



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

WYCHWOOD SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Wychwood School

Full Name of School	Wychwood School		
DfE Number	931/6068		
Registered Charity Number	309684		
Address	Wychwood School 74 Banbury Road Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 6JR		
Telephone Number	01865 557976		
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Email Address	admin@wychwoodschoo.org		
Headmistress	Mrs Susan Wingfield Digby		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Deborah Pluck		
Age Range	11 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	120		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	87	
Number of Boarders	Total:	33	
	Full:	25	Weekly: 8
Inspection dates	6th to 9th February 2012		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: www.legislation.gov.uk. Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and disability).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning corporal punishment.

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

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in June 2009 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the**

same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Wychwood School aims to provide excellent education in a well-rounded and happy environment. It is committed to developing young people of integrity, with a strong sense of self-worth, independence of thought, and the confidence to build careers and personal lives that will do them credit. The school believes that its small size and family atmosphere allow each girl to achieve the best possible outcome without undue pressure. The school is a Christian, non-denominational foundation which welcomes pupils of all faiths. It is an educational charity, governed by a board of management on behalf of its trustees.
- 1.2 Founded in 1897 by Miss Margaret Lee, a pioneer of women's education, the school is situated in north Oxford, within easy walking distance of the city centre. It occupies three large buildings surrounding a tennis and basketball court and a garden. Boarders are accommodated on the upper floors of two of the buildings. A distinctive feature of the school is the Council, at which staff and pupil representatives meet weekly to discuss the discipline and internal organisation of the school.
- 1.3 Wychwood is a boarding and day school for girls aged between eleven and eighteen. At the time of the inspection, 120 girls were on the roll, 33 of whom were either full or occasional boarders. Thirty-three girls were in Year 12 or 13. Girls come from a variety of backgrounds. At the age of eleven, approximately half join from maintained and the remainder from independent schools. A little over half the boarders are from overseas. Girls leaving after Year 11 are replaced in Year 12 by new arrivals in at least equal numbers. Over recent years, most girls leaving after A levels have gone on to a wide selection of universities and courses.
- 1.4 Girls may enter the school at any stage following an entrance test and, where possible, a personal interview to demonstrate their ability to benefit from the education offered. Standardised tests taken by pupils soon after entering the school show that the ability profile of pupils in Years 7 to 11 is above the national average, with the majority having an ability that is at least above average, and few having ability below average. The school does not use standardised ability assessments for pupils entering Years 12 and 13, but GCSE results indicate that they too are of above average ability.
- 1.5 Twenty-three pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), fifteen of whom receive support for their English. No pupil at the school has a statement of special educational need. The school has identified fifteen pupils as having a special educational need and/or disability (SEND), mostly mild dyslexia, of whom nine receive specialist learning support.

- 1.6 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
Remove	Year 7
Inters	Year 8
Lower Transits (LTs)	Year 9
Upper Transits (UTs)	Year 10
Shell	Year 11
Study 1	Year 12
Study 2	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 In most respects, Wychwood is highly successful in achieving its aims. Girls are well educated and, at all stages of the school, they achieve good levels of success in their work and examinations, and in a range of extra-curricular activities. Teaching is good and, at times, inspirational, based on the staff's own good knowledge of their subjects and of the pupils that they teach. The curriculum is wide ranging and well thought out. Pupils who are particularly gifted, or who need support, are enabled to succeed suitably because of the close individual attention they receive from the staff.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent, resulting in confident, well-adjusted young women, well prepared for adult life and with a clear sense of right and wrong. The care and guidance provided by committed and hard-working staff are excellent, as is recognized by the parents. The overall quality of boarding is sound. Relationships in the boarding community between pupils and staff, and between pupils themselves, are good and boarders say that they are happy. The school does not, however, at present meet all the National Minimum Standards for boarding.
- 2.3 Wychwood benefits from sound governance and good management and leadership. The governors are committed and knowledgeable but have yet to articulate a clear vision for the school's future development. The attention given to safeguarding the welfare, health and safety of pupils is sound, although some regulatory requirements have not been fully met. The leadership and management give clear educational direction and ensure the high standards of achievement, personal development and pastoral care that characterize the school, although a lack of clarity in the management structure has resulted in some areas of school life not being fully monitored and developed under the guidance of a senior member of staff.
- 2.4 The school has addressed all the recommendations and requirements made in the report following the last inspection, but further work is required with respect to the recommendations concerning the provision for boarders and the expansion of opportunities for girls to participate in activities.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

2.5 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- save a copy of the admissions register each month and store it securely for at least three years [Part 3, paragraph 17, under Welfare, health and safety];
- check the identity of any person supplied by an employment agency before that person begins work [Part 4, paragraph 20.(2)(c), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors and National Minimum Standard 14.1, under Staff recruitment and checks on other adults];
- provide appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill, having regard to regulation 5 of the School Premises Regulations [Part 5, paragraph 23.(k), under Premises and accommodation and National Minimum Standard 3.2, under Boarders' health and well-being].

2.6 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011 and therefore, in addition to the actions listed above, it must:

- ensure appropriate privacy for boarders taking showers [National Minimum Standard 5.1 under Boarding accommodation].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.7 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Articulate a clear vision for the school's future direction.
2. Improve the range of extra-curricular activities and encourage more participation, under the guidance and leadership of a senior member of staff.
3. Improve the interior furnishing and décor of the boarding accommodation to provide a more homely atmosphere, in line with the school's ethos.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 The pupils are well educated and, in accordance with the school's aims, individual girls are enabled to achieve their best without undue pressure. Pupils at all stages acquire good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill across the range of the curriculum, as was apparent in lessons and in their books and files. They are articulate and able to apply their knowledge effectively when advancing their opinions or analysing an argument. Good numbers have achieved Duke of Edinburgh's Awards at bronze, silver and, occasionally, gold level in recent years. The school's contestants in the Young Enterprise scheme reached the county finals in 2010 and 2011. Many individual pupils have gained success in sporting, musical, speaking, poetry and drama events. Significant numbers of pupils have entered for and gained a Sports Leader's award, qualifying them to assist in coaching younger girls. All pupils are involved in the form play competition and enjoy the satisfaction of participating in an event in front of the whole school. The quality of the pupils' artwork on display at the school is high.
- 3.3 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools. There was a slight decline in results between 2008 and 2010, but in 2011 every pupil achieved at least five passes at grades A* to C, including mathematics and English. A-level results have also been above the national average for girls in maintained schools, and above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools.
- 3.4 Pupils at all stages make good progress. In particular, the most able are suitably challenged, as was seen when two Year 13 girls discussed theological understandings of conscience, revealing their deep insight, whilst those identified as having SEND or EAL are able to progress in line with their abilities. A girl with EAL, for example, was encouraged to develop her design ideas using a mind-map, resulting in a full page of ideas for development. The levels of achievement in GCSE and A-level examinations indicate that, both in the years to GCSE and in Years 12 and 13, pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability, as is confirmed in the years to GCSE by the standardised measures of progress used by the school.
- 3.5 The girls' attitudes to their learning, their co-operation and good behaviour are excellent and highly conducive to good learning. They listen to one another with respect, they persevere well with tasks set and are evidently eager to do their best. Although they have good information and communication technology (ICT) competence, the use of ICT by pupils to assist their learning is not common, apart from using the internet as a source of information. Scrutiny of their books and files reveals the pride that is taken by most in their work, as well as their creativity and originality. Evidently many enjoy learning.

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

- 3.6 The curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.7 The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which covers all the requisite areas of learning and contributes effectively to the school's aim to achieve the best possible outcome for each individual. The curriculum is suitable for all ages. The curriculum in Years 7 to 9 gives pupils good opportunity to acquire skills in numeracy, literacy, speaking and listening and ICT, and to acquire knowledge in the key subjects of the national curriculum. Older pupils benefit from a wide range of optional subjects at both GCSE and A level, which can be freely chosen. The choices are accompanied by effective individual guidance to ensure that the programme selected is suitable. This wide range of subjects, including the availability of two languages and of separate sciences, at GCSE is a strong feature of the curriculum. Some girls follow personalised programmes enabling them to take individual combinations of GCSE and A-level subjects early. Pupils benefit from a relevant personal, health and social education programme (PHSE) and a helpful provision for careers and citizenship, using a combination of class lessons and external speakers. In Years 12 and 13, the curriculum is enriched by a study extension programme which includes visiting speakers and, for pupils in Year 12, participation in the Young Enterprise scheme. The time available in Years 12 and 13 for physical education (PE) is limited and, in interviews, some girls expressed disappointment with this.
- 3.8 The school makes good provision for pupils with SEND. All pupils entering the school in Years 7 to 9 are assessed to identify those girls who have particular learning needs, and the individual education plans prepared for each are effective in communicating advice and strategies for classroom use. Where appropriate, pupils receive specialist one-to-one support. Pupils with EAL and those who are gifted and talented are also identified, and suitable support is offered.
- 3.9 Educational visits feature prominently in the school calendar and provide valuable enhancement of the curriculum. The school makes good use of its proximity to Oxford and London and the abundance of resources available. Links, particularly in science, have been established with university departments. Speakers are invited to the school to talk on a range of relevant topics. Trips overseas are popular and have included ski trips, exchanges to Spain and adventure trips to Morocco and Costa Rica, broadening pupils' perspective. Pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, they take music and drama examinations, and instrumental examinations in music, developing their self-esteem. They enjoy their involvement in the Shakespeare Schools' Festival and also in the school's termly performing arts evenings and annual form plays. A minority of the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed some dissatisfaction with the school's extra-curricular provision. Inspection evidence revealed a range of well-established and successful extra-curricular opportunities but that the number of clubs, societies and activities at lunch-time and before and after school is limited.
- 3.10 Effective links exist with the local community and these support pupils' personal development well. Girls help children with their reading in a neighbouring school and also with sports coaching through the Sports Leaders scheme. They raise money for numerous good causes both at home and further afield. Often, pupils have close personal links with their chosen charities.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The quality of teaching throughout the school is good.
- 3.12 In a significant minority of the lessons, across all years and in a wide range of subjects, the teaching was excellent. Some teaching was inspirational, and none was less than sound. Teaching is generally characterized by meticulous planning, based on the teacher's own good knowledge both of the subject and of the pupils in their class. As a result all pupils are enabled to make good progress and to achieve their best, in line with the aims of the school. Teachers make highly effective use of questioning to challenge the most able, and some excellent examples of this were seen, including in a Year 12 English lesson in which carefully posed questions led to an exciting, and increasingly profound, exchange of ideas about the poetry of William Carlos Williams. Teachers are adept in providing support for those with particular learning needs, often by offering different ways of learning so that pupils can use the one that is most accessible to them, and they are very willing to provide individual help after school for pupils who need it, a factor that was appreciated by pupils responding to their pre-inspection questionnaire. As a result, pupils with SEND or EAL are skilfully guided and enabled to succeed. Many lessons make very good use of resources, as in a Year 8 Spanish lesson which used a galaxy of resources in order to provide a fast-moving, varied and enjoyable lesson on the vocabulary of numbers. ICT is well used by teachers to enhance their lessons, as in a Year 9 form period when a short film clip provided a moving illustration of how one person can make a difference to the lives of others, stimulating a thoughtful discussion.
- 3.13 Scrutiny of pupils' books and files revealed the high standard of marking across the school. Marking is regular, makes detailed and constructive comment, and is encouraging. The grades and marks given are well understood by pupils and enable them to know how well they are progressing. Since the last inspection, the school has developed its systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. These systems are fruitfully used in conjunction with the regular staff discussions about pupils' progress to identify individual pupils in need of additional support. The school has also developed good techniques for analyzing examination marks statistically in order to identify pupils whose performance is significantly different to expectations and this exercise is regarded by staff as being very helpful, although its use is still evolving.
- 3.14 Relationships between the pupils and their teachers are very positive, enabling the teaching to be not only purposeful and effective, but also stimulating and enjoyable.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' strong spiritual development is clearly apparent in their confident, well-balanced responses to form-time discussions, assemblies and the religious studies programme. They are quick to take opportunities to explore and express their understanding of the non-material dimension to life in lessons such as PHSE, English and psychology. They appreciate the significance of faith in the lives of many and are aware of how this is manifested in the practices of the major world religions. They express their own beliefs and opinions clearly and tolerantly.
- 4.3 Pupils throughout the school have a very well developed sense of morality. Their awareness of the importance of mutually respectful, strong relationships was borne out in their positive reaction to the school's 'thought for the week' when they contemplated what they could do for others through reflection on inspirational moral leadership. They support charities ranging from the local community emergency food bank to overseas appeals and, each term, money is raised through pupil-led initiatives ranging from cake sales to the 'Wychfactor' talent show.
- 4.4 Pupils display a high level of social development. They are appreciative of the way in which the school community fosters close-knit relationships between pupils of different ages, and between boarding and day pupils. Girls in Years 12 and 13 feel privileged to be able to mentor younger pupils, and embrace leadership through a number of opportunities, such as being spokeswomen at the council and through organising house or form events. They recognise their own growth in self-confidence as a result of these opportunities. In the classroom pupils of all ages are articulate, able to think independently, to share their views and to justify their ideas, and lively debate is a feature of many lessons throughout the school. Their awareness of public services and institutions in England is good, developed through assemblies and lectures, the library newspapers and a range of publications chosen by the pupils, which are keenly read, as is apparent in their choice of newspaper articles for the news board.
- 4.5 Pupils have well developed understanding of both western European and other cultures. The broad cultural mix of the school is celebrated and embraced. In a Year 11 religious studies lesson, a Muslim pupil demonstrated how the veil is worn, leading to discussion about different attitudes across the world towards women wearing the veil. Two girls travelled to Auschwitz for a day during the inspection as part of the school's commitment to support Holocaust Memorial day. Pupils take the opportunities on offer to make use of Oxford's museums and to enjoy the theatrical culture of Stratford-upon-Avon. Pupils are open-minded and curious about the wider world and trips abroad have enabled them to appreciate the cultural magnificence of Rome and Paris first-hand, whilst others have ventured as far afield as Morocco.
- 4.6 The small number of responses to the pupils' pre-inspection questionnaire made it difficult to draw reliable conclusions, but the statements with which most respondents agreed were that teachers give pupils individual help when they need it, teachers help pupils learn, and the school deals well with bullying. Inspection evidence supported these views.

- 4.7 The school's aim of developing young people of integrity, with a strong sense of self-worth, independence of thought, and the confidence to build careers and personal lives that will do them credit, is in large measure achieved.

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

- 4.8 Pastoral care for the pupils is excellent.
- 4.9 The high quality of the care provided is recognised by both parents and their daughters. Subject teachers, form teachers and progress tutors play a central role in supporting the pupils' high levels of personal development. Progress tutors meet regularly with their tutees to set appropriately challenging academic targets and to advise on personalised study strategies. This is one way in which strong, mutually respectful pupil-teacher relationships are built. Older pupils mirror this in their care for younger girls, and kindness is highlighted as an important quality in all associations.
- 4.10 Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits through PHSE lessons and the good selection of well-balanced menus on offer every mealtime. They are offered a range of physical activities, including swimming and occasional evening classes in activities such as yoga, and would appreciate a greater variety still.
- 4.11 The pupils' behaviour in lessons, and as they move around the school, is exemplary. Pupils are confident in the school's ability to deal with any rare unpleasant behaviour wisely, quickly and effectively and the role of senior pupils, working with teaching staff, as arbitrators and guides, is recognised and valued.
- 4.12 Appropriate arrangements are in place to support pupils with SEND; all those identified have appropriate individual education plans and the co-ordinator liaises regularly with teachers to ensure that pupils' needs are understood and met. The school has a suitable plan for the improvement of access for pupils with disabilities.
- 4.13 The school's council is recognised as a valuable institution to encourage the expression of pupils' views. Serving pupils, democratically elected, are proud of their positions and serious about their responsibilities. The council provides an important opportunity for all pupils to participate in the school's decision-making processes.

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

- 4.14 Arrangements to safeguard welfare, health and safety are sound.
- 4.15 The policies and procedures adopted to safeguard pupils are good in most respects. Comprehensive training ensures that all staff have good awareness of child protection matters and know how to respond should an issue arise. The school has rigorous procedures for the safe recruitment of staff and mostly these are well implemented, although checking the identities of a small number of domestic staff supplied by an agency had not been conducted in accordance with requirements.
- 4.16 Measures taken to minimise risk from fire are good. Regular fire evacuation practices occur at varying times of day and are carefully recorded. Fire maintenance equipment is routinely checked and serviced. Portable appliance tests are conducted annually, as was recommended in the last inspection report. Risk assessment is good. Staff are routinely trained in fire procedures and risk awareness.

- 4.17 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are generally good. Clear procedures are established for the management of trips away from school. Comprehensive risk assessments are conducted. Limited arrangements are made for pupils who are unwell. Boarders can see a doctor at school and a suitable protocol has been approved for the dispensing of home remedies and medicines, but no similar protocol exists for the storage and dispensing of controlled drugs. A suitable number of staff is trained in first aid, and their training is kept up-to-date.
- 4.18 The attendance and admission registers are well kept. The attendance register books are kept for at least three years. The admission register has recently been transferred from a book to an electronic version, but arrangements to make a monthly copy of the electronic record and store the copies securely for three years had not yet been implemented.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.19 The overall quality of the boarding is sound.
- 4.20 The outcomes for boarders are good. The pupils talk openly and confidently about their experience of living together, which they describe as being positive, and many spoke about the good friendships that they enjoy with other boarders of all ages. The boarding community comes from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures and the pupils treat one another with consideration and tolerance and a high degree of mutual trust. Girls who board are very supportive of one another, contributing to the development of self-esteem and self-confidence. Older boarders act as house mothers and sisters to new girls, helping them to settle in.
- 4.21 Boarding pupils have good opportunities to make a positive contribution to the community. All boarders are able to suggest outings and activities that they would like. The catering department welcomes, and reacts swiftly to, suggestions for meals that the pupils would like. The boarders' views are conveyed to school staff by their representatives on the school council. Boarders take responsibility for their own rooms and personal laundry, contributing effectively to the development of their independence. Relationships between the girls and the house staff are constructive and based on the staff's very good knowledge of the girls in the house. Relationships between the girls themselves are good and contribute positively to their well-being.
- 4.22 The overall quality of boarding provision and care is sound. The pastoral care provided by the boarding staff is good. The school has an established process for inducting new boarders and the pupils commented that they fitted into school easily and quickly learned the routines. The boarding community is small, allowing each girl to be well known to staff and all the other girls.
- 4.23 The range of activities available to boarders in the evenings is limited, although during the inspection the opportunity to participate in a yoga taster session was very popular. Boarders have access to games rooms, television, the school library and the art room during the evenings. At weekends, outings are arranged and access to local amenities are available.
- 4.24 The accommodation provided is adequate, but it does not benefit from many homely touches. The accommodation for looking after sick boarders is sufficient only to satisfy basic needs of comfort and supervision, and not suitably removed from other boarding accommodation. The showers do not provide appropriate privacy. Facilities for boarders to maintain contact with their families are good. In addition to

their own mobile phones, boarders have access to telephones and computers, some equipped for video conferencing. Years 12 and 13 pupils may have their own laptops or tablets at school. Contact numbers for parents and guardians are available to boarding house staff at all times and parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire said that it is easy to contact the boarding staff when they have need.

- 4.25 Arrangements for ensuring the welfare and safeguarding of boarders are sound. The school has effective policies and procedures for promoting good behaviour and boarders commented favourably on how well they mix with and know one another. The school is committed to act immediately if any incident of unkindness is reported and boarders say that such incidents are infrequent and well handled by the staff. The school's policy and procedures for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils are generally good, though some regulatory deficiencies need to be remedied. All staff have received training in safeguarding.
- 4.26 The leadership and management of the boarding provision are, in most respects, effective. Boarding priorities are clear and the houses fulfil their aim of encouraging the girls to work together. A comprehensive boarding development plan has been agreed and is in the process of being implemented. Comments from the parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they are satisfied or very satisfied that the staff treat the pupils as individuals, that boarding is well organised and managed, that the school keeps the girls safe, that parents can contact the staff easily and that their child's progress and development is helped by the experience of boarding. The least positive response from the parents was to the proposition that the boarding accommodation is comfortable. The inspection finding agreed that the accommodation could be more homely. The recommendations of the last inspection of boarding standards have all been addressed by the school, including the appointment of a governor with particular responsibility for monitoring boarding, but there is still more work to be done to ensure full compliance with the National Minimum Standards.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Overall, the governance is sound.
- 5.2 The governors are hard-working and committed to the school's ethos. They have established effective arrangements to oversee all aspects of the school's life and ensure that it fulfils its aims. Through their finance committee, governors agree budgets, and plan and monitor expenditure prudently, to ensure sufficient resources to support educational and pastoral objectives. The full board monitors educational standards, policies and procedures rigorously. It contains among its number people with considerable professional experience and expertise in education. Although they have yet to articulate a vision for the school's future direction, they have recently appointed an admissions and marketing director and formed a marketing committee to collaborate in presenting the school and its aims to the wider community.
- 5.3 Since the last inspection, the governors have strengthened their insight into the working of the school by nominating individual governors to take a particular interest in aspects of the school's work, monitoring health and safety, child protection and boarding, as instances, and by adopting a formal procedure to review school policies annually, as recommended after the last inspection. These measures have improved the governors' ability to provide encouragement, challenge and stimulus to the school.
- 5.4 The governors are aware of, and diligent about, discharging their responsibilities for ensuring the welfare, health and safety of pupils, including the annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements. However some improvements in relation to regulatory requirements are needed.

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

- 5.5 The leadership and management of the school and the links established with the parents are good.
- 5.6 All those with leadership and management responsibilities provide clear educational direction and promote the aims of the school with considerable unity of purpose. They are very committed to the school's ethos and family atmosphere. Their effectiveness is reflected in the pupils' good academic and other achievements and in the high standard of their personal development and the excellence of pastoral care.
- 5.7 The specific responsibilities of senior managers are not clearly defined so as to ensure their most effective deployment, and the extra-curricular activities programme is not closely overseen and guided by a senior manager. The role of heads of departments to monitor standards is not fully delegated and this inhibits their ability to set standards. The school's size and the cohesion of the staff, however, mean that the informal nature of delegation is largely effective.
- 5.8 School development planning is comprehensive and the result of good collaboration between staff, senior management and governors. It reflects detailed knowledge of the school and its priorities, but lacks a clearly articulated vision to enable the school

to achieve its full potential. The school's self-evaluation is meticulous and shows a shrewd awareness of the school's strengths and areas for development.

- 5.9 The management is conspicuously successful in securing the appointment of well-qualified staff and diligent in ensuring that they receive appropriate training and professional development. In particular, regular whole-school training ensures that all staff are well equipped for their roles in safeguarding, first aid and health and safety. Professional development is supported by a well-established staff appraisal scheme. Lesson observation is an accepted part of school life and helps to ensure the sharing of good practice within and across departments. The school has clear procedures for the safe recruitment of staff so as to ensure the safeguarding of pupils. Senior managers work closely with governors on regulatory compliance.
- 5.10 The great majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire are satisfied with the education and support provided for their children and with the quality of communication with school. Their responses indicated that parents are satisfied that their children are happy and safe in school and are well looked after. A small number of parents commented that the school did not provide sufficient support in special educational needs, but inspection evidence did not support this view. A few parents expressed dissatisfaction with the range of extra-curricular activities provided and the inspection finding was that, although some worthwhile and successful activities flourish, the range of activities is limited.
- 5.11 The school enjoys good links with parents, carers and guardians and, in line with its aim to provide education of the highest quality in a well-rounded and happy environment, welcomes parents' views and their involvement in school events. A suitable complaints procedure is well-publicised to parents, including on the school website, and scrutiny of the school's records confirms that all concerns are resolved to the parents' satisfaction at an early stage.
- 5.12 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. They are welcomed to many events including concerts, the performing arts evenings and the Christmas carol service. They appreciate being involved in the life of the school and some have taken up opportunities to give talks to pupils or to join school trips. The parents' association, the Friends of Wychwood, is successful in raising funds for the school and provides a focus for social events. Each year, they organise the Christmas fair, a summer party and an evening for new parents. New parents are also invited to join their children at an induction afternoon in the summer term.
- 5.13 Parents and prospective parents are provided with all the required information about the school via well-presented printed material, including the prospectus, and the school's website which contains a wealth of information about the school's policies and procedures, as well as news of topical interest. The school magazine, *The Elms*, contains much interesting information about the school's activities, as well as examples of pupils' art and photography work. In addition, regular newsletters are sent to parents, keeping them well informed about events at school.
- 5.14 Reports to parents are informative and positive and provide helpful subject-specific advice, as well as setting targets for further progress. Written reports are sent home at least twice each year as well as progress sheets. Parents are invited to attend an annual parents' evening, which gives them good opportunities to discuss their children's academic and personal development. Effective use is made of e-mail communication, thus ensuring that any concerns raised are speedily addressed.

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