

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **St John's College School**

Full Name of the School	<b>St John's College School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>873/6004</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>N/A</b>
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Chairman of Governors	<b>Dr Helen Watson</b>
Age Range	<b>4 to 13</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2008</b>

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 was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. 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 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. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 St John's College School is predominantly a day school which also has a co-educational boarding section that provides accommodation for the choristers in the College choir and for an equal number of other pupils.
- 1.2 The school traces its origins to the mid seventeenth century when provision was made for the education of the boy choristers who served the Chapel of St John's College. In the twentieth century the intake was widened to include boys who were not choristers. The school moved to its present location in 1955. In 1973, the nearby Byron House was acquired and provided education for girls aged 7 to 11 whilst Senior House, named after a former headmaster, educated day and boarding boys aged 7 to 13. Subsequently, a co-educational Pre-prep department was added to Byron House. The school became fully co-educational in 1993. Byron House caters for all pupils in the 4 to 9 age range and Senior House has the remainder of the pupils, both day and boarding. Pupils mainly attend the school from a wide geographical area locally and come largely from families with professional backgrounds or with connections to Cambridge University or the technological industries of the city.
- 1.3 The school is located in Grange Road adjacent to the College's playing fields which it uses. Byron House is a short walk from Senior House. The school has recently purchased, and is refurbishing, a house in between the two houses. The school has very close links with the College, apart from the historical links with the choristers. The composition of the governing body reflects these links with six of the governors being fellows of the College, as well as the Dean of Chapel, the College organist and the College's senior bursar being ex officio members.
- 1.4 In total, 449 pupils attend the school, of whom 37 board. In all, 38 children are in the Foundation Stage (Reception) of whom 20 are boys and 18 are girls. A total of 83 pupils are in Years 1 and 2, 46 boys and 37 girls. In Years 3 to 6, there are 226 pupils, 125 boys and 101 girls. In total, 102 pupils are in Years 7 and 8, of whom 64 are boys and 38 are girls.
- 1.5 The school seeks to care for the whole child; to meet the individual needs and foster the aptitudes of each child. Central to its aims are the provision of high academic expectations, a rich curriculum and high quality pastoral care within a community where pupils develop their care of others in an ethos of mutual respect.
- 1.6 The main point of entry to the school is at Reception which is non-selective. Children who enter in Year 3 or who join in other age groups are assessed to ensure that they can cope with the demands of the curriculum. Choristers are admitted to Year 4 or above on the basis of their singing and musical ability and the school seeks to assure itself that with their busy lives, they will cope with the school curriculum. Standardised tests indicate that the ability of the pupils, overall, is above the national average, though the range is wide with significant minorities of below average and well above average pupils.
- 1.7 Two pupils have statements of special educational needs and 83 pupils have been identified by the school as having a degree of learning difficulty and requiring extra support. A total of 71 pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds and are fluent in English.

- 1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Kindergarten	Reception
T1	Year 1
T2	Year 2
1	Year 3
2	Year 4
3	Year 5
4	Year 6
5	Year 7
6	Year 8

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 Pupils benefit from a rich educational experience which is varied and interesting and strongly meets the school's aims to meet pupils' individual needs, foster their aptitudes and to nurture the growth of each child. The outstanding quality of the curriculum is in line with the school's self-evaluation. Pupils experience a caring environment with emphasis on their emotional and social well being which enables them to reach the intellectual and physical standards, and make the personal and academic development required, for them to enter the senior schools of their choice.
- 2.2 Considerable attention is given to pupils' aesthetic and creative development particularly in music, drama, and art. Emphasis is placed on developing pupils' linguistic and mathematical skills. High priority is given to the development of pupils' skills in speaking and listening. Due attention is paid to ensure that pupils gain the necessary skills in literacy and numeracy to enable them to gain places at the senior schools of their choice. Central to the curriculum is the emphasis placed on enabling pupils to gain skills in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). The strengths reported at the last inspection have been maintained. The curriculum has improved, for example with the introduction of the 'emotions for learning' project (E4L) in Byron House. Parents responded very positively in the pre-inspection questionnaire to the range of experiences provided for their children.
- 2.3 In line with its aims, the educational experience makes secure links between pupils' academic and personal development. Consequently significant emphasis is placed on the provision for pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE). For example a 'staying safe' topic is included in the programme as well as emphasis now being placed on the development of pupils' emotional intelligence. Effective use is made of the rich local environment and people in the community with specialist knowledge. The extensive extra-curricular activities enhance pupils' experience. A rich variety is provided: for example, clubs to support the development of listening skills, spelling and touch typing as well as sport and a significant number of musical and dramatic activities.
- 2.4 The curriculum is very effectively planned with comprehensive and thorough schemes of work readily available to all staff on the school's website and intranet. The management of the curriculum is of high quality and is carefully monitored by heads of department as well as the school's leadership team. The curriculum for children under five is carefully planned in line with the national guidance for the Foundation Stage.
- 2.5 Great attention is paid to ensuring that all pupils have opportunities to participate fully in all the school's activities. Comprehensive support is provided for pupils with learning difficulties, both in lessons and where necessary with a specialist teacher. Relationships between the teachers and learners are excellent and cement a good partnership so that pupils report that the help they receive is very useful. Support for the pupils with special educational needs is carefully matched to their needs as set out in their written statements. An example of the high quality of support for these pupils is that all staff, not only teaching staff have had specialist training in the nature of the pupils' needs and how best to support the pupils concerned. Although pupils with English as an additional language are fluent in their spoken English, their progress is carefully monitored.
- 2.6 More able pupils are challenged and this results in them achieving highly in their entrance and scholarship examinations to senior schools. In Byron House, the more able pupils are now periodically taught together. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Care is taken in the tracking of pupils' academic progress to ensure that pupils that have been

identified as being more able make sufficient progress. Pupils the school has identified as being talented have good opportunities to develop their talents, for example in music, drama and sport.

- 2.7 Excellent attention is paid to preparing pupils for the next stage of their education. The high quality leadership and management of the curriculum and personal development ensures that pupils' move from Byron House to Senior House is seamless. Meticulous attention is paid to pupils' preparation for their move to senior schools. Information from detailed analysis of pupils' academic and personal development is used carefully to track pupils' progress to ensure it is sufficient to enable them to be successful in meeting the requirements of senior schools. This information is used very effectively to help pupils and parents in choosing their senior schools.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.9 Pupils are well educated in that considering their age and ability they achieve good standards. They are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding in the subjects they study, and successfully apply this throughout their studies. In line with school's aims, they develop the skills of concentration and perseverance whilst enjoying their work. The strengths reported at the last inspection have been maintained. Inspection evidence agrees with the school's self-evaluation that pupils achieve well.
- 2.10 Pupils do not take national tests. Pupils' attainment is regularly assessed and compared against national norms using standardised tests. Analysis of the data provided by these assessments shows that pupils attain good standards in English and mathematics and make rapid progress. Examination of pupils' completed work in these subjects confirms the good standards achieved. The attainment of boys and girls is similar. More able pupils achieve well and for the younger pupils this is an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties make secure and appropriate progress. Noteworthy are the academic clinics which support pupils' progress.
- 2.11 Success is achieved in a wide range of activities. In mathematics, pupils have done well in the Junior Maths Challenge gaining a significant number of gold medals and a number of pupils qualified for the Olympiad. The school came first in a national general knowledge competition for preparatory schools. Considerable success is achieved in Associated Board examinations and a number of pupils have enjoyed the opportunity to play with national bands and orchestras. The St John's College Choir has an international reputation. Drama plays an important part in the life of the school with year groups having a production each year. The school has a good sporting record, for example the rugby XV was undefeated in 2007 and in hockey a number of teams were county champions for their age groups, with pupils being selected to play for the county and region.
- 2.12 Pupils' learning skills are well developed. They have very positive attitudes to their learning and work hard in response to the thorough teaching and interesting opportunities provided. Pupils are very articulate. They explain their ideas confidently and competently ask questions of their teachers. In lessons, they listen attentively to their teachers, think for themselves, and show interest in the views and comments of their peers. They debate competently in individual lessons, for example in French when they considered their response to dilemmas posed by their teacher. In addition there are planned opportunities in the curriculum for more formal debates, which they say they find interesting.

- 2.13 Pupils respond well to the opportunities to think creatively, for example in the considerable amount of poetry and writing published in the school magazine. They read fluently and write accurately and at length for an interesting range of purposes. Their completed work is well presented with generally neat handwriting.
- 2.14 Pupils attain good standards in numeracy. In Year 8, pupils show a good understanding of algebraic rules. By the end of Year 6, they competently calculate ratios and in Year 2, they accurately give correct change when 'shopping'. Pupils make good use of these skills in science and other subjects, for example in geography when they use climate data. Pupils develop good skills in ICT, which they use to good effect, for example in designing databases and producing graphs, as well as publishing their writing.
- 2.15 The impact of the E4L project with younger pupils is to be seen in the development of their skills in solving problems; for example when a letter for Bill the zoo keeper is smudged and pupils have to prepare for the arrival of an unknown animal. Across the school, pupils readily suggest solutions for overcoming problems they have encountered or have been given by teachers. Pupils are proficient in making notes, for example when they watch a video or conduct an experiment.
- 2.16 Pupils usually settle quickly in lessons and activities and concentrate on the task in hand. In conversation with inspectors, pupils frequently commented that they found the lessons interesting and that teachers readily helped them with any difficulties they encountered. Pupils collaborate well, for example when using a computer or attempting to solve a problem.
- 2.17 Pupils work independently and use the library and internet to undertake research, for example when they research information for a biography or to write an account of the 2007 rugby world cup final. They respond to the effective teaching about how to use a library, when with assistance from the librarian, they find out for example, whether floating plants have roots. The pupils' committees readily use their initiative and bring forward useful proposals for future developments.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.18 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. The school comprehensively fulfils its aim to develop the 'whole child'. The school's Christian heritage is implicit throughout the school's activities. The strengths reported on at the last inspection have been successfully maintained. The pre-inspection questionnaires revealed wide satisfaction on the part of parents with the attitudes and values promoted by the school.
- 2.19 Pupils develop a strong spiritual awareness and high levels of self-esteem and confidence. They enjoy a wide range of spiritual experiences. In assemblies, in an atmosphere conducive to an appreciation of the intangible, they reflect on values such as the importance of judging the inner person, not a person's outward appearance. The religious studies curriculum provides pupils with opportunities to come to understand important aspects of other world faiths. Pupils' understanding of other faiths is further developed by visits to places of religious worship and by listening to visitors to the school.
- 2.20 Pupils have a very well developed sense of what is right and wrong, and accept that there are consequences for breaking a moral code. They successfully develop their self-knowledge and critical thinking skills as they discuss issues concerned with prejudice and discrimination, and how to make correct choices in life. Older pupils showed that they had a secure understanding of the dangers posed by racism. In conversation with inspectors, pupils explained that the school rules were fair and appreciated that they were for their benefit. At

the heart of the life of the school are the excellent relationships pupils enjoy with staff and with each other, and staff are extremely good role models in this respect. Pupils enjoy being taught by the teachers who in turn enjoy being with their pupils.

- 2.21 Pupils show a strong sense of social awareness. They have many opportunities to take responsibility. For example, a pupil checks pupils' dress when they enter assemblies to ensure they are neat and tidy. Pupils readily respond without negative comments. Pupils respond well to the opportunities to be part of a team and to develop teamwork. A 'buddy system' has been developed and is very successful in providing strong links between Byron House and Senior House. It involves the children in Years 4 and 7 who become 'buddies' before the younger children move to Senior House in Year 5. Pupils in Year 7 and Year 8 relish the opportunity to visit Byron House to play with the younger children at break times.
- 2.22 The leadership of the school is consistently seeking to find ways to further pupils' development. Three pupil committees have recently replaced the active school council and have responsibility for charities, environment and community links. Already pupils make an excellent contribution to the life of the school through these committees; for example, one is looking into the possibility of recycling kitchen oil to be made into diesel for the school lawnmowers. Pupils regularly are involved with support for charities. The rich experiences the school provides strongly develop pupils' understanding of what it means to be a citizen.
- 2.23 Pupils develop a strong cultural awareness because of the interesting and varied opportunities provided for them. They regularly participate in the performing arts, for example in music through the choirs and the significant number of music groups and ensembles. Drama is given a high profile and the attractive displays of pupils' completed artwork displayed around the school are testament to their cultural development. Pupils benefit from visits to museums, galleries and places of educational interest. The choristers have many opportunities to visit other countries and cultures, for example Venice and Estonia. Older pupils benefit from residential visits to France and Italy. Pupils are provided with useful opportunities to learn about other cultures, for example through their support for a link with Zanzibar. Talk and presentations by members of other cultures about their religious beliefs enable pupils to develop positive attitudes towards cultural differences.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.25 Strong teaching is reflected in pupils' good levels of achievement and progress. The strengths reported in the last inspection have been maintained. Teaching has improved in that outstanding teaching was observed across the school as a whole in a range of subjects. The quality of teaching reflects the school's evaluation. Very thorough procedures for assessment are used successfully to track pupils' progress and to plan work. Some aspects of arrangements for marking pupils' completed work are not consistently implemented. The quality of the teaching is very much in line with the school's aim to enable pupils to achieve their best. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were strongly supportive of the quality of teaching.
- 2.26 Teaching is encouraging and interesting. Pupils frequently commented that 'teachers always help you when you find things difficult'. Inspection evidence endorses pupils' positive views. Teaching is significantly enhanced by the excellent relationships between teachers and pupils. The good quality of the teaching gives pupils opportunities to think for themselves and to make the most of their intellectual, physical and creative talents. Where teaching is especially successful, it is imaginative and teachers choose a range of activities

and resources that are very well suited to the task in hand. For example, in a science lesson in Year 1, pupils were investigating the properties of water but also learnt about important ideas in history and geography. Imaginative use of a video and of very well chosen resources in an art lesson enabled older pupils to make considerable progress in their understanding of the work of Magritte and in their creative development.

- 2.27 Staff have a secure command of the subjects they teach and good use is made of their specialist knowledge. In line with the school's aims, teachers know their pupils well. The planning of lessons takes due account of pupils' needs and their previous learning. Teaching assistants are well deployed and add considerably to pupils' learning. Across the school a brisk pace and effective use of time are usual in lessons. Where teaching is not quite as effective, the pace of lessons is slower. Lessons generally end with a useful round-up discussion with pupils about what they have learnt. Teachers hold high expectations of pupils' behaviour and the good behaviour in the school is regarded by pupils and teachers as the norm.
- 2.28 A significant improvement since the last inspection has been the successful introduction of interactive white boards. In common with all the innovations in the school, this has been very effectively led and managed. Teachers who have been provided with these are part of a development project within the school. Imaginative use of the boards by teachers has enhanced learning significantly. For example in a French lesson in Year 8, pupils improved their understanding of the conditional tense by responding to the dilemma carefully displayed on the white board. In Year 2, its effective use enabled pupils to develop a deeper understanding of symmetrical patterns. In addition, teachers make effective use of electronic resources, such as charts and diagrams, in their lessons.
- 2.29 Comprehensive support is provided for pupils with special educational needs and those with learning difficulties. Due account is taken of the statements of pupils with special educational needs. All staff have received special training in the needs outlined in one statement to ensure that they provide appropriate support. Careful attention is paid to the individual education plans drawn up where necessary for pupils with learning difficulties. Well-planned support is provided in lessons and well-judged extra support is provided on an individual basis. More attention is now provided for younger more able pupils as well as those who are older. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- 2.30 Teachers regularly and accurately assess pupils' work. The school uses a number of nationally standardised tests against which to compare pupils' attainment. The staff have very secure understanding of the standards pupils are to reach if they are to gain places or scholarships at the senior schools of their choice. Careful track is made of individual pupils' progress to identify where improvement or extra attention is required if pupils are to be successful. The school effectively combines the assessment of pupils' academic progress with their personal development in the form of action plans which are discussed with individual pupils every two weeks. A strength of the school is the very effective intranet which enables all staff to contribute easily to an individual pupil's record of progress.
- 2.31 Marking of pupils' work is undertaken conscientiously but not consistently in line with the school's agreed policy. Teachers' marking and correction of work is regular and thorough. The marking policy clearly indicates important principles to be borne in mind with regard to advice to pupils but it does not provide sufficient guidance as to what has to be done, with consequent inconsistencies in individual subjects and between year groups. Teachers usually provide praise and encouragement in their marking but less frequently provide pupils with written advice about what they need to do to improve their work. Where marking provides this advice, rarely are pupils given feedback in subsequent written marking as to how well the advice has been followed.

- 2.32 Thorough analysis is undertaken of the assessments made, not only to track individual pupils' progress but also to adapt the curriculum where necessary. For example, following analysis of younger pupils' phonic knowledge in reading, the school purchased a new commercial scheme that dealt with the gap in pupils' knowledge. Following a routine review of assessments in mathematics, an improvement in the teaching of mathematical language was identified. Staff training was then provided together with appropriate resources.
- 2.33 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 is outstanding and is a major strength of the school. The care provided meets the school's core aim of meeting individual pupils' needs. Thorough and rigorous attention is paid to pupils' welfare, health and safety. At the heart of these arrangements is very effective management. The strengths reported at the last inspection have been maintained and further developed. Parents are very appreciative of the care their children receive. The quality of care fully supports the national Every Child Matters agenda.
- 3.2 The school provides an atmosphere of trust and warmth where pupils are happy and know they always have someone to turn to. Relationships throughout the school are excellent, especially between older and younger pupils. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire the pupils indicated that they were very positive about what the school does for them. One pupil wrote 'the school altogether is my favourite place to be.' Another commented 'the school really makes a big effort to keep us happy.' These views are strongly supported by the inspection evidence.
- 3.3 Pastoral care is very well managed. Teachers know their pupils very well as individuals and use this knowledge to extremely good effect. The excellent use of the school's intranet enables all teachers to contribute to each child's pastoral care and personal development. All pupils have an action plan for their development which is reviewed regularly. At the heart of the outstanding pastoral arrangements are the meetings individual pupils have every two weeks with their tutor who has access to a thorough record of each pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils are very appreciative of these meetings, as they know they are based on their needs and action plan, rather than an impersonal agenda.
- 3.4 Pupils are strongly encouraged to share their worries with an adult. Younger pupils each have a safety circle and older pupils have a safety network of adults to whom they can turn to share their worries. A particular strength is the way the headmaster and senior leadership team know the pupils individually and they very much model the ethos of the school.
- 3.5 When pupils encounter exceptional difficulties the staff provide them with the support they need and, not infrequently, this support extends to pupils' families.
- 3.6 Imaginative and comprehensive arrangements are in place and implemented to promote high standards of behaviour. Expectations of behaviour are clearly understood by pupils who regard the rules as being fair and for their benefit. Pupils from a number of cultural backgrounds work and play harmoniously and enjoy learning about each other's cultures. As one pupil put it 'everyone is your friend at this school'.
- 3.7 Thorough attention is given to the prevention of bullying and harassment. Pupils are fully aware of the anti-bullying policy as they made a significant contribution to the design and text of the leaflet provided for all pupils. Due attention is paid to the problem of cyber bullying on mobile phones or through the internet. The subject of bullying is addressed at the start of each term. In discussions with inspectors, pupils indicated that bullying was rare and they had confidence that, should it occur, staff would deal with it robustly and swiftly.
- 3.8 Very secure arrangements are made and implemented successfully to safeguard and promote pupils' health and well being. Rigorous attention is given to child protection. The policy is up to date and thorough, and staff have had the necessary training. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been made on all adults who require them, together with the taking up of

references and the checking of qualifications. A central record has been established. These checks are securely part of the school's recruitment of staff.

- 3.9 Attendance and admission registers are completed correctly and prompt checks are made should a pupil be absent without a reason being provided. Attendance is high. Protection against fire is thorough. First aid is well provided for. Appropriate risk assessments are made for educational visits.
- 3.10 Pupils are encouraged to live healthily. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities provided to take exercise and due attention is paid to healthy living in science and in the PSHE programme. The weekly menu for lunch is varied and a salad option is provided. However, secure arrangements are not in place to check pupils' choices to ensure that they are making healthy decisions. A small minority of the sample of pupils who completed the questionnaires before the inspection expressed concern about the food. The boarders' forum has also expressed some concerns. A food committee has been established to deal with such concerns. Inspection evidence judged the quality of the food to be acceptable.
- 3.11 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**

- 3.12 The school has an excellent partnership with parents and outstanding links with the community. This quality is very much in line with the school's self-evaluation. These links reflect the school's aims to provide a rich educational experience as well as meeting pupils' needs. The strengths highlighted in the previous report have been maintained, all to the benefit of the pupils.
- 3.13 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate a high level of satisfaction with the education their children receive. They particularly appreciate the quality of the teaching, the range of subjects, the support for pupils with special educational needs or learning difficulties, the help and guidance provided, and the extra-curricular activities. A small minority of those who responded to the questionnaire had concerns about homework and felt that not enough was done to encourage them to be involved or to handle their concerns. Inspectors found that the amount of homework set was well monitored and that well thought out arrangements are in place to deal with parental concerns.
- 3.14 Parents have considerable opportunities to be involved in activities in the school. They are invited to attend sessions that deal with a diverse range of topics including approaches to reading, study skills and the dangers of the misuse of drugs. Informal gatherings are held for parents and staff to meet each other, for example the 'At Home' evenings as well as the 'meet the tutors' sessions. In addition the enthusiastic Parents' Association organises events, which are open to all. Parents regularly have opportunities to attend concerts, plays and sporting events.
- 3.15 Detailed and extensive information about the school is provided for parents, and prospective parents. The core of this information is found on the extremely well constructed and detailed website. All aspects of the school's work are there and parents are guided by a very helpful site map together with quick links to important areas, such as the curriculum summaries, teaching and learning as well as pastoral care. Answers can readily be found regarding the daily life of the school. The site is kept up to date. In addition the school magazine, the Eaglet, provides news and further useful information.

- 3.16 The school takes a comprehensive view over the provision of reports for parents about their children's work and progress. It meets its aim that reports should produce a dialogue between home and school and should generate a plan of how best to support each child in the future. Informative written reports are sent out twice a year. Parental consultation evenings are held. In addition, a 'surgery system' is in place which establishes a regular weekly slot when teachers will be in a given place, to meet with parents, by appointment. Opportunities are provided for parents to be present when pupils discuss their progress with teachers. Parents of pupils with special educational needs and those whose children have learning difficulties have regular opportunities to liaise with the appropriate staff.
- 3.17 The small number of parental concerns is handled sensitively. Parents have access to a detailed complaints procedure and all but a small minority who responded to the questionnaire felt that concerns were appropriately dealt with. Parents are made to feel welcome and most concerns are usually dealt with informally.
- 3.18 The links that have been established with the local community and further afield are of a high quality. The establishment of the pupil committees for charities, community and the environment is a reflection of the importance the school places on these links. Local and international charities are well supported as well as links with the local community, for example support for the elderly. Particularly noteworthy is the Stringmoves project on Saturdays that provides musical education for local children. The range of the links with the community makes a significant contribution to pupils' all-round personal development.
- 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].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.20 The boarding arrangements safeguard and promote pupils' welfare and make a positive contribution to their educational experience. Despite recent changes in staff, most of the strengths reported on at the last inspection have been maintained. The school has carefully attended to the matters requiring attention listed in the Commission for Social Care Inspection report in 2005.
- 3.21 Relationships between the boarders are warm and very supportive. The boarders report that they enjoy boarding and that they have made good friendships. In the main, the relationships between boarders and the house staff are positive and friendly.
- 3.22 A good variety of activities is provided in the evenings. Effective use is made of the school's facilities for study as well as playing ball games or swimming. An interesting programme, which the boarders said they enjoyed, is provided at the weekends, which includes for example, bowling and visiting the Bedford Oasis.
- 3.23 The quality of the boarding accommodation is adequate. The boarders appreciate the extra common room space that has been provided. They have access to the school facilities for private study and leisure. However, the boarding accommodation is somewhat austere when compared with the rich environment of the school which boarders experience during the day; for example the well displayed completed work of the pupils. The quality of the boarding environment is much as it was at the time of the last inspection.
- 3.24 Approximately half of the boarders are choristers. They have helpful support to ensure that they deal successfully with the demands placed on them through their busy lives. They have opportunities on Wednesdays to catch up on prep or work missed as a consequence of their chorister duties. A designated time is made during the weekend for them to catch up on any uncompleted work.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The pupils of St John's College School benefit from a high quality education effectively sustained by the governance of the governing body which works closely with the school to set clear aims and values. Following a detailed review of its structure and work several years ago, the governing body now provides improved oversight and guidance. The strengths reported at the last inspection have been maintained.
- 4.2 The structure of the governing body is well defined, for example it now has a vice chairman to deputise for the chairman. The close links with St John's College are maintained in that six of the governors are fellows of the College, as well as the Dean of Chapel, the College organist and senior bursar being ex officio. The membership of the governing body has been extended to include expertise relevant to the governance of a school, for example by the inclusion of two serving heads of senior schools, as well as a governor with legal expertise. A paper is shortly to be considered by the governors to improve the structure further.
- 4.3 Governors exercise effective oversight of the school. Key policies are presented to them and are discussed in meetings. They effectively fulfil their responsibilities, particularly in the areas of child protection and health and safety. A significant number of the governors are parents of children at the school and have a very good grasp of the school, particularly its strengths and needs. Governors are very supportive of the school.
- 4.4 Prudence with finances has enabled a steady improvement of facilities over the past few years. The governors are fully involved in the school's plan for development, its long-term goals and the financial implications. For example the refurbishment of a nearby building is a significant first step in the redevelopment of the temporary buildings in the centre of the school.
- 4.5 Governors have a good insight into the working of the school through the reports they receive and from visits they make. Their experience and expertise provide useful advice and support. One governor has specific responsibility for child welfare issues and liaises closely with a member of the leadership team with responsibility for pastoral matters and the head of Byron House. This arrangement ensures that governors are made aware of issues and developments. One governor is also charged with a responsibility to forge close links between staff and governors and these are successful.

### **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.6 Leadership and management are outstanding and ensure that the school provides an education firmly based on the school's values and its specific aim to educate the 'whole child'. Improvements have been made since the last inspection. The good standards achieved by the pupils, successes in gaining places at senior schools and their high quality personal development are again testament to the excellent leadership, and to the devotion of the headmaster and all staff as reported at the last inspection.
- 4.7 The headmaster and the senior leadership team provide very effective and inspirational leadership. At the heart of this leadership is their determination to know the pupils well and then to use that information to ensure that individual pupils make good progress academically and in their personal development. Close attention to detail and highly effective organisation are the hallmarks of their work. Very thorough and well-organised

- arrangements are used efficiently to provide the senior leadership with detailed and reliable information about the school's overall strengths and areas for development. The monitoring of teaching is thoroughly undertaken by the leadership team, together with an external consultant, as part of their cycle of review of the work of individual departments. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
- 4.8 The management of staff with specific responsibilities, such as heads of subjects, is of high quality. They regularly undertake reviews of their departments using agreed arrangements to provide consistency across the school. The information arising from the reviews is used effectively by them to draw up an improvement plan for the department.
- 4.9 The school development plan is extensive and comprehensive and is based on the departmental development plans as well as the outcomes of reviews undertaken by the senior leadership themselves. The plan clearly outlines areas for development, responsibilities for ensuring actions are taken, as well as financial implications.
- 4.10 A very significant factor in the management of the school is the outstanding administration. Imaginatively, the school has created a very efficient team which is part of the senior leadership team. The two school sites have the services of a full-time administrator who undertakes the administration of all aspects of the school's life, from booking educational visits and ensuring that teaching cover is provided, to organising parental consultations. Consequently, teachers are free to concentrate on ensuring progress in pupils' academic and personal development. The senior administrator works very closely with his two colleagues to provide 'joined up thinking' across the school, as well as contributing to a strategic view of the school's development. He ensures that staff recruitment is fully in line with national guidance regarding child protection matters. Of huge benefit to the school is the use of the school's intranet and website overseen by the senior administrator.
- 4.11 Staff development is of high quality and is seen as being essential for the school's further development. Comprehensive arrangements are in place to induct newly qualified teachers using the national scheme, and staff new to the school. The success of these arrangements is seen in the positive attitudes staff have towards the school. Training is seen as being vital to ensure that the school continues to improve. A team of teachers who are very interested and competent in the use of electronic white boards has been established. The teachers share their expertise and together they have created a considerable pool of expertise. Their exploratory work is about to be reviewed and the team will then train other teachers. Teacher appraisal is securely in place.
- 4.12 The prudent management of resources ensures that a good level of resources is available. The school is well maintained and is in a good state of decoration. Colourful displays of pupils' completed work enhance the learning environment used during the day. The quality of cleanliness is of a high standard.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 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 is very effective in meeting its central aim to meet the pupils' individual needs and to foster all pupils' aptitudes. Pastoral care is outstanding, as is pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Provision for welfare, health and safety is comprehensive. Pupils are provided with an excellent educational experience through a rich curriculum and extensive extra curricular activities. Levels of achievement are good. In addition, pupils are particularly successful in the creative aspects of the curriculum, especially in music, drama and art. Teaching is strong. Thorough arrangements are implemented to assess pupils' progress and this information is used effectively to plan their work and to develop the curriculum. Marking of pupils' work is undertaken conscientiously but not consistently in line with the school's agreed policy. Comprehensive and effective support is provided for pupils with special educational needs and those with learning difficulties. Links with parents and the community are excellent. Leadership and management are outstanding. The headmaster and the senior leadership team provide very effective and inspirational leadership. At the heart of this leadership is the core aim of knowing the pupils well and using that information effectively to ensure pupils make good progress academically and in their personal development. The very strong and imaginative administrative arrangements enable teachers to devote their energies to their teaching. The boarding experience supports pupils' education and development but the quality of the accommodation is rather austere.
- 5.2 Overall, good progress has been made since the last inspection. The strengths have been maintained. The challenge for more able pupils has improved. Extensive and coherent arrangements have been established to monitor and evaluate the work of the school. Teaching is regularly monitored. The school development plan is carefully based on the outcomes of the reviews and includes a significant training programme to support proposed developments.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 In order to build on the improvement since the last inspection, the school should:
1. ensure that the school's marking policy is robust and consistently implemented;
  2. take steps to reduce the austerity of the decoration and furnishing in the boarding house.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 28<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> January 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, governors and parents, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the sanatorium. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr Rod Sharman	Reporting Inspector
Mr Robin Davies	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Andrew Dobbin	Headmaster, IAPS school
Miss Patricia Griffin	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Geoffrey Hammond	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mr Adrian Lowe-Wheeler	Deputy Head, IAPS school