushforth	Team Inspector (Head of Pre-Prep, GSA school)
Ms Clare Trelfa	Team inspector (Head, ISA school)
Miss Jean Walker	Team inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mrs Susan Meek	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Miss Mary Regan	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Mary's School, Cambridge is a day and boarding school for girls aged 4 to 18. The school is a Catholic foundation, which welcomes girls from all denominations and faiths. It was founded in 1898 by sisters from the Congregation of Jesus, who drew their inspiration from the Venerable Mary Ward, a seventeenth century religious sister. The school's ethos is based on Mary Ward's vision of the essential dignity of each human person. It aims to provide a strong moral and spiritual framework for life, to encourage in each girl a sense of worth, to nurture the core values of integrity, justice and respect for human dignity, to promote a sense of responsibility and to foster a love of learning. The school's work is overseen by a board of governors, who are also the trustees of the charity; they include the local Catholic priest and a sister from the Congregation of Jesus.
- 1.2 At the time of the inspection, the school had a total of 658 pupils. Of these, 161 were in the junior school, for girls from the age of four to the age of eleven, and 497 pupils were in the senior school, for girls from the age of eleven to the age of eighteen. Within the junior school, 17 children were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for pupils aged four; the EYFS setting is exempt from the EYFS learning and development requirements. Within the senior school, 113 were in the sixth form, for pupils aged 16 to 18. Although the great majority of girls are day pupils, 84 senior school pupils board full-time and another 6 board weekly. Of these, 54 girls live in Main School House, and 36 sixth-form girls live in Bateman House, opposite the Art Centre.
- 1.3 Day girls are drawn from a range of academic, business and professional families within a thirty-mile radius of Cambridge and have a range of ethnicities typical of the area. Boarders are drawn mostly from overseas and come predominantly from south east Asia, but with growing numbers from Russia, Nigeria and Western Europe.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the school is above the national average, though with a wider spread of abilities in the sixth form. One hundred and thirteen pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom thirty-seven receive individual support. There are eighty-two pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), of whom fifty-three receive support; almost all of these are in the senior school.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection, the school has acquired property a short walk away from the senior school, and converted the buildings and grounds to provide new junior school and EYFS facilities, including direct access for the reception class to a secure playground and outside learning environment, a sensory garden and adventure playground. This has enabled the school to improve senior school facilities by restoring the chapel, creating a new learning resources centre, sixth-form centre and art and photography centre, and refurbishing boarding accommodation.
- 1.6 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 Throughout the school, pupils achieve excellent standards so that, by the time they leave, their results at A level are above those for girls in selective maintained schools. Pupils make an excellent start in EYFS, where standards are high. Pupils of all ages are highly articulate, apply their understanding readily to new situations, show exceptional creative skills and contribute much to classroom discussion. Their attitudes to learning are exemplary. The high quality of their learning is supported by excellent curricular arrangements, outstanding additional support for pupils who need it, and by excellent teaching, which is much improved since the previous inspection. Throughout the school, teaching is well planned, with excellent use of 'question-and-answer', and good opportunities for open-ended discussion in the great majority of lessons. Marking provides considerable support to pupils in the improvement of their work.
- 2.2 Pupils of all ages show excellent personal development. They are mature, reflective, self-confident without being arrogant, and highly aware of the needs of others. Both they and the staff fully reflect the school's ethos of integrity, justice and respect. Their development is extremely well supported not only by the Catholic spirituality at the heart of the school, but also by meticulous pastoral care, excellent relationships, and their own sense of pride. The school gives excellent attention to their welfare as it does to boarding arrangements. Boarders enjoy comfortable accommodation and high quality care, appreciating both the close communities in which they live and the way they are fully integrated into school life.
- 2.3 Governors give excellent strategic leadership and oversight to all aspects of the school's work. Excellent outcomes in all areas reflect excellent leadership and management in both parts of the school, including the EYFS, though the small size of the leadership team in the junior school places a considerable burden on those involved. The whole school is led with a clear vision, encompassing the kind of community it wishes to be, the kind of young adults it wishes to develop and the academic goals it wishes to achieve; it is successful in all these aims and has addressed successfully issues raised in the previous inspection concerning the quality of teaching and marking, subject monitoring in the junior school, and provision of resources in the EYFS. Links with parents are excellent, as reflected in the highly positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that sufficient time and additional support is provided for the senior leadership in the junior school.
 2. Make more frequent use of the improved access to the new outdoor facilities in the EYFS.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The pupils are extremely well educated in line with the aims of enabling each girl to understand her strengths, to know how to make best use of her abilities and to progress beyond her own expectations. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, the overwhelming majority of pupils and parents were pleased with pupils' progress.

Junior School

- 3.3 The standards in the EYFS are excellent. All children, including those with SEND, make excellent progress in their learning relative to their starting points; they are well prepared for the next stage of their education. By the end of Reception, most children reach the expected levels of achievement while the more able exceed them in many areas. Most children are confident writing their first name, while the more able are developing independent writing skills. Many children read confidently and fluently. By the end of Reception, most children order numbers to 20 and recognise many of the numbers on a 100-square. Children respond well to additional challenge. For example, in Mandarin, they have acquired an extensive vocabulary enabling them to name colours, food and parts of the body.
- 3.4 Older pupils achieve high standards in all areas. They are highly articulate, using interesting and sometimes sophisticated vocabulary, for example when discussing the prologue to *Romeo and Juliet*. They read fluently and present their work neatly. In a musical play, the French drama group spoke and sang with excellent accents. The pupils' application of mathematics and scientific knowledge demonstrates a very good understanding. Standards in physical activities are high, and artwork is of exceptional quality. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used with confidence. Pupils work together well, showing respect for each other, together with independent thought and creativity. Pupils participate at county level for cricket, hockey and swimming, with successful results by school teams. In music, pupils show an excellent understanding of rhythm and pitch. Pupils who take instrumental lessons achieve high standards.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, based on lessons, scrutiny of work and interviews with pupils, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils with SEND progress equally well as a result of the support they receive; the most able pupils make rapid progress as a result of being given more challenging tasks to complete. Pupils are successful in moving to the senior school.
- 3.6 Pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. From the EYFS upwards, they enjoy challenging themselves as well as being challenged. They have excellent relationships with teachers and each other, and work successfully together as well as independently. They are highly motivated, enthusiastic, enquiring learners. In the EYFS, children are confident when making a decision and are developing independence.

Senior School

- 3.7 As pupils move into the senior school, they continue to produce work of excellent quality. They listen carefully and both speak and write fluently, in English and in modern and classical foreign languages. Their searching questions are based on a good understanding of issues in the humanities, and demonstrate significant skill in mathematics and sciences. By the time they leave, sixth-form pupils deal with abstract concepts confidently, and apply them to new situations. Artwork is of exceptional quality and, in the wide variety of singing and instrumental groups, the pupils perform to a high standard. They deploy excellent ICT skills across the curriculum.
- 3.8 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013, the most recent three years for which comparative data is available. Results in GCSE were above the national average for girls in maintained schools, and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Over two-thirds of grades were at A* or A level. Results in IGCSE French were above worldwide norms. A-level results were well above the national average for girls in maintained schools, and above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Over four-fifths of results were at A* to B grade, above the average for girls in maintained selective schools. This level of attainment, and nationally standardised measures of progress, indicate that pupils make excellent progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities, as confirmed by lessons observed, the scrutiny of work and discussions with pupils. The pupils are successful in entry to a wide range of universities.
- 3.9 Pupils who have SEND progress extremely well; for example, support with research enables them to deliver a presentation to the rest of the class. Similarly, those with EAL develop an excellent grasp of complex grammatical structures by the sixth form. Pupils work independently, selecting a wide range of topics for their International English Language Teaching System (IELTS) oral presentations. In many lessons, additional challenge enables the most able pupils to progress beyond their peers. Opportunities in art and music enable those with special talents to develop them to the full.
- 3.10 In addition to high standards in art, music and dance, pupils achieve well in a wide range of team and individual sports. They make high quality contributions to clubs, and are successful in activities such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, Young Enterprise, and science competitions.
- 3.11 The pupils show excellent motivation, perseverance and commitment. They work extremely purposefully, both individually and in groups, taking responsibility for their work and showing greater independence of logical thought and action than in the previous inspection. They enjoy their learning, continually question their own standards and seek to improve them. Pupils almost always participate readily in class discussion, responding well to challenging questions and asking their own questions confidently. Written work is presented well.

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

- 3.12 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.13 Throughout the school, the broad and balanced curriculum, which includes all the required areas of learning, supports the aims of promoting independent learning and

encouraging a sense of worth. Almost all parents are pleased with the choice of subjects, and almost all pupils and parents are pleased with the range of activities. The overwhelming majority of parents are pleased with the support for the most able pupils, and many commented favourably on the quality of special needs support.

Junior School

- 3.14 The excellent provision in EYFS is carefully planned and well matched to individual children's needs. The broad and exciting curriculum gives children access to a wide range of experiences, enhanced by the use of specialist teachers in French, Mandarin, music and gymnastics. Children now have access to a much improved outdoor area, but this is not yet being used to the full. This helps them all to reach the expected level of development, while the more able reach levels beyond expectation.
- 3.15 By fusing a wide range of subjects, the curriculum enriches the pupils' lives with creative, challenging and enterprising opportunities, which are well suited to their needs. This creative approach brings learning to life, for example through the wide variety of colourful displays. The pupils' ability to relate learning from different subject areas was well illustrated by their work on London landmarks. The substantial contribution to pupils' learning by ICT includes support for research, help with presentation and use of an internet mathematics programme. In games lessons, older junior school pupils are taught hockey, netball, dance and gymnastics at the senior school, where they benefit greatly from its facilities.
- 3.16 The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme strengthens pupils' personal development well. It gives them opportunities to reflect on a wide range of issues, such as children's rights in the UK, and the implications for those less fortunate than themselves.
- 3.17 Pupils with SEND are well supported and individual education plans help them access the curriculum effectively. Teachers plan lessons extremely well to ensure that there are challenging tasks for the more able. In addition, enrichment portfolios provide opportunities for pupils to work independently in areas such as mathematics challenges, extended writing and research.
- 3.18 The academic curriculum is supported by a varied and interesting extra-curricular programme. Clubs range from Spanish to code programming, and from drama and dance to sport. A wide range of educational visits supports pupils' learning. Excellent links with the local community benefit their social development. Pupils sing at a local nursing home over the Christmas period and perform with those from a local state school in a concert. Links have been formed with other Catholic schools as far afield as Manchester and Ireland.

Senior School

- 3.19 In Years 7 to 9, the broad curriculum provides a secure foundation for future learning. Pupils have a wide choice of modern languages, which now include Mandarin. From Year 8, sciences are studied separately. Food technology is available both within and outside lesson time. From Year 10, a wide range of courses is available, with 23 subjects at GCSE and 27 at A level; the school takes great care to meet pupils' preferences wherever possible. The Extended Project Qualification is offered at A level. In addition, the pupils follow the sixth form general programme which includes UCAS preparation, careers advice, PSHE and philosophy, ethics and religion. Since the previous inspection, the school has placed

a greater focus on independent learning; this has been supported by improved private study facilities, and by the way ICT is now embedded into pupils' learning.

- 3.20 The well-planned PSHE programme is taught alongside religious studies, and covers an appropriate range of topics. Healthy living is promoted, alongside topics such as relationships, drugs and alcohol education.
- 3.21 The curriculum provides excellent stimulus for pupils of all abilities. Pupils with SEND benefit from excellent support. Their extremely good progress is achieved through small group teaching, in-class support and effective communication between the SEND department and other staff. Pupils appreciate the open-door policy, which enables them to access support when they wish. As a result, they feel well prepared for examinations and higher education.
- 3.22 The provision for EAL pupils is excellent; they benefit from well-structured and effective teaching. Their needs are assessed before entry, and individual support programmes ensure that they make rapid progress in their language skills. Extensive use is made by both pupils and teachers of ICT, for example when current news broadcasts were used to develop pupils' linguistic range and confidence.
- 3.23 For more able pupils, teachers provide opportunities for extension work within the classroom. Departments have developed additional extra-curricular provision for gifted and talented pupils, alongside others with a special interest. Music, drama, art and sport provide opportunities for pupils to develop their individual talents.
- 3.24 The activities programme offers a huge range of opportunities to add breadth to the curriculum. Staff are fully supportive and very active. Activities during the inspection ranged from Mass to meditation, from drama to orchestra, and from international club to the school council. Over a hundred pupils participate in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, and are thus involved in service to the local community. Concerts involve local schools and parishes. Beyond Cambridge, matches, trips and expeditions broaden pupils' education further. Ten trips took place during the inspection, including foreign exchanges and practice expeditions.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.25 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.26 In both sections, teaching successfully supports the school's aim of fostering a love of learning. The overwhelming majority of pupils and parents are pleased with the progress that pupils make, and therefore the quality of teaching that supports it. A similarly high proportion of pupils say that teachers help them to learn and give individual help when it is needed, and that the work they do is interesting. Both the quality of marking in the junior school, and the consistency of teaching in the senior school, are much improved since the previous inspection.

Junior School

- 3.27 In EYFS, teachers know children very well and support them in the development of important skills, enabling them to develop and learn effectively. Throughout the junior school, including in the EYFS, teaching promotes pupils' learning extremely well. Teachers use a wide variety of expressive, lively and challenging strategies, which inspire pupils, help them remain focused, and involve them in independent and co-operative learning. Lessons are well prepared and the relationships between teachers and pupils encourage positive learning opportunities.

- 3.28 Teachers manage time well so that the pace is brisk and progress rapid. Teachers share learning objectives with older pupils. They demonstrate secure subject knowledge. Innovative teaching was particularly evident in STEM (Science, Technical, Engineering and Mathematics), for example in Year 3 where pairs of pupils worked with enthusiasm to construct a model Ferris wheel. Teachers have an excellent understanding of their pupils' needs, so that planning suits all abilities, including those with SEND and EAL. Teachers and pupils make very good use of a wide range of resources, including ICT.
- 3.29 The quality of marking is excellent and a target or thinking skill is now usually included, an improvement since the previous inspection. In many cases there is a dialogue between teacher and pupil. Regular classroom and standardised assessments allow pupils' progress to be monitored. Skills ladders, giving predicted outcomes for learning at different stages, are used by staff as a tool to check progress, to enable the pupils to be involved in their own learning and to provide more challenge for the more able. The progress made by children in EYFS is carefully monitored, through regular and on-going observations and thorough assessment.

Senior School

- 3.30 Teaching is well planned and, in the vast majority of lessons, a great deal of attention is given to pupils' individual needs. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, have high expectations, give very clear and precise instructions and know their pupils well. Careful questioning of pupils is used well to promote higher-level skills. In the vast majority of lessons, teachers moved effectively from group to group, or pupil to pupil, to offer advice and promote progress. Most lessons are focused, purposeful and have an enjoyable atmosphere where praise and mutual support are common. Pupils are challenged to think for themselves and, in many cases, develop their confidence in their academic work rapidly. Open-ended tasks and challenging teaching promote independent thinking and co-operative learning.
- 3.31 In the high proportion of excellent lessons, a brisk pace is combined with individual and group tasks in which pupils are skilfully challenged to develop and refine their ideas. Teaching is well resourced and, in the vast majority of lessons, a good range of activities is employed which enhances pupils' learning and supports their progress; just occasionally, lessons lack pace and variety, but pupils still usually apply themselves fully and enthusiastically. Teaching makes good use of ICT to support learning; pupils issued with tablets were enthusiastic about their use, which is imaginative and supports independent learning well.
- 3.32 Teaching caters well for the needs of pupils with SEND or with EAL, and learning assistance provides valuable support. Clear lesson objectives, a sharp focus on key words and explicit assessment criteria all help the pupils in their learning, regardless of their needs or abilities.
- 3.33 Baseline assessments support lesson planning and enable the monitoring of pupils' performance against individual aspirational targets. These assessment reports, together with regular dialogue between teachers, enable teachers to provide support through personalised intervention when necessary. Work is marked regularly and good written and oral feedback provided; in many subjects, pupils are encouraged to reflect on their own learning and set targets for themselves. The attention given to their individual needs is fully appreciated by the pupils themselves.

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 The quality of pupils' personal development is outstanding, supported by excellent relationships between pupils and staff. The school meets its aims of providing pupils with a strong moral and spiritual framework. It promotes a strong sense of responsibility towards others, both inside and outside the school. Self-esteem, self-awareness and self-sacrifice are evident throughout the community. The vast majority of pupils say they are encouraged to do things for themselves and have good opportunities to exercise responsibility. Children in EYFS are self-assured and confident; they trust adults at school, co-operate and share, tolerate each other's differences, and feel secure and happy. Children are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 4.3 The quality of pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. They have a strong spiritual awareness and demonstrate high levels of respect for themselves and others. The Catholic ethos, and the principles of Mary Ward, are focal points in everyday life. Pupils of all ages participate with sincerity in acts of worship; they are reflective in lessons and show self-confidence and self-esteem in their dealings with others. In the junior school, the moving enactment of the Passion of Christ through the Stations of the Cross and the end of term Service of Reflection were carried out with devotion and reverence. The senior school Lenten service was an occasion of reflection, worship and beauty. Pupils express themselves confidently and openly share their faith with others; for example, sixth-form pupils said how inspirational it was to go to Lourdes. Throughout the community, pupils' spirituality lies at the heart of the school's life.
- 4.4 Pupils have excellent moral standards, and a clear sense of right and wrong. They demonstrate a strong sense of justice and are aware that the world is not equal. Pupils are caring and considerate, tolerant and sensitive to others' feelings. In the junior school, house meetings allow older and younger pupils to develop a shared understanding of the world around them. The pupils take pride in their own and others' achievements. They are committed to embracing diversity. Behaviour is excellent. Pupils care much about the needs of others. For example, junior pupils sponsor a disadvantaged child in Ethiopia. Senior pupils support a wide range of local, national and international charities, often organising fundraising activities themselves. Pupils have compassionate, considerate attitudes promoted by the exploration of moral values in lessons.
- 4.5 Pupils' social development is excellent. The whole community is characterised by pupils' high degree of social responsibility. Pupils are welcoming and courteous to visitors. They take their responsibilities seriously, whether through individual roles or through membership of bodies such as the school councils. Older junior school pupils show a good understanding of current affairs, enhanced by guest speakers for example discussing parliament and how it functions. Their knowledge of democracy and British institutions is promoted through the curriculum. Eco Week promotes their awareness of the environment. In the senior school, pupils in all year groups benefit from the carefully planned opportunities for leadership. The leadership committee, comprising representatives from all year groups, has further enhanced opportunities for all.

4.6 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. They have learned to appreciate cultural diversity through embracing the range of ethnicity within the school community, and through studying a variety of faiths in religious studies. Parents visit the junior school to enable pupils to discuss and understand Diwali, and pupils celebrated Chinese New Year in Mandarin. In both parts of the school, pupils' artwork shows a sensitive appreciation of cultural differences. In the junior school, clubs such as French Theatre Club and Indian Folk Dance develop a broad understanding of other cultures. In the senior school, the International Club, run by sixth-form pupils, increases their understanding of other countries. The club explores cultural issues and traditions, and shares language and traditional activities. Overseas trips such as the annual Dutch exchange for pupils in Years 8 and 9 give insights into cultures overseas.

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

4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.

4.8 Throughout the school, the high quality of pastoral care and guidance fully supports the aim to encourage in each girl a sense of worth. In EYFS, teachers and support staff ensure that all children enjoy very positive relationships with adults and form secure emotional attachments with their key person, who is the class teacher. Arrangements for the transition to Year 1 are very good; children spend their play time and lunch break with Years 1 and 2 and know all their teachers very well.

4.9 The overwhelming majority of pupils say they enjoy being at school, and value the support they receive. Staff know pupils extremely well and relationships between the staff and pupils are friendly, positive and respectful. Pupils know they can go to a member of staff should there be a problem; they are confident that any issues will be dealt with swiftly and efficiently. In every way, staff provide excellent role models.

4.10 Houses provide important continuity for pupils, as well as providing opportunities for competition, since house families contain groups drawn from different age groups. In the junior school, staff mentors for pupils in Years 5 and 6, additional to their form teacher, help pupils challenge their own learning and thus enhance their personal development through their use of enrichment portfolios.

4.11 In the senior school, the provision of two tutors per form group enables pupils to have regular individual attention, and provides more opportunities to discuss academic progress and pastoral issues. New pupils receive careful induction. Pupils enjoy taking part in peer mentoring, so that relationships between older and younger pupils are strong and supportive. Pupils are well supported by counselling and opportunities for meditation. There is an appropriate programme for careers provision, supported by work experience and outside agencies.

4.12 The behaviour of pupils is exemplary; appropriate rewards and sanctions promote exceptionally high standards. The criticism of teachers' fairness in applying rewards and sanctions from a very small minority of pupils in the questionnaires, was not supported by inspection evidence, which included a scrutiny of the school's records and discussion with pupils. In questionnaires, a very large majority of pupils said that any bullying that occurred was well dealt with and, when questioned, pupils said it was not a problem.

4.13 The school councils represent the pupils' views well. Although a small minority of pupils felt their views were not listened to, pupils to whom inspectors talked said that

they appreciated the way they are run, and the changes that have been made following their deliberations.

- 4.14 Pupils, including children in the EYFS, are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits. Lunches are nutritious and offer appropriate choice. Regular exercise occurs both through the curriculum and through extra-curricular activities. The school has appropriate plans to improve its provision and access for pupils with disabilities. Children in EYFS are increasingly independent and can confidently manage their own personal hygiene.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.16 Highly effective arrangements ensure that pupils are safe and well cared for, making a significant contribution to their personal development. Pupils say they feel safe at school. Welfare policies and procedures are rigorously followed in all areas of the school, including in EYFS.
- 4.17 The detailed policy for safeguarding pupils has full regard to official guidance, is implemented meticulously and regularly reviewed by the governors, who are aware of their safeguarding responsibilities. Training for both the designated persons and other staff is up to date. The school has developed good working relationships with the local authority should there be a need for any contact. Issues raised in confidential questionnaires and in discussion with pupils about the handling of concerns were found in inspection evidence to have been handled properly.
- 4.18 Protection against fire is comprehensive. A recent visit from the local fire and rescue service highlighted minor points for attention, which were immediately put right, along with work to ensure the safety of the external fire escapes. The health and safety committee meets regularly under the chairmanship of the health and safety manager, who ensures that appropriate checks on buildings and facilities are undertaken, as well as checks on water quality and trees. All sites, activities and outings have full risk assessments.
- 4.19 There is a detailed first-aid policy and an excellent sick bay on the senior site where nurses can also look after younger pupils if necessary. In the junior school, there is additional medical provision. An appropriate number of people have first-aid and paediatric first-aid qualifications.
- 4.20 Admission and attendance registers are completed and stored correctly.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.21 The quality of boarding education is excellent.
- 4.22 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders of all ages are friendly, courteous, articulate, and tolerant, demonstrating high standards of conduct. They are extremely positive about their boarding experience. They are well integrated, their individuality is respected and different cultures are celebrated. Boarders are generously supportive of each other and have a warm rapport with boarding staff. Younger boarders appreciate the encouragement and friendship of older peer mentors.

- 4.23 Boarders contribute to the smooth running of their houses, and leadership positions as boarding prefects are keenly sought. Boarders said they felt that their views were listened to; they cited several changes, such as the reduction in the number of weekends away, which have resulted from responses to questionnaires or initiatives by the boarders' council.
- 4.24 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders are extremely well cared for by dedicated staff, who know them very well and are committed to promoting their well-being. New boarders are carefully inducted into boarding life and have 'buddies' to help them settle. Excellent communication exists between boarding staff, year heads, form tutors and the senior leadership team to ensure boarders' needs are fully met.
- 4.25 The well-equipped medical centre is staffed by highly efficient and caring nurses. Medicines are stored and dispensed meticulously, both in the surgery and in the houses. The majority of boarding staff are trained in first aid. The medical officer, who is a local general practitioner, visits the school weekly and liaises with a range of outside agencies for specialist support. Boarders say there is a wide range of staff to whom they can go if they need help, including the school counsellor and the lay chaplain. The contact details of the independent listener are posted in the houses and given in boarders' handbooks, thus addressing the recommendation in the previous boarding report.
- 4.26 Boarders enjoy a varied choice of appetising and nutritious hot and cold food; they are particularly appreciative of the international dishes served at supper, and the brunch at weekends. Special occasions, such as Chinese New Year, are celebrated and dietary requirements for cultural and medical reasons are met. In the boarding houses, year groups have well-equipped kitchens to prepare snacks and drinks in the evenings and at weekends. In the questionnaires, a small minority expressed dissatisfaction with the food and snacks provided, but inspection evidence did not support this view.
- 4.27 Boarders develop culturally and creatively through an impressive programme of music, drama and dance and benefit from the rich cultural and intellectual opportunities available in Cambridge. They keep physically fit through an extensive range of sports, and several boarders join local clubs, such as athletics and rowing. They have access to school facilities in the evenings and weekends and they enjoy boarders' activities, especially cooking and debating. Recent trips to a film studio, museums, a science festival and an overnight stay in Bath were greatly enjoyed and the boarders' concert, organised by boarding prefects, was a recent highlight. In the questionnaires, a small minority of boarders were critical of the activity programme and during the inspection, some younger boarders said they would like more free time; however, the majority agreed that they liked trying new experiences – such as wall climbing on Friday evenings.
- 4.28 Accommodation for boarders is good overall, and in the sixth form it is excellent. Junior boarders live in the heart of the school building, and the sixth form is accommodated nearby. Rooms are comfortable, clean, bright and airy and boarders enjoy personalising their space with posters, photographs and memorabilia from home. The questionnaires indicated that a small minority of boarders did not feel their belongings were secure, but houses can only be accessed by keycodes and safes are provided in each room to ensure possessions can be locked away.

- 4.29 Pupils in Years 7 to 9 share up to four to a room and a few junior boarders said that some rooms are cramped. Work has already begun to extend accommodation for this age group. New Year 10 boarders share rooms to help them integrate, but the majority, from Year 10 upwards, enjoy single study bedrooms. A rolling programme of refurbishment is in progress in Main School House and the updated bedrooms are greatly appreciated. Common rooms are well furnished and ideal for relaxation or to watch television or DVDs.
- 4.30 Boarders maintain regular contact with family and friends via mobile phones or email, although some said internet access could be unreliable at times. The school communicates effectively with parents and guardians by email and by an informative half-termly boarding newsletter.
- 4.31 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. Policies for welfare and safeguarding are rigorously implemented. Staff recruitment procedures are thorough, and all house staff and prefects are appropriately trained in child protection. Regular compliance checks of fire regulations in houses and termly unannounced fire drills are standard practice. Assessments of risk for the boarding houses, for activities and for trips are comprehensive. The systems for contacting staff in houses at night are clear and both houses have good overnight supervision. Boarders follow a well-monitored process for signing in and out of their house and staff are quick to follow up any unexplained absences. Outside persons visiting the houses are suitably supervised.
- 4.32 The prevailing culture of inclusivity, mutual trust and respect, which pervades each boarding house, minimises incidents of bullying and boarders state that occurrences are rare. There is a clear cyber-bullying policy and boarders are given helpful advice on internet safety.
- 4.33 The school is welcoming to all and has made significant effort to promote its understanding of the needs of international boarders in its *Every Boarder Matters* strategy. The integration of overseas boarders has greatly improved since the previous inspection.
- 4.34 Staff manage boarders' behaviour with a light touch and ensure that relationships between pupils are harmonious and supportive. Staff ensure that boarders feel comfortable, safe and secure in the boarding houses.
- 4.35 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of boarding is excellent, based on a clear statement of boarding principles and a regular review of practice. The houses are extremely well run and members of the senior leadership team have developed close liaison with boarding houses, understanding the challenges they face very well. Regular meetings between the boarding staff and visiting tutors ensure that there is cohesion between the academic and boarding life of the school. The newly convened boarders' welfare committee further enhances the monitoring of boarders' well-being. Careful tracking of boarders' progress and development academically, socially, emotionally and physically is a key contributor to their overall happiness and success.
- 4.36 Since the previous inspection, the school has been highly successful in its initiatives to integrate boarders into the school community. The questionnaires confirm that the vast majority of parents and boarders are extremely satisfied with the boarding provision.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The governing body brings considerable commitment and insight to its work, understanding fully the school's distinctive Catholic ethos and always seeking new ways in which to interpret it. The structure of their meetings meets the school's needs well, and the recent appointment of an executive officer to support their work reflects their determination to achieve the highest standards of governance. Governors give careful attention to all sections of the school, including to EYFS.
- 5.3 Governors make excellent use of opportunities to work with senior staff through their committee structure, and of their frequent visits to the school to gain an insight into all aspects of the work of the school; this enables them to support those who lead it day to day. In addition, reports to the governing body, including briefing papers prepared by a variety of staff, and perceptive head's reports, ensure that governors are very well-informed, and make decisions about strategy based on proper evaluation of needs and initiatives in school.
- 5.4 The governing body provides support, stimulus and challenge for further growth and improvement. Its oversight of educational standards, financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources is robust. The governing body takes steps to ensure that there is a suitable balance of skills and experience, supported by suitable training. Governors give full attention to the oversight of safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, conducting reviews of policy and implementation at least annually as required.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 The leadership and management of the whole school are highly successful in achieving the aims of the school, in reflecting the vision of Mary Ward, and in the discharge of their delegated responsibilities for policy implementation and the safeguarding of pupils. This clear vision permeates all that the school does, enabling it to combine academic success with a strong spiritual and Catholic ethos. Fulfilment of this vision is supported by careful self-evaluation and ambition to improve. The overwhelming majority of parents say that the school is well led and managed.
- 5.7 Leadership of the junior school, by a small, recently formed team, reflects a clear vision which has a very positive impact on pupils' academic and personal development, both in EYFS and in later years. Both the EYFS setting and the rest of the school are welcoming, safe and stimulating. In particular, the creative curriculum has been devised by the whole staff, working as a team, and is thus supported by the whole staff, in their dual roles of class teachers and subject co-ordinators. Leadership and management are effective throughout the junior school and EYFS in monitoring and self-evaluation, setting ambitious priorities and ensuring they are achieved. Planning is very effective and pays particular attention to the needs of

pupils of different abilities. The leadership team has introduced new challenges for the pupils to give further opportunities for independent learning, but limitations in leadership time are reflected in the considerable commitment of those involved. The EYFS setting has an effective partnership with the local authority and outside agencies to ensure that children receive the support that they need. Both the EYFS, and the rest of the junior school, have made excellent progress since the previous inspection. The move to the new site has considerably enhanced facilities for pupils of all ages, and subject co-ordinators now use a rigorous process to track, monitor and evaluate pupils' progress and subject content within their cross-curricular approach to teaching and learning; this ensures all areas are well covered and pupils make rapid progress.

- 5.8 Within the senior school, restructured roles have created strong line management, monitoring and support. Policies and procedures are regularly reviewed by the senior management team. Heads of department and pastoral leaders lead their teams very effectively, also providing monitoring and support as needed. Regular meetings enable each staff team to contribute to the school development plan.
- 5.9 At a whole-school level, the clearly articulated vision, which permeates the whole community, creates high expectations for staff and pupils alike, thus supporting excellent educational and personal development. The very focused and skilled senior management team is easily accessible to both staff and pupils. Its collegiate approach enables development planning to be both a shared and individual responsibility, which enables very successful implementation. Self-evaluation is strong, and is based on questionnaires completed by both pupils and parents, on the analysis of data and on the monitoring of pupils' experiences. Strengths and weaknesses are well understood and action plans are put in place to identify areas requiring action. Management at all levels is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all children, safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Rigorous procedures for safe staff recruitment ensure that all required pre-appointment checks are completed in a timely manner.
- 5.10 Staff induction is comprehensive, both before arrival and during succeeding weeks. The spiritual support given to new staff helps them to be in sympathy with the Catholic ethos of the school, as well as helping them undertake the more practical aspects, such as form prayers. Careful liaison between staff responsible for induction, and those responsible for teaching and pastoral care, supports high quality teaching from the outset. The appraisal system focuses effectively on the quality of learning, and identifies issues for further development. Other ways of monitoring quality, such as short visits to classrooms by senior staff, provide further evidence of teaching and learning quality. All these initiatives, together with whole staff training, have improved the consistency of teaching since the previous inspection.
- 5.11 Both teaching and non-teaching staff show considerable commitment to the school and its pupils. The inclusion of non-teaching staff in the senior management team reflects the importance given to the roles they play
- 5.12 The school maintains excellent links with parents and has established a strong partnership with them. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, were very happy with the education and support provided for their daughters. No concerns were raised by any significant number of parents. During the inspection, parents who met an inspector, spoke highly of

committed, dedicated staff, the school's ethos and the care and support that was provided for all their children.

- 5.13 Parents are well informed about the school. They are provided with the required information, and have access to much other useful information. This includes a comprehensive prospectus and magazine, the early years *Starting School in the Reception Class* booklet, and a wide range of information about courses and approaches to teaching. In addition, the parents' portal on the school website provides access to a wealth of valuable information, including school policies and future events.
- 5.14 The school is keen to work closely with parents and provides numerous opportunities for them to be actively involved in the life of the school as well as in the work and progress of their children. The very strong parent-teacher group (PTA) supports the school by organising fundraising events as well as assisting on open mornings and entrance examination days.
- 5.15 Easy contact between EYFS staff and parents ensures prompt action should any issues arise. Parents share information and observations about their children, although currently they do not contribute to their child's individual learning journals. Parents help pupils to celebrate the cultural diversity of the school, for example showing them how to make origami animals.
- 5.16 The 'open door' policy in the junior school, supported by regular communication, ensures that parents are well informed about school life. Junior school parents attend class assemblies and services, the annual Easter egg hunt, class plays, sports day, information evenings and the Year 6 leavers' barbecue. Pupils enjoy grandparents' day when there are tours of the school led by the granddaughters and followed by tea and cakes. Prize giving is a major celebration of all the achievements and successes from throughout the year.
- 5.17 Senior school parents attend information evenings and parenting workshops, which cover topics such as drugs and alcohol and the safe use of the internet. In addition, parents attend a wide range of events such as prize giving, art exhibitions, drama performances and music concerts, sports fixtures and the sports award dinner.
- 5.18 Appropriate parents' evenings, along with detailed and informative termly reports, ensure that parents are kept very well informed about their child's work and progress. A scrutiny of sample entries in the complaints log showed that the school deals promptly with any concerns in accordance with its published procedure, and that it replies in detail to the issues raised.

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