



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ST MARY'S SCHOOL (SENIOR), CAMBRIDGE**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## St Mary's School (Senior), Cambridge

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

Full Name of School	<b>St Mary's School, Cambridge</b>		
DCSF Number	<b>873/6001</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>290180</b>		
Address	<b>St Mary's School, Cambridge Bateman Street Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB2 1LY</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01223 353 253</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01223 357 451</b>		
Email Address	<b>cavery@stmaryscambridge.co.uk</b>		
Head	<b>Miss C Avery</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs D Wilkinson</b>		
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>500</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>0</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	11-18: <b>500</b>
Number of Day Pupils	<b>429</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding:	<b>2</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>71</b>	
	Full:	<b>67</b>	Weekly: <b>4</b>
Inspection date	<b>23 Mar 2010 to 24 Mar 2010</b>		
Final (team) visit	<b>04 May 2010 to 06 May 2010</b>		

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government 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 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), and the report does not contain 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 and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in March 2008 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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

- 1.1 St Mary's is a Catholic day and boarding school for girls aged four to eighteen in Cambridge. It was founded in 1898 by the sisters of the Venerable Mary Ward (the Congregation of Jesus, formerly the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary). St Mary's senior school educates 500 girls aged eleven to eighteen, of whom 71 are boarders, nearly all aged thirteen and above. One governing body governs the senior and junior schools. The values of the school are based on the educational vision of Mary Ward, who believed in the essential dignity of each human person, women as well as men. The school seeks to encourage excellence and foster a love of learning, stimulate curiosity, encourage independent thought and enhance self-esteem. Emphasis is placed on the provision of a caring and stimulating Christian environment, within which pupils can discern their vocation through the development of their gifts and social skills, providing education to pupils of all faiths or none.
- 1.2 The school occupies two sites within walking distance of Cambridge city centre, close to the University Botanic Gardens, with sports fields a short distance away. Boarding accommodation is at the top of the main school building, with additional houses for sixth formers nearby. Since the previous inspection the school has acquired additional boarding accommodation and extended facilities for the sixth form, and for teaching cookery, photography, and information and communication technology (ICT). A new headmistress was appointed in 2007.
- 1.3 The pupils' ability is above the average for all schools nationally, with a wide range of abilities evident in the sixth form. Half the pupils continue into the sixth form and are joined by around thirty new pupils. Those who leave proceed to study at local independent schools or sixth form colleges. Pupils come from a range of backgrounds, from Cambridge and a broad area surrounding the city, with around one-tenth coming from overseas, with 21 nationalities represented. There are 73 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 52 receive support. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 75 pupils who have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 36 receive specialist learning support.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS**

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

- 2.1 Pupils of all abilities attain high standards and are effective learners who make good progress. They benefit from an excellent curriculum and programme of activities, and from good teaching which is well-planned and effective overall. Many pupils achieve excellent standards in activities. Pupils work together well and benefit in their learning from the confident relationships they have with their teachers.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent and has a strong spiritual dimension at its core. Pupils are polite and courteous. They show high levels of self-esteem and undertake responsibility willingly and successfully. They demonstrate a strong moral code. Pupils support an extensive range of charities with enthusiasm. They develop excellent cultural awareness, participating in a wide range of activities related to their own and other cultures. Pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care within the caring Christian environment central to the school's ethos. Older pupils develop good relationships with younger ones. Arrangements to ensure the pupils' welfare and health and safety contribute effectively to their care. The boarding experience contributes well to the pupils' personal development and boarders benefit from good quality accommodation. The pupils' responses to pre-inspection questionnaires were positive about the school, although some expressed concern about inconsistencies in some teaching styles.
- 2.3 Governance is good, and supports the school's aims well, together with the Catholic ethos which informs them. Appropriate oversight and good planning are combined with realistic financial consideration. Together with senior management, governors identify the school's needs well through well-considered self-evaluation. The school has responded successfully to the recommendations of the previous inspection report. Since then significant progress has been made, in the school's curricular and extra-curricular provision, particularly for more able pupils and those with LDD or EAL, the contribution of boarding to pupils' education, and links with parents. Leadership is excellent and management is good. Good policies are introduced at all levels, and implemented successfully overall, with effective monitoring. The school maintains excellent links with parents, who expressed satisfaction, often strongly, with the education provided by the school in pre-inspection questionnaires.

### **2.(b) Action points**

#### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.

#### **(ii) Recommended action**

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Ensure that good practice in teaching is consistently applied across all subject areas.

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

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

- 3.1 Pupils attain good standards and make good progress in relation to their ability. The school successfully meets its aim to enable pupils to develop their gifts and foster a love of learning. Results at GCSE and A level over the last three years for which comparative data are available have been high in comparison with the national average for all maintained schools. Results at A level have been high when compared with the national average for girls in maintained selective schools.
- 3.2 Pupils of all abilities, including more able pupils and those with LDD, attain well across all subject areas, and some reach excellent standards in class and in workbooks. Sixth form pupils studying English spoke with passion about *Othello* and *The Duchess of Malfi*, demonstrating outstanding knowledge of the texts. Those with EAL make good progress, rapidly developing a secure command of the subjects they study. Pupils develop good knowledge, skills and understanding and articulate their ideas clearly, with some sixth formers studying the humanities showing high levels of articulacy. Their reasoning skills are well developed. The pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding is consistently good. Pupils demonstrate high levels of mathematical skills and these are used effectively in other subjects. Younger pupils construct accurate graphs in physics to demonstrate variation of resistance. Pupils use ICT well to produce computer-generated documents, manipulate images, and for graphic design. They develop outstanding creative skills, producing art and design work which demonstrates high levels of imagination and originality. Pupils are confident composers. Creativity is supported by accomplished technical skills across a range of subjects, including textiles and cookery.
- 3.3 Pupils are good learners, willing to explore new concepts supported by sure and confident relationships with their teachers. They work well on their own, and work together to excellent effect, including in sports, music and staged productions. Pupils are diligent, putting much effort into their work, although some are reluctant to take the initiative in their learning. They develop good listening skills. They show good focus in lessons and in activities, although occasionally some become distracted, hindering their progress. Work set for homework is generally completed well, although not all work in some files and workbooks is completed in full. Files are orderly and well presented. Pupils achieve at high levels in activities, including regular awards at gold level in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E), distinction at higher levels of instrumental and speaking examinations, and success in poetry and mathematics competitions. Pupils participate at regional level in a number of sports, with success at national level in football and karate.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)**

- 3.4 An excellent curriculum provides highly effectively for the pupils' needs. It is well designed to stimulate their curiosity, in line with the school's aims. Revision of the timetable since the previous inspection meets the recommendation of that report. The core curriculum in Years 7 to 11 strongly supports all areas of learning, and a good range of options are offered at GCSE and A level. These include opportunities for pupils to pursue individual interests at A level, such as ancient Greek. However, the provision for outdoor team sports in the sixth form curriculum lacks continuity. For all pupils a significant proportion of the available curriculum time for sport is currently limited by transport issues. The school has plans to address this. A comprehensive framework to develop the pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE), including citizenship, is fully embedded within the religious studies (RS) curriculum. It is integral to the school ethos and is of excellent quality. All areas of the curriculum are supported by effective schemes of work.
- 3.5 The school makes good provision for careers education, beginning in Year 9. Younger pupils are given worthwhile opportunities to investigate a range of possible careers. Pupils in Year 11 may obtain a computer-generated careers profile. They also undertake a fruitful period of work experience. This programme is currently being extended into the sixth form. A well-stocked careers library is used effectively by sixth form pupils, who receive good advice from tutors in preparing university applications. They feel well supported in planning for the future.
- 3.6 Pupils with LDD and those with EAL are identified well through testing on entry to the school, and their needs are identified clearly to all staff. The requirements of those with LDD are met well. Timetabled lessons are provided, often in small groups. Arrangements for pupils with EAL are excellent. They receive tuition in English well suited to their level of experience and their progress is monitored effectively. More able pupils and those with particular talents are provided for well, many through an imaginative scholars' programme. A designated member of staff oversees and monitors their educational experience to ensure it is enriched appropriately. For example, funding is provided for theatre visits which pupils assess in a written presentation.
- 3.7 The school provides an excellent range of physical, creative and intellectual extra-curricular activities. These are appreciated and valued by the pupils. They include activities as wide-ranging as rowing and calligraphy. A timetabled period for activities ensures that all pupils participate. Many attend two or more additional, optional activities. The Athena club gives opportunities for those on the scholars' programme to develop a broad range of interests. Many pupils in Year 10 and above take part in the D of E Award scheme. The pupils' involvement in activities is monitored by staff and reported on to parents.
- 3.8 The school has good links with the local community. Visitors from industry speak in the careers programme and give advice as part of the Young Enterprise scheme. There are several valuable links with university departments. Pupils' work is displayed at the zoological museum and sixth formers studying physics undertake practical activities at the engineering department. The school has fruitful links with other faith schools in Cambridge. Pupils are active in fund-raising for many charities, both local and international, including a major annual project raising money to send sick children to Lourdes.



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

- 3.9 Teaching is good and sometimes excellent, enabling pupils to develop their gifts in line with the school's aims. Teachers know their pupils well and are aware of their individual needs, enabling pupils of all abilities to make good progress. In RS more able younger pupils made rapid progress when given additional tasks to extend their understanding of sacred Hindu rites of passage. Pupils with LDD and EAL benefit from focused advice given during teaching in small groups. Pupils with EAL in the sixth form are enabled to gain confidence rapidly in their use of English through materials which they can access for themselves, specifically related to their A-level subjects.
- 3.10 Well-planned teaching, making good use of the time available, often gives clear educational direction to pupils, to which they are receptive, following advice diligently. Many lessons provide pupils with varied methods of learning, to which they respond well. In the best teaching a wide range of activities and approaches stimulates the pupils' interest, enabling them to make rapid progress through exploring things for themselves. Younger pupils enhanced their geographical skills and understanding of demographics when asked to view a video clip, discuss its implications in pairs, and then independently sum up their individual reactions in writing. However, such approaches are not consistent across all subjects. The school has recently set up a working group to encourage more widespread sharing of such methodology to stimulate the pupils' learning. Homework supports the pupils' development well, but teaching does not always ensure that tasks are completed in full. Teaching displays good subject knowledge. The atmosphere of mutual respect and trust which characterises relations between staff and pupils, coupled with high expectations of pupils, facilitates effective learning.
- 3.11 Teaching is well supported by a wide range of resources which are used effectively. Computer equipment is plentiful and most teaching makes good use of it to aid learning. The recommendation from the previous inspection report to ensure teaching is informed by training in use of ICT has been addressed. Interactive white boards are used well much of the time, most effectively when pupils use the boards. In Latin younger pupils consolidated their understanding of the language quickly when invited to drag and drop words and phrases into the most appropriate area of the board. The library is a good resource, well stocked and effectively organised. It is used regularly by pupils before and after school, and in a number of designated lessons. Sixth form pupils have good provision for private study.
- 3.12 Teaching makes good use of information from nationally standardised tests, reintroduced recently, together with information from regular internal assessment, to identify the pupils' potential and monitor their progress. A 'traffic light' system enables this information to be communicated with clarity to both pupils and parents. Work is generally marked regularly, giving helpful feedback to pupils. They are confident that they understand how their work is assessed, and feel that they are given good guidance on how to improve. In Years 7 to 9, not all work is marked consistently and some comments lack detailed advice. The most successful marking enables pupils to make progress by giving clear written feedback backed up by individual discussion in class.

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

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

- 4.1 The pupils' personal development is excellent. They develop high levels of self-esteem in line with the school's aims. They reach very high levels of spiritual development and self-confidence, stimulated by the school's Catholic ethos, and the many opportunities for performance at all levels of ability across a wide range of artistic and sporting areas. They develop a detailed understanding of Christian and other faiths through services, and through assemblies and lessons which celebrate festivals of diverse faiths. Older pupils engage in spiritual exercises such as meditation with great integrity. The many cultures represented in the school, particularly in boarding, play a significant part in the development of a natural tolerance of others' ideas and cultures which characterises many pupils' approach to life. In all areas of school life, pupils readily celebrate each other's successes.
- 4.2 Pupils develop a strong moral code. Older pupils in the senior school write objectively and sensitively about issues surrounding in vitro fertilisation. Younger pupils showed a clear awareness of issues of equality and justice in government when giving a presentation on the Gambia. Some pupils develop their awareness of moral issues of sustainability well through membership of an ecological committee. Awareness of concepts of fairness is reflected clearly in the pupils' approaches to issues of equality in trade and politics.
- 4.3 The pupils' excellent social development is enhanced by the seriousness with which they take responsibility, at all ages, in diverse areas of school life, for example as members of the school council, and in committees related to catering and charity work. Mentoring systems enable older pupils to take responsibility for helping younger ones, and many sixth formers take leading roles in clubs and societies. Older pupils develop a good understanding of public institutions, participating in a mock general election with vigour, but younger pupils articulate their understanding of this area less clearly. Charitable work is a strong feature of school life. An enthusiastic annual fund-raising fortnight in support of pilgrimage to Lourdes involves the whole school, and some sixth formers participate further by travelling to give assistance to sick pilgrims. Other activities, such as working with cancer patients and organising a stall to sell equitably traded goods, further develop the pupils' sensitivity to the needs and dignity of others, in fulfilment of the school's founding aims.
- 4.4 Pupils develop strong cultural awareness in response to an excellent, diverse range of opportunities. A biennial musical and several annual drama productions enable many pupils of all abilities to participate in a stage event while others perform in auditioned open-air Shakespeare productions. Pupils of all ages develop good, individual responses to art in response to workshops and gallery visits. Many perform enthusiastically and successfully in musical ensembles. Pupils enhance their linguistic, cultural and theological understanding through a large number of visits to European countries. Events such as an annual boarders' concert allow pupils to develop their understanding of non-Western cultures through experiencing music, dance and food from around the world.

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

- 4.5 Arrangements to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent. The support and guidance provided for pupils is highly successful in fostering their personal development and supporting their academic achievement. There is a clear and effective pastoral structure centred on heads of year, who work closely with form tutors, boarding and teaching staff. Relationships between pupils and their teachers are positive and those between pupils are good. Pupils comment that staff are always available to help, and that they give of their time generously, with further individual guidance provided by staff mentors. They appreciate the extra levels of support provided by confidential counselling and chaplaincy arrangements. The school's arrangements for pastoral care contribute greatly to pupils' development of self-esteem and confidence.
- 4.6 The school promotes good behaviour effectively, encouraging pupils to learn from any mistakes or failures with grace and maturity. This approach reflects successfully the vision of the school's founder to recognise the essential dignity of each human being. Around the school, and in lessons, pupils are generally polite and courteous. Appropriate sanctions are in place to deal with serious breaches of acceptable behaviour but these rarely need to be invoked. In response to inspection questionnaires, and in interviews, pupils expressed some concerns about the fairness with which sanctions operate, but inspectors found no evidence to support this. The school operates excellent measures to guard against bullying. Pupils are confident that any incidents are dealt with promptly and effectively, should they occur.
- 4.7 The school has excellent arrangements to safeguard pupils. Regular and effective training is given to all staff, including those with specific responsibilities, and procedures are understood clearly. There are good plans to improve access for those with physical or learning needs. Registration of pupils is methodical and absence is followed up quickly. Concerns over the registration of sixth form pupils expressed at the time of the previous inspection have been addressed. The school maintains an appropriate admissions register. Good arrangements exist for those who feel unwell and these are operated sensitively, in conjunction with a comprehensive first aid policy. Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are excellent, and arrangements for health and safety on educational visits are good.
- 4.8 The school promotes the pupils' health well in the curriculum and through activities, giving good guidance in the PSHE programme, food technology lessons and providing many opportunities for physical development. Encouragement to eat healthily is also displayed prominently and supported by the provision of nutritious, attractive, and well-balanced meals.

#### **4.(c) The quality of boarding education**

- 4.9 The quality of boarding education is good. The recommendations made following the most recent statutory boarding inspection have been fully implemented. Relationships in boarding are strong, reflecting the sense of community which prevails in the school as a whole. Pupils enjoy being together and say that they are extremely well supported by staff. Integration of boarders and day pupils is not yet fully achieved, but the school has plans in place to address this. Pupils comment that they enjoy opportunities that exist to meet with day pupils outside working hours. A satisfactory mechanism exists for pupils to pass on their concerns. They can express their views directly to staff, or through the pupil heads of boarding, but some pupils feel that the system is not always wholly effective. The induction process for new boarders helps them to settle quickly, complemented by good quality information packs. Systems to monitor and record the welfare and progress of boarders are thorough. Information is shared and communicated well, including between medical and boarding staff.
- 4.10 Accommodation in the new sixth form house is excellent, offering many opportunities for boarders to develop independently, such as taking responsibility for their own laundry. There are plans to extend this facility for the next academic year. Good quality accommodation in the main school building, for younger pupils and some sixth formers, is homely and comfortable. A newly refurbished common room and showers enhance this provision. Pupils are able to study independently in their rooms. Access to electronic communication is provided for all, but this does not always operate reliably, disrupting study and contact with parents. The school is aware of this issue and is actively planning to renew its systems. The food provided for boarders is good, and pupils observed that the quality of meals at weekends improved recently in response to comments made in school questionnaires.
- 4.11 A wide-ranging and varied programme of activities is much appreciated by boarders. They feel that weekend trips and visits are enjoyable and contribute to a good social life. Excellent use is made of local amenities, and cultural events are a popular feature of the activities programme.

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

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

- 5.1 Good governance supports the school's aims well. The governing body includes a good range of experience in education, finance and the law. It also benefits from the presence of figures with experience of boarding education. All governors give strong support to the school's Catholic ethos. Designated committees oversee financial and policy-making arrangements. In conjunction with information supplied by individual governors with responsibility for liaison in areas such as safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety, this ensures appropriate oversight of those areas where governors have statutory responsibilities. Long-term financial planning by governors enables senior management to initiate development planning for the school within strategic aims identified together with the governing body. The school buildings are maintained well. Governors receive good quality information and visit often. They maintain fruitful links with staff. Links with parents through the use of questionnaires, and the presence of some parents on the governing body, ensure that good communication is maintained, strengthening the sense of community in the school.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.2 Excellent leadership and good management ensure that the school's aims are met well. Clear educational direction at all levels, including boarding, contributes greatly to the pupils' academic progress and personal development. The needs of the school are identified well through carefully considered self-evaluation, and addressed through policy-making which is effective and clearly focused. Academic senior management ensures that aspects of teaching and learning policy are reviewed regularly and developed appropriately, through staff training and monitoring by middle management. This operates effectively, although not yet wholly consistently throughout all of the teaching. Pastoral management at all levels operates highly effectively, and management of boarding is good. The recommendation of the previous report to strengthen management structures has been met well. Good links between the junior and senior schools ensure continuity of approach and contribute to the growth of the school as one family. Development planning includes realistic aspirations for the school's success, and benefits from input from staff. It includes clearly-identified criteria for success. Careful financial planning ensures that pastoral and academic areas of school life receive good resources.
- 5.3 The school secures well qualified staff who fully support the school's ethos. Recent appointments to middle and senior management positions have contributed much to the school's development. A good system of staff review has been introduced which meets the recommendation of the previous inspection successfully. This leads to staff development which is well designed to address the school's needs academically, and in the areas of safeguarding, the pupils' welfare, and health and safety. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are robust, and the central register is maintained effectively. The school's sense of community is further enhanced by the effective work of secretarial, administrative and other non-teaching staff, who play an active role in supporting pupils.

**5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.4 The school has an excellent partnership with parents, contributing well to its aim to create a caring environment for pupils. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires parents showed satisfaction, often at a high level, with the education and support provided for their children. They were particularly satisfied with the curriculum, with teaching, the information provided by the school, pastoral care, the high standards of behaviour achieved, and the school's promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views.
- 5.5 The school develops constructive relationships with parents through highly effective communication. Parents receive three short, summative progress reports during the year, and a full written report. The quality of all these reports is excellent. In addition parents are invited to attend a consultation evening at which they receive comprehensive oral reports from teachers. Recent revisions to progress reports have enhanced their quality through the inclusion of assessment data related to standardized tests, linked to 'traffic light' indicators of the pupils' progress.
- 5.6 Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with all the required information about the school. New parents receive a comprehensive information pack which is complemented and updated regularly by information provided on a secure area of the school website. Electronic communication provides an additional means of contact. Parents are invited to attend informative evening meetings dealing with subject choices and university entrance procedures.
- 5.7 Parents have excellent opportunities to be involved in the work of the school. An active parent-teacher association enables them to contribute by serving refreshments at school events, mounting displays in the main reception area, and selling second-hand school uniform. It has created a series of committees to support different areas of school life. A recently established parental support network, 'Loaves and Fishes', has enjoyed notable success. The association organises a wide range of fund-raising and social activities which assist with the provision of additional equipment and facilities.
- 5.8 The school has well-established procedures for handling the concerns of parents. Parents feel that the school deals with their concerns carefully and considerately. The school's complaints policy sets out an appropriate framework for dealing with formal complaints, but it has not needed to be implemented recently.

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

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

### Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mr Nicholas Beesley	Team Inspector (Head, SHMIS School)
Mrs Diana Jefkins	Team Inspector (Former Head, GSA School)
Mr Laurence McKell	Team Inspector (Head, HMC School)
Mrs Julie Roseblade	Team Inspector (Head, GSA School)