

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

NORTH LONDON COLLEGIATE SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

18th to 21st February 2008

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

North London Collegiate School

Full Name of the School	North London Collegiate School
DCSF Number	310/6075
Registered Charity Number	1115843
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Age Range	4 to 18
Gender	Girls
Inspection Dates	18th to 21st February 2008

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

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. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 North London Collegiate School, an independent day school for girls aged between 4 and 18, is situated in a mainly residential area of Edgware. It was founded in 1850 by Frances Mary Buss, a pioneer of education for women, and in 1929 it acquired its present site, the former location of an eighteenth-century palace built by the Duke of Chandos. The core of the school is a house built by William Hallett, an eighteenth-century cabinet maker. The original buildings have been added to and developed to meet changing needs. The most recent development is a Performing Arts Centre opened in February 2007. The school is a Christian foundation, overseen by a board of governors, but accepting pupils of all faiths or none. At present, the school has 1066 pupils on roll, organized into a Junior School, incorporating Reception to Year 2 in the First School and Year 3 to Year 6 in the Lower School, and a Senior School divided into three sections, Middle (Years 7 to 9), Upper (Years 10 and 11) and the sixth form. No pupils receive public funding but 130 receive funding from the school; 65 through bursaries, 62 through scholarships and 3 through staff fee remissions. Pupils come mainly from professional and business backgrounds.
- 1.2 The school gives high priority to the provision of what it terms ‘an ambitious education’ to enable each girl to make the most of her own gifts. It aims to do this through the professionalism of its teachers, their drive and enthusiasm, and their detailed knowledge and love of their subject. It aims for academic excellence, the growth of the whole personality, good relationships, and going beyond the demands of examinations. It seeks to provide an opportunity for the girls to develop their own interests and to maintain a community that is tolerant and teaches service to others.
- 1.3 Entry to the school is selective and normally takes place at the ages of four, seven, eleven and sixteen. Admission is through group and individual assessment at the age of four, the school’s entrance examination at the age of seven, and the 11+ examination of the London Girls’ Schools Consortium. At the age of sixteen, applicants are tested on the subjects they are planning to study in the sixth form, the tests being based on the common core of the GCSE syllabuses. Standardized tests indicate that the ability profile in the Junior School is well above the national average; in the Senior School it is far above the national average. Consequently, if Senior School pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in public examinations will be above the average for maintained selective secondary schools.
- 1.4 Since the last inspection in 2002, the school has increased the provision of after-school extra-curricular activities in the Junior School, reorganized the school day to allow for more double-period lessons, increased timetabling flexibility, and provided a more balanced curriculum. It has also increased its focus on opportunities for self-directed learning and the development of critical argument and independence of thought. It has established the International Baccalaureate (IB) as an option in the sixth form.
- 1.5 The number of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds is significant but none has English as a second language. The school provides support each year for a few pupils (fifteen at the time of the inspection) with moderate learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), mainly dyslexia and dyspraxia. It has no pupils with statements of special educational needs.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

2.1 The last inspection concluded that the educational experience provided was excellent. It is now outstanding. It is fully consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy. As a whole, it gives pupils experience in, and contributes effectively to, their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative development, and to their acquisition of the skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. Pupils' experience of personal, social and health education (PSHE) reflects the school's aims and ethos and is enriched by extra-curricular activities, links with the community, and provision for voluntary service and work experience for pupils in the Senior School. It prepares them very successfully for their next stage of education, training, employment and adult life. With very few exceptions, pupils leave school to go to Oxford, Cambridge or other competitive universities. The curriculum is effectively planned and set out in writing; it provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and promotes participation in a wide range of activities. The school meets the curricular requirements of all those pupils requiring learning support.

Junior School

2.2 The quality of education in the Junior School meets the aims of enabling pupils to make the most of their abilities and to strive for academic excellence, helped by a highly committed and enthusiastic staff. The school provides a non-competitive environment in which pupils are free to become independent learners and be self-disciplined. Teachers expect high standards and they encourage tolerance of others and individual self-expression, especially through PSHE, drama and music lessons.

2.3 The broad and balanced curriculum meets the different needs of pupils and is suited to their abilities and interests. A particular emphasis on linguistic and mathematical development in the early years enables pupils to achieve outstanding skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. Library skills are taught from Reception onwards so that by Year 6 pupils are expected to read critically in a wide variety of styles. The reading and practice of poetry also help to develop their literacy skills. The constant evaluation of the curriculum ensures that it is always relevant to the pupils' needs.

2.4 The curriculum contains all subjects of the National Curriculum. In addition, religious studies (RS) is taught from Reception, chess in Years 2 and 3, drama from Year 3, and French, German and Spanish in rotation from Year 4. Technical, scientific, physical and creative development is well supported by careful timetabling, specialist accommodation and often through specialist teaching. Effective cross-curricular planning and carefully chosen activities encourage pupils' human, social and aesthetic growth, for example, in Year 4 in which pupils studying the Tudors drew pictures of Henry VIII in an art lesson and learnt to play and sing music from the Tudor period in a music lesson. The pupils' skills in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) are becoming effectively developed through weekly lessons. The Junior School has responded to the recommendations made in the previous inspection report by providing more extra-curricular activities.

2.5 PSHE, circle time, RS and assemblies successfully develop the pupils' self-esteem, tolerance and service to others in accordance with the school's aims. A good range of cross-curricular activities enrich the pupils' experience. Pupils enjoy taking part in the specially planned focus weeks, such as for science and music. In each year, they have the opportunity to take part in a considerable number of school trips as well as having visits from authors, one of

whom came on World Book Day. Links with the local community also enrich the pupils' experience.

- 2.6 Pupils are carefully prepared for the next stage of their education. Communications between staff in each department, visits to new classes and teachers, and meetings for parents are effective in helping pupils settle happily as they move through the school. Those in Year 6 are given a 'Learning Performance Seminar', which includes study skills and the techniques of note-taking. They are also given talks to stimulate their interest in future careers. Schemes of work and the curriculum are carefully planned and designed to provide progression. Continuity in curriculum planning between different sections of the school is a strong feature.
- 2.7 A small number of pupils have been identified as needing some learning support and each one has an individual education plan (IEP). If necessary, support teachers and class teachers provide additional help. They also offer special groups in English and mathematics. Departmental schemes of work are detailed but generally lack opportunities for extension work or for work that takes account of pupils' different needs and skills.

Senior School

- 2.8 The curriculum in the Senior School is broad and balanced and effectively planned. In Years 7 to 9, it contains all the subjects of the National Curriculum with the addition of Latin, a choice of Spanish or German, drama, ICT and PSHE. In Years 10 and 11, English language, English literature, mathematics and dual science are compulsory. Greek and Russian are additional options. Altogether, pupils take either nine or ten GCSE subjects from a wide choice of options. The school has adopted the International GCSE in three subjects, including science. In Years 12 and 13, the school offers both A levels and the IB in a wide range of subjects. The IB has been introduced to provide further opportunity for pupils to develop their skills of communication as well as giving them more opportunity for self-directed learning. An outcome of a recent curriculum review has been a change in the timing of the school day to allow for more double periods across subjects in Years 7 to 9.
- 2.9 The school has a wide extra-curricular programme, trips abroad, and opportunities to take part in debates. Pupils take part, for example, in: The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme; Young Enterprise; biology and chemistry Olympiads; St John Ambulance first aid training; Associated Board music examinations; and English Speaking Union debates. On Wednesday afternoons, Year 13 has a range of extension courses and opportunities to read more deeply.
- 2.10 Music and drama are particularly strong, following the good foundations laid down in the Junior School. For many years, the school has been renowned for chamber music, regularly winning the Founder's Trophy in the National Schools' Chamber Music Competition. Pupils are also regularly involved in the National Children's Orchestra and the National Youth Orchestra. The school mounts about twenty dramatic productions a year. Pupils often appear in theatre, radio, television and film productions. Some have recently contributed to exhibitions at the Saatchi Gallery and the Letchworth Arts Centre. The school currently holds an Artsmark Gold level award for its achievements and activities in these areas. Pupils also take part in many sports. Each year, some represent the county, and occasionally their country, in lacrosse, netball, gymnastics, cross-country running and athletics. All these activities provide the pupils with wide-ranging opportunities for individual and team success and cultural awareness.

Whole School

- 2.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.12 The pupils' learning and achievements are outstanding and better than they were in the previous inspection. The pupils are able to demonstrate critical and creative thinking and understanding in every year group, and they acquire exceptionally high standards of knowledge and skills, particularly in speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematical competence, logical and independent thought and the use of ICT. They study effectively and are able to work co-operatively in pairs or in groups. No significant differences were seen between different groups of pupils, subjects or curricular areas. In both the Junior and the Senior School, the aims of the school are fully realized.

Junior School

- 2.13 Pupils in the Junior School do not sit national tests but they perform exceptionally well in other standardized tests. Tests on entry to the school indicate that pupils' attainment is high in relation to their abilities and well above the national average for maintained primary schools at this stage in mathematics and reading. Over the last three years, standardized test results for Years 1 to 6 have been consistently well above the national average, thus indicating that the school adds value to the pupils' initial attainment. Levels of attainment are high in most subject areas, but especially so in English and music. In a Year 1 geography lesson, pupils showed an impressive grasp of mapping and co-ordinates. Pupils are successful in their progress to the Senior School.
- 2.14 The school's tradition of academic ambition is reflected in the outstanding level of the pupils' learning. They develop exceptional levels of knowledge, skills and creative and critical understanding in their subjects and activities and learn to apply them effectively. They achieve well in many individual and group activities. For example, the Junior School Chamber Choir has reached the final of the BBC Radio 3 Choir of the Year competition this year. The creative strength of the school is reflected in the success of pupils who take part in nation-wide literary competitions. The pupils also perform well in sport. They have had recent successes in both gymnastics and cross-country running. They develop individual talents well through taking part in regular sporting activities, drama productions, musical events and chess, which they start in Year 2.
- 2.15 Pupils are effective as independent learners. They take part in cross-curricular projects across year groups and show considerable ability in organizing their work independently. Clear evidence of individual research was seen in a Year 6 geography lesson in which the pupils were studying the relationship between shopping and the environment. The work was challenging and well thought out, extending the pupils' experiences. Pupils enjoy working co-operatively and do so sensibly. Some excellent examples of this were seen in a Year 4 music lesson in which pupils worked out chords on glockenspiels, and in a Year 3 games lesson when pupils worked in pairs to improve and evaluate their skills in lacrosse.
- 2.16 Levels of concentration and behaviour are high and the pupils are well motivated, clearly enjoying their work and activities, although occasionally they become bored and restless. Overall, they are happy, enthusiastic and confident and demonstrate great pride in their school.

Senior School

- 2.17 GCSE, A-level and IB results in the last three years were well above the averages for maintained selective schools, representing good attainment in relation to pupils' abilities. The results in mathematics and German are far above the average for maintained selective schools. The pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding in subjects and activities and can apply them effectively. Their critical and creative thinking is excellent. Their work in Year 12 in history and English revealed strong signs of independent thinking. In an RS lesson in Year 7, pupils worked in groups at the beginning of the lesson and, towards the end, they were able to discuss aspects of Hindu worship with authority and knowledge. In Latin in Year 11, pupils were able to demonstrate an impressive command of tenses, conjunctions, prepositions and forms of the passive infinitive. In English, a work folder belonging to a Year 11 pupil contained some outstanding writing. Year 12 pupils in an IB Spanish lesson followed with ease a teacher speaking Spanish at a rapid pace. In Years 9 to 11, project work in mathematics demonstrated some notable ICT skills as well as an assured command of algebra, calculus and drawing graphs.
- 2.18 Pupils have a well-developed capacity to take notes and to organize their work independently. They routinely note down new information in lessons. They are able to study and work co-operatively with others and in teams. In a Year 13 classical civilization lesson, the pupils' very efficient note-taking did not impede the lively discussion that took place at the same time. Pupils work very effectively in teams, showing that they are accustomed to such work. Paired work was a feature of all the lessons observed in modern foreign languages. Pupils' ability to settle and apply themselves generally, and to their work in particular, is outstanding. They are interested in their subjects and derive considerable enjoyment and intellectual excitement from every aspect of their work.
- 2.19 Differences in attainment within teaching groups are minor. A scrutiny of work showed that it was not easy to detect significant differences between pupils of different abilities. The fact that the school streams only in mathematics illustrates that such differences in attainment are not significant. The scrutiny also showed that exercise books and files are usually very well organized. The wide range of resources in the library is used effectively. The number of books on loan is noteworthy.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.20 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. Pupils develop spiritually, and acquire a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, meaning and purpose, within a system that gives them opportunities to explore values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and the way in which they affect pupils' lives. They develop morally, including their ability to distinguish right from wrong and to respect the law. They develop socially through their ability to accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative, and understand how they can contribute to community life. They also demonstrate, according to their stage of maturity, a broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England. They develop culturally by acquiring an appreciation of, and respect for, their own and other cultures in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. In every respect, the school's aims – respect for the faiths of others in the multi-ethnic society of the school; promotion of service to others; and caring for others in the school – are fully satisfied.

Junior School

- 2.21 The pupils have a strong sense of spirituality. This is promoted through school assemblies and work in subjects such as RS, PSHE and art. The study of works of art and listening to music, as well as enjoying the school's beautiful surroundings, are examples of stimuli used to encourage reflection and thought. The pupils' sensitive response to a profoundly moving class assembly was an excellent example of how they are developing a sense of spiritual awareness. The school achieves its aim of helping pupils acquire a sense of identity, self-worth, personal insight, and meaning and purpose. The focus is on the individual and improving oneself rather than on competing with others. This is achieved in part through an effective system of self-assessment, target-setting and self-evaluation. In interviews, pupils said that they found this a helpful and constructive way of improving and developing. The opportunities pupils are given to explore values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and the way in which they affect people's lives, are outstanding. Examples of this are evident throughout the Junior School in displays, discussion groups and research work. Pupils worked together in multi-faith groups to raise awareness and understanding of different cultural backgrounds and religious traditions.
- 2.22 The pupils have a strong moral sense and appreciate the difference between right and wrong and respect for the law, whether in the school context or elsewhere. Pupils at an early age begin to have some idea of what it means to be citizens and the responsibilities that citizenship brings. The school's Golden Rules of behaviour are displayed in every classroom. The adults in the school provide good role models for personal behaviour, and from Year 3 onwards the pupils are given increasing opportunities to take on roles of responsibility.
- 2.23 Pupils develop socially through an ability to accept responsibility for their behaviour, and they have a strong sense of community life both in school and in the wider environment. They learn to respect and value their surroundings through initiatives such as Challenge of the Week, and they contribute to the wider community by supporting chosen charities. Themes in assembly help to promote a sense of community and support for one another. Pupils' contribution to the School Council is committed and beneficial.
- 2.24 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. The school provides a programme of extra-curricular activities and cultural visits, including trips to the theatre, art galleries and places of worship used by different religions. These are valued by the pupils and are well attended. They are reinforced through themes explored in assemblies, topic work, debates and PSHE. Differences in cultures at home and abroad are explored in subjects such as geography, history and religious studies.

Senior School

- 2.25 The Senior School provides a foundation through which pupils of all faiths or none develop spiritual awareness. Through assemblies and services of different faiths, including a secular assembly, often organized by members of the sixth form, pupils are given the opportunity to think about spiritual, moral and ethical issues. Regular meetings of clubs, such as Lunch and Learn, enable pupils of all or no faith to discuss aspects of their beliefs. The meetings are organized and chaired by sixth formers. RS lessons introduce pupils to world faiths and philosophies, and through discussion they explore and share their own system of beliefs in a sensitive and respectful atmosphere. Other subjects, such as art, drama, English, music and PSHE, encourage pupils to think deeply and explore values and beliefs in a neutral and dispassionate context. Pupils respect beliefs and attitudes that are sincerely held but may be different from their own.

- 2.26 Provision for pupils' moral education is excellent. The school's code of conduct, called 'Care, Courtesy and Consideration', establishes boundaries that pupils respect, and behaviour is exemplary both in lessons and around the school. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their own actions and they value the mutual respect between themselves and the staff and with each other. They are also given opportunities in lessons to consider moral issues. In geography, for example, they can begin to appreciate the enormous differences in the standard of living between rich nations and poor; in history, they have opportunities to consider what can be learned from the past; in science, they can judge whether scientific development is morally neutral.
- 2.27 Pupils' social awareness is strong. Whatever their stage of development, pupils have an unmistakable sense of belonging to a community that values them as individuals and trusts them to behave responsibly. The school has no prefect system and so much depends on the pupils' self-discipline. A recent management decision to abolish the school bell has placed the onus on pupils to be on time for lessons. The evidence so far is that both initiatives are working. The School Council provides an effective forum for pupils to discuss issues and to help to bring about change. All Year 13 pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for organizing a variety of activities, including societies, assemblies, charities, editing magazines and papers, and visiting the Junior School to help in classrooms. This initiative helps them develop into mature, caring young adults who can lead and organize with confidence and authority.
- 2.28 The provision for the cultural development of pupils is excellent. It is fostered by a full programme of extra-curricular activities and cultural visits, including trips to the theatre, concerts, art galleries and lectures, all of which introduce the pupils to new and exciting experiences. Lessons in art, modern foreign languages, history, music, and English are just a few examples through which the great diversity of international culture is shared and explored, and as a consequence pupils are acutely aware of the world around them.

Whole School

- 2.29 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.30 The quality of teaching is frequently outstanding and never less than good. It has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching enables pupils of all abilities, including those with LDD, to acquire new knowledge, make progress according to their ability, increase their understanding and develop their skills. All pupils identified as having LDD are given IEPs and their progress is carefully monitored. Teachers go out of their way to prepare projects for pupils of exceptional ability, of which the school has a significant number, to stimulate them and stretch them intellectually.
- 2.31 Teaching fosters in pupils the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and an ability to think and learn for themselves. It encourages them to behave responsibly and enjoy learning. It is generally well planned, employing effective teaching methods, suitable activities and the wise management of class time. It shows a good understanding of the pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment. Teachers demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding of the subject matter they teach. The resources teachers use are of good quality, quantity and range and they make effective use of them. Notable among the resources is the library, the staff of which are praised by pupils for their care and support in learning. In addition to regular library services, active help is given by

providing pupils with instruction in research techniques, and focused support for specific subject lessons, and through materials, such as an IB research handbook and an on-line resource for poetry coursework. Assessment is regular and thorough and it is used to plan teaching so that pupils can progress. Teaching makes effective use of arrangements for pupils' performance to be evaluated against the school's own aims as provided to parents and against national norms.

Junior School

- 2.32 The quality of teaching in the Junior School is good. Teaching in the majority of lessons was good, often outstanding, and none was unsatisfactory. In discussion, parents of Junior School pupils considered teaching to be dynamic. Teaching was outstanding when pupils were fully engaged in their lessons, as they were in a Year 5 history lesson in which they were carrying out research on a census form related to Frances Mary Buss, the founder of the school. Through skilful questioning, they were made to think and reason before giving their answers. However, very occasionally, teachers do not always offer able pupils sufficient challenge during lessons and some girls displayed signs of boredom if the pace of the lesson slowed.
- 2.33 The high quality of teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly and enjoy learning through the outstanding relationships that prevail throughout the Junior School. Teachers clearly make lessons enjoyable and converse willingly with pupils, who respond to them warmly and with interest. This was seen, for example, in a Reception class lesson on identifying parts of a flower. Teachers show an excellent understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of pupils and are able to build on the foundations already established. The few pupils identified as requiring learning support and others who face general difficulties are given able assistance by teachers either during lessons or in activity periods in the afternoon, such as the Mathematics Club or, if appropriate, through email and 'Home Link'. Teachers make good use of the school's wide range of resources. Some use the ICT equipment very effectively, especially those that have interactive white boards in their rooms, but others need further training. Teachers encourage pupils to continue class work at home and use the internet to email it to school. Pupils in mathematics lessons in Year 1 were taught how to make use of the interactive white board to measure lines with an electronic ruler and to improve their word-processing skills.
- 2.34 Excellent use as a resource is made of all teachers and assistants, including the head of the Junior School. The two deputy heads have classroom responsibilities as form teachers. All teachers spend some time working alongside colleagues in lessons or in small groups when pupils are undertaking consolidation or extension work. Particular emphasis is given to this in English and mathematics throughout the Junior School.
- 2.35 Assessment is regular and thorough and carried out effectively by most teachers. In a few books, some work was unmarked, but in most cases teachers mark carefully and add helpful and constructive comments. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their own work and make thoughtful comments on how they might improve it.
- 2.36 Teachers evaluate pupil performance against national norms and judge the progress of individuals in class through formal assessment procedures. The school's 11+ transfer tests to the Senior School and other schools are another measure used to judge the level of attainment of individuals and as a measure of the quality of teaching the school provides. This information is used effectively in planning lessons.

Senior School

- 2.37 The quality of teaching in the Senior School is outstanding. Teaching is responsive to the needs of pupils. The most able pupils, in particular, benefit from inventive extension activities. A significant number of lessons make provision for pupils of differing abilities by a variety of means. For example, a Year 8 lesson on Pythagoras' theorem used a practical example to engage all the pupils, supported by a graded worksheet and stimulating problems. A particular strength is the co-ordination between academic and pastoral staff to ensure that all pupils, regardless of ability, are given guidance and support. Pupils say that teachers readily respond to requests for help outside the classroom.
- 2.38 A notable feature of the teaching is the extent to which it enables pupils to think and learn for themselves. In particular, skilled questioning frequently elicits personal responses and further enquiry from pupils that allows them to work things out for themselves. In a Year 11 physics lesson, pupils asked many questions during a demonstration of cutting magnetic flux and exchanged ideas before coming to conclusions. Intellectual application and interest in work are seen in many lessons. In a Year 11 English lesson on sonnet form, pupils used appropriate literary terminology in a sophisticated way to express their own interpretations. In almost all lessons, well-organized teaching encourages exemplary pupil behaviour: pupils are attentive, focused and keen. Levels of concentration are high throughout lessons, and in most cases pupils demonstrate interest and personal engagement in the subject matter. Their enthusiasm, stimulated by their teachers' approach to lessons, is often infectious.
- 2.39 Planning of lessons is generally of high quality and accommodates a wide range of methods. Lessons are well structured and well paced. A well-organized Year 8 ICT lesson, for example, effectively covered a great deal of ground preparing pupils for the design of their own websites. A Year 12 geography lesson on London's suburbs taxed pupils' skills and enabled them to make deductions from evidence, thus leading them to ask probing questions about variations in house prices. While lesson timing was generally good, some lessons were rushed towards the end, reducing the impact for pupils and, on occasion, omitting a planned element.
- 2.40 Teaching shows a good understanding of pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment. Coherent plans for teaching and learning are given in comprehensive schemes of work. Lesson plans are part of the overall scheme and comment on the work previously achieved by the class. A few examples of detailed awareness of individual pupils' needs were noted in lesson plans, such as in a Year 11 drama lesson in which the teaching accommodated and identified personal issues. More generally, teachers respond to pupils' needs by employing a range of techniques in lessons, such as variations in questioning and the judicious use of paired and group work.
- 2.41 Teachers' subject knowledge and understanding are excellent. They are very well informed and communicate their passion for their subjects. The joy of scholarship and the virtue of academic rigour are conveyed to pupils in most lessons. A Year 13 Greek lesson, for example, demonstrated excellent knowledge of the subject, and an astutely chosen text offered the pupils suitable challenge and stimulation in learning. A Year 7 science lesson enabled pupils to learn skills of classification and analysis, as well as reasoning and debate, from a very firm knowledge base.
- 2.42 The resources available to teachers are of high quality and are well used. Academic departments are well supported. Books, magazines and audio-visual aids of various kinds are in good supply. The recently opened Performing Arts Centre offers an excellent facility for drama and a considerable number of other gatherings and activities.

- 2.43 The core of school policy for assessment is the assessment criteria in the 0-9 scale used principally below Year 10. This scale gives broad descriptors fashioned by departments according to the demands of the subject. All pupils understand and appreciate this scheme, which gives consistency, raises aspirations and often helps to give shape to written work. The nature of comments made by teachers on pupils' work varies according to the needs of each subject, but also within departments. At best, written assessments regularly offer praise and constructive criticism. In a number of departments, the quality of written assessments is uniformly excellent. Evidence in many areas indicates that information from assessment is used to develop teaching plans, for example, by reinforcing a particular language construction. A distinctive feature of the school's approach to assessment is the absence of any rank orders of pupils by their performance. The focus is on each individual's achievement and their self-motivation. Pupils welcome the freedom this brings from the stress of public competition, while acknowledging that they continue to be competitive and treat seriously the assessments they are given.
- 2.44 Nationally available norms are used as a means to evaluate pupils' performance but are of limited value given the relatively narrow band of high-achieving pupils at the school. The school's own arrangements for evaluating pupil performance are, however, very well developed. They are based on professional judgement and effectively track and monitor pupils' performance in accordance with the school's stated aims. Where necessary, strategies for pupils who underperform are implemented and followed through. The quality of teaching has a significant and positive impact on the high standards of learning and achievements of the pupils in the school.

Whole School

- 2.45 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care and of the welfare, health and safety of pupils is outstanding. The staff provide strong support and guidance for pupils of all ages. The school's pastoral arrangements are very effective. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves is excellent. Pupils are confident when talking to staff that any concerns they may have will be listened to sympathetically. The measures the school takes to promote good discipline are successful. The senior management team (SMT) has deliberately imposed few rules but the highly efficient monitoring system of tutors, form teachers, heads of year, the school nurse and the school counsellor, provides pupils with readily available support if and when it is needed. In this way, potential behavioural problems are mostly avoided. Pupils enjoy the relative freedom to conduct themselves with dignity. Very rarely does their behaviour give rise to concern and, if so, the matter is promptly dealt with. When interviewed, pupils were unanimous in saying that bullying and harassment are not tolerated and, on the very rare occasions when they occur, they are dealt with immediately.
- 3.2 The school's policy on child protection is clearly set out and is successful. The school has taken appropriate steps to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Fire doors have been fitted and fire extinguishers have been placed at strategic locations. Notices directing staff and pupils to safe areas in the event of fire are displayed prominently. The health and safety arrangements are excellent. The school pays particular attention to health and safety statutory obligations. If a pupil is ill, the school provides a sick bay in the medical centre where she can be treated until other arrangements are made. First aid and medical cover are provided throughout the school day for pupils, teachers and all other members of staff. The school nurse carries a mobile phone and first aid equipment is always immediately available. First aid kits and a list of qualified first-aiders are situated at various points around the school. These points are also listed in the staff handbook. If the school nurse is not available, a qualified first-aider will administer first aid. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing healthy eating habits and taking regular exercise. The food the school provides at lunchtime is of good quality. The admission and attendance registers are up-to-date and are scrupulously maintained.

Junior School

- 3.3 Pastoral care in the Junior School is outstanding. The staff are fully committed to providing support and guidance to the pupils. Arrangements for pastoral care are thorough. Regular meetings are arranged when matters of care and welfare are discussed and the systems of communication within school and with parents are effective. Senior managers in the Junior School work hard as a team to ensure that policies they have drawn up work well. Pupils are very familiar with the system even when they have never had to use it. Relationships between the staff and the pupils are warm and friendly. During interviews, the pupils agreed that their form teachers offered effective support and guidance. Relationships are strengthened further through Personal Appointment Time, a system through which pupils can raise with their teachers, the nurse, the school counsellor or the office staff any concerns they may have. Both pupils and staff referred to this as a special time that they enjoy and find valuable. The importance the Junior School places on the pastoral care and welfare of pupils is reinforced through themes in assemblies and topics in PSHE, such as 'What makes

a good friend?', RS and circle time. All members of staff have been trained in child protection procedures, and are familiar with statutory obligations and the school policy.

- 3.4 The school is successful at promoting good discipline and behaviour. When necessary, the Junior School Behaviour Management system is invoked and parents are informed.

Senior School

- 3.5 The quality of pastoral care, support and guidance provided by the Senior School is outstanding. Staff know their pupils well. Tutors move with their forms each year in the Senior School within the three pastoral sections so that close contacts are never lost. Assistant tutors work with every form or tutor group to make sure that the teacher:pupil ratio is well balanced. The academic and personal progress of each pupil is effectively monitored. Tutors and section heads deal promptly with any matters of concern. Tutors discuss reports with each pupil and set targets by agreement so that a close watch is kept on the pupil's academic and personal development. Detailed records are maintained and staff have access to them.

- 3.6 The deputy head (pastoral) and the section heads are very effective in leading and managing the procedures for pastoral care. Communication of information about pupils and their welfare is quick and easy. Regular meetings ensure that staff involved are well informed and are able to contribute knowledgeably to any policy review. The pupils value the 'buddy' system for new pupils, and peer counselling by members of the sixth form. The school counsellor and the school nurse make a valuable contribution to helping pupils with concerns.

- 3.7 Relationships between staff and pupils are strong. Courtesy, care and consideration for others are well understood and underpin community life. The pupils are very supportive of one another. They say that they have a very constructive, open and friendly relationship with staff and that they are valued as part of the school community. This atmosphere of ease and trust encourages pupils to take a full part in lessons and in extra-curricular activities, where they have the confidence to show initiative and develop leadership skills.

- 3.8 Behaviour in the Senior School is excellent, and the school takes effective measures to promote this. Pupils understand that good behaviour is expected of them and they believe that the measures, including sanctions, to encourage it are fair. Tutors deal promptly with any incidents, and serious lapses in conduct are successfully resolved by the deputy head. Policies to combat bullying and harassment are thorough and no pupil interviewed could recall any recent case of bullying. Staff operate a culture of disappointment: that is, expressions of regret that the conduct expected of a pupil has not been maintained, rather than one that depends on sanctions. This is very effective. The staff handbook gives details of the Senior School's behaviour management policy.

- 3.9 The child protection policy gives clear guidelines on what procedures should be adopted when anxieties arise. All members of staff have been recently updated as part of their in-service training.

Whole School

- 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.11 The school has established and maintained an outstanding and effective partnership with parents. Links with the community are also outstanding and continue to be developed. The aim of the school to maintain a community that promotes service to others is fully realized.
- 3.12 Parents are satisfied with the education and support the school provides. In their responses to the questionnaire sent out before the inspection, they were overwhelmingly positive about the standards of education and support their daughters receive. In discussion, parents were impressed with the dynamic nature of the leadership and management of the school, and they appreciated all the opportunities for learning it provides for their children. Parents have many opportunities to be involved in school activities and in the work and progress of their children. Exhibition Day, Sports Day and Founder's Day are of particular importance, but parents are also invited to attend assemblies and other occasions. A relatively small number of parents of pupils in the GCSE and A-level years felt that parents have too little opportunity to be involved in the day-to-day life of the school, but the inspectors found no evidence to support this claim. Parents take part in mock interviews and many contribute valuable professional expertise and advice at careers talks or at the Careers Convention. They are also involved in extra-curricular activities and school visits. The link between home and school is further strengthened through the Parents' Guild, which encourages parents to contribute to the school and to charities through organizing or taking part in activities such as the summer fete, quiz evenings and the 'bring and buy sale', as well as welcoming new or prospective parents to the school on open days. A fireworks event is held annually, with the aim of helping parents and families to get to know one another. This is considered to be important because the catchment area of the school is so wide.
- 3.13 Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school. Parents of current pupils receive clear and useful reports about their children's work and progress. They receive a wide range of information of high quality from the school, including a summary of the school development plan (SDP). Parent-staff consultations take place each year and formal, detailed reports are written towards the end of the academic year. These contain information about pupils' progress and levels of attainment as well as advice regarding further steps for development in all subjects. The website, prospectus and the information given in handbooks for new parents are very helpful. Parents in the Junior School are emailed a general newsletter every two weeks and a newsletter once a term with details of the curriculum to be covered each term. In the Senior School, parents receive a newsletter at the end of each term. The school magazine, published annually, includes details of university destinations and pupils' academic, artistic or sporting successes. Information about forthcoming trips or events, and about pupils' recent achievements, is sent to all parents electronically.
- 3.14 The open-door policy in the Junior School is a strong feature, and parents in the early years who deliver and collect their children daily make good use of it to discuss their children's progress. Although parents are encouraged to arrange a meeting to discuss the progress of their children after receiving their reports, not all respond to the offer. Each term, parents in the Senior School receive a report on their daughter's progress, either in written form or in oral feedback at a parents' evening. Written reports provide useful information on pupils' achievements and attitudes to work and give helpful advice on areas for future improvement. In conversation, parents praised the help and advice given at the information evenings about options for GCSE, A level and IB.
- 3.15 The school handles the concerns of parents with care. Parents are encouraged to raise concerns, and the formal complaints policy is clear and available on demand. A small

minority of parents indicated in the questionnaire that they were not satisfied with the manner in which concerns were handled. However, the inspectors found that the school's procedures were sound and that issues were dealt with in an effective and efficient manner. In conversation, parents agreed that the school deals with problems both effectively and promptly. Teachers are approachable and know their pupils well, and parents feel that several members of staff are readily available for them to approach for advice. The excellent link between teachers and parents is a significant factor in the strong pastoral care system.

- 3.16 The school provides outstanding links with the community. It maintains a staff exchange scheme with schools in Australia and the USA. The headmistress co-directs the Prince's Teaching Institute, which organizes subject-based professional training for teachers from maintained schools, and contributes to national discussion about curriculum and examinations. A strong link exists with a local maintained school, which allows pupils in Year 3 in each school to exchange visits. The Senior School has a strong partnership with a wide range of independent and maintained schools, through which a variety of activities are organized, including debating and study days. The staff and pupils of the school have links with schools in the London and Greater London areas. These links include a drawing club, joint drama and music productions, and subject-based research and presentations of the results. Pupils from other schools are invited to attend talks on medical issues, and other events such as professional drama performances. The school is exploring ways in which the new Performing Arts Centre might be used to develop links with other schools or with the local community.
- 3.17 The school has exchange visits with schools in France, Spain and Germany. Links are being developed with schools in Australia and Zambia. The school raises money for an educational project for refugees in northern Thailand. Pupils have contributed to this project by visiting it during their GAP Years. The recent development of a link with a school in Lusaka is hoped to provide a continuing opportunity to raise awareness of the needs of others. The intention is that a group of Year 12 pupils will visit each year to assist with teaching, and a pen-pal scheme between the schools is being established. Local and overseas charities and organizations have benefited from the Canonaid scheme, which collects well over £15,000 each year through cake sales, 'readathons' and the annual 'Canons Follies', and is organized by the pupils. The fundraising activities are outstanding in their quality and commitment, and pupils are encouraged to contribute to weekly collections for chosen charities by the Canonaid publicity team. Of particular note is the annual donation to the Karenni Schools Development Project, which assists a school set up in Thailand by a former pupil.
- 3.18 The school believes strongly in service and is true to its aims to promote it. Pupils are encouraged to participate in community service, which includes visits to local residences for those with disabilities, and senior pupils assist in both the Junior School and in local primary schools, where some teach an introductory Latin mythology course. Visits to places of educational value, such as the Globe Theatre and the National Museum, have taken place and members of the public have benefited from the use of the school's facilities. Many departments organize overseas visits each year. These links enrich the pupils' education and learning, and help to produce a sense of community and an understanding and appreciation of the world about them.
- 3.19 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is outstanding. The structure of the governing body is well defined and its oversight of the school, both junior and senior, is very effective.
- 4.2 The governors are drawn from a variety of backgrounds: university and academic; parents; educational; and business. The chairman herself has drawn on previous experience in some of the remodelling of the sub-committees. The full governing body meets once a term. The headmistress attends its meetings and the bursar is its clerk. The finance and estates sub-committee meets eight times a year; the personnel and the academic sub-committees once a term; the investment committee three times a year. The nominations and the development steering sub-committees meet as required. The former is concerned with recruitment to the governing body and the latter is an ad hoc sub-committee that deals with the performing arts and bursary fund campaign. All these sub-committees are chaired by individual governors. The governors' handbook provides a short biography of each governor. It outlines the function and composition of each sub-committee and how often they meet. The chairmen of each sub-committee present key areas for discussion and make recommendations to the governing body. The governors and the SMT hold a one-day annual conference to work on two or three major long-term strategic issues.
- 4.3 The governors are fully aware of their responsibilities, and are appropriately involved in educational development and financial planning, strategies to ensure effective educational provision and investment in human and material resources. They have a good insight into the working of the school and provide advice, support and stimulus for growth and improvement. The governors provide effective support for the school and have had a strong impact on its development. They see a clear demarcation between themselves and the SMT to which they have delegated such matters as the school's ethos, teaching, curriculum, extra-curricular activities and pastoral care. The governors see themselves as having an important but independent non-executive role. They have, however, been involved in each stage of the school's development plan and they have a strong interest in seeing that it is put into practice.
- 4.4 The governors are very effective in discharging their responsibilities for the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Detailed policies on welfare, health and safety, child protection and the handling of complaints are included in the staff handbook and have been approved by the governors.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The quality of leadership and management of the school is outstanding. The headmistress provides strong and dynamic leadership, ably supported by her senior management team. Together they provide clear educational direction that is reflected in the quality of education, the care of pupils and the fulfilment of the school's aims and ethos. They are very effective in analyzing the school's needs, setting priorities, planning to meet these priorities and putting decisions into practice.
- 4.6 Management at all levels in both the Junior School and the Senior School is successful in drawing up and implementing appropriate procedures and policies and in checking and reviewing their effectiveness. The SDP, which sets priorities for a five-year period, includes a summary of each objective, an action plan for each, the initials of the member of staff with

the responsibility for seeing it through, a timetable for each priority and a summary of the intended outcomes. It also includes a summary of the aims of the school. It was very common for teachers to say during interviews with inspectors that these aims are at the heart of all of the school's educational development. The inspection team found this to be true. Since the last inspection, the changes to the educational provision and to the styles of teaching have been reinforced through rigorous self-analysis. Priorities are established and decisions made after discussions with staff at all levels. As a consequence, the school is constantly evolving and improving through, for example, the continuing development of ICT and the introduction of a range of modern foreign languages in the Junior School. Departmental policies and practices are reviewed in regular cycles. All aspects of teaching and learning are assessed and improvements made through regular in-service training. This policy is said to have had a major effect on the school's examination results and helps to ensure high levels of academic performance. The headmistress, the staff and the governors have a strong commitment to scholarship and academic challenge. The appraisal system is linked to staff training so that staff are motivated to teach with enthusiasm and drive. It supports and encourages self-evaluation. Teachers are very motivated.

- 4.7 The SMT has adopted an integrated approach to management. Discussions take place at every level of management: at SMT meetings, departmental meetings and informally among teachers themselves. The pupils are part of this integrated approach because, through their tutor groups and the School Council, for example, they are able to put forward ideas and suggestions so that they become part of the management process. This could not be achieved without easy and often quite informal relationships between pupils and their teachers. The pupils in both the Junior and the Senior Schools are very mature for their ages.
- 4.8 Management at all levels is effective in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient staff of high quality and ensuring their suitability to work with children. The arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, supply staff and governors are thorough. Financial resources are well managed, and the accommodation and resources are appropriate, support the school's educational aims and meet the needs of every pupil. The budget is well controlled and the school's finances are efficiently distributed. Several newly qualified teachers are on the staff. They are well monitored, receive excellent training and have a reduced timetable.
- 4.9 The administration of the school is very efficient. The administrative staff are very effective in ensuring that the school runs smoothly and is a welcoming place for visitors and parents. The school and its grounds are superbly maintained and are pleasant to walk around. The security guards, the grounds staff and the secretarial staff are pleasant, helpful and capable.
- 4.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.11 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school fully satisfies its aims as set out in the school development plan. The quality of teaching is frequently outstanding and never less than good. Its main strengths are in the quality of lesson planning, the effectiveness of the teaching methods, the careful management of time and the teachers' complete command of, and enthusiasm for, their subject. The pupils are keen and effective learners. They respond well to teaching. Relationships between pupils and teachers are excellent. The school is very successful in placing pupils in the universities of their choice. The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is outstanding. The quality of the school's pastoral care, welfare, health and safety is also outstanding. The school has excellent links with the wider community. The leadership, management and governance of the school are outstanding, and are strongly committed to scholarship and academic challenge. The school development plan shows appropriate short- and long-term planning. Pupils are able to look forward to their next stage of education with confidence.
- 5.2 The school is constantly and successfully re-evaluating itself to improve its policies, its administration, and the quality of education, care and relationships, and governance and management. Since the last inspection, the school has taken steps to ensure that the attendance registers are correctly maintained.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 To improve even further the outstanding educational experience and the high standards of care the pupils are offered, the school is recommended to:
1. continue to develop ICT across the curriculum.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 18th to 21st February 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analyzed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Iain Paterson	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Anthea Hickman	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Robert Chatburn	Assistant Head, IAPS school
Dr John Guntrip	Director of Studies, HMC school
Miss Helen Johnson	Deputy Head, HMC school
Mrs Rosemary Kimmins	Former Teacher, HMC school
Mr Wayne Lawton	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mr Anthony Little	Headmaster, HMC school
Mrs Jan Scarrow	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Val Weakley	Deputy Head, ISA school
Dr Ernst Zillekens	Head of Department, HMC school