



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
OXFORD HIGH SCHOOL GDST**

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Oxford High School GDST

Full Name of School	Oxford High School GDST
DfE Number	931/6093
Registered Charity Number	306983
Address	Oxford High School GDST Belbroughton Road Oxford Oxfordshire OX2 6XA
Telephone Number	01865 559888
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Email Address	j.carlisle@oxf.gdst.net
Head	Mrs Judith Carlisle
Chair of Governors	Mrs Louise Ansdell
Age Range	4 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	876
Gender of Pupils	Girls
Numbers by Age	4-5 (EYFS): 33 5-11: 276 11-19: 567
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Sian Dawson
EYFS Gender	Girls
Inspection Dates	19 Jan 2016 to 22 Jan 2016

PREFACE

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) Regulations 2015. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI standard inspection was in January to February 2010.

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

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

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

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

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of the local governing board and a governors' representative, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Mrs Cathy Williamson	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Flora Bean	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Miss Naomi Bartholomew	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Clare Dawe	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)
Mr James Burns	Team Inspector (Assistant Head, HMC school)
Mrs Wendy Martin	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school)
Mrs Clare Sherwood	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Michael Taylor	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mrs Isabel Tobias	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mrs Angela Russell	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Oxford High School is an independent day school for girls aged from four to nineteen. It was founded in 1875 and is Oxford's oldest girls' school. The school is accommodated on three sites within walking distance of each other in the residential area of Summertown in north Oxford. The school aims to encourage pupils to develop their self-confidence, to be ambitious in all areas of life and to be aware of the impact of their actions on those they care about, on the wider world and on themselves.
- 1.2 The school is a member of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), whose council is legally responsible for its governance, and operates within the Trust's policy and planning structures. A school governing board (SGB) has no legal powers but provides support, challenge and local oversight. The chair and most members of the SGB, and the chair and chief executive of the Trust, have been appointed since the previous inspection. The personnel and structure of the senior leadership team (SLT) for the whole school have also changed and a new head was appointed in 2011. New buildings housing classrooms, a hall, drama facilities, a dining hall, a lecture theatre, language rooms and an administration centre have been opened.
- 1.3 The junior school has 309 pupils, of whom 33 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It occupies two large Edwardian buildings in Woodstock Road (Reception and Years 1 and 2) and Bardwell Road (Years 3 to 6). Since the previous inspection, the school has closed its Nursery and no longer accepts boys into the junior school. The senior school educates 567 pupils on a modern site in Belbroughton Road; this includes 147 in the sixth form. Most pupils are from business and professional families living in and around Oxford and represent a mix of British ethnicities.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the junior school is above the national average, and in the senior school the profile is well above the national average. There are nine pupils in the junior school and fifty in the senior school who have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Of these, two in the junior school and thirty-three in the senior school receive learning support from the school. Eleven pupils in the junior school and four pupils in the senior school have English as an additional language (EAL), all of whom receive support for their language development. No pupil has an education, health and care plan.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of pupils' achievements is exceptional. Oxford High School is highly successful in meeting its aim to encourage girls to be ambitious in all areas of life and has fully met the recommendation from the previous inspection to maintain the high standards of learning and personal development. Pupils reach very high standards in their GCSE, International GCSE and A-level examinations and in the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), and most are successful in achieving their first choice of course at highly selective universities. Pupils throughout the school, including in the EYFS, have excellent subject knowledge and their reading, writing and speaking skills are highly developed. They think clearly and logically, and have excellent organisational skills. Pupils' creative and sporting achievements are exceptionally strong. The excellent, highly flexible curriculum and extensive extra-curricular programme enable pupils to succeed in a wide range of intellectual, physical, creative, social and cultural activities. Excellent, high quality teaching encourages pupils to research and think for themselves, and to reach the highest standards whether working individually or collaboratively. The very large majority of lessons are extremely well adapted to the needs of pupils, ensuring rapid progress for all. In a very small minority of lessons observed in the junior school, teaching did not always support the needs of the least able pupils. Pupils have exceptional learning skills and their positive, confident attitude ensures excellent progress. More able pupils and those with SEND or EAL make rapid progress that is at least as good as their peers. The vast majority of pupils said that their teachers help them to learn and that they are making good progress in their work.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. Throughout the school, pupils are mature, self-confident, caring individuals who value and respect themselves and other people. Pastoral care and welfare, health and safety arrangements are excellent, promoting a safe and caring environment for pupils. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they regard learning as a collaborative venture with their teachers. From their earliest years, pupils are highly inclusive and quick to challenge discrimination and inequality. They show their concern for others in their community and charity work. They understand the values and institutions of their own culture and respect those of others. When they leave school, pupils are extremely well prepared to take their place in the wider world and to contribute positively to society.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is excellent. The GDST provides excellent oversight of welfare, health and safety requirements, and safeguarding policy and practice are rigorously scrutinised. An annual review enables the Trust to offer well-informed challenge to the school. The GDST is responsible for the third stage of the school's complaints policy. Recent practice has been fully compliant although one exception to the policy was permitted on a reasonable basis. Since the previous inspection, pupils and staff have benefited from the GDST's excellent strategic investments in staffing, building and resources; the recommendation that EYFS staff should develop their qualifications and skills has been fully met. The SGB provides strong local support and advice to the school. The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent throughout the school. Leaders ensure that the school meets its aims through strategic planning, policy implementation and extensive monitoring. A very large majority of parents said that they are satisfied with their links with the school and with information about their children's progress.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Provide further opportunities for all staff in the junior school to share best practice in meeting the needs of all pupils, particularly the less able.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is exceptional.
- 3.2 The school's aim to encourage girls to be ambitious in all areas of life is achieved most successfully in the outstanding achievements of its pupils, so meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection to maintain high standards of learning.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, children enjoy their learning. They think carefully when answering open-ended questions and work together well. They write increasingly complex words using their excellent phonic knowledge and can order two items by weight or capacity. They are active learners who investigate and explore with increasing independence and creativity, and their enthusiasm is evident, as when they sing in two parts with skill and confidence.
- 3.4 Pupils throughout the school have excellent knowledge and skills, combined with a profound understanding of their subjects. They are clear and confident speakers, as observed in an erudite sixth-form discussion on the situation of minority Christian groups in the Middle East. Pupils have exceptionally strong reading and writing skills. They think clearly and logically, applying mathematical skills accurately, for example when Year 3 pupils cracked a code to find their missing toy. Pupils' achievements in creative subjects are extremely high, with the most able producing work of exceptional quality. Many pupils reach high standards in sporting activities, with team and individual successes at local, national and international level.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are available. In the junior school, standardised tests indicate that pupils perform higher than age-related expectations in English and mathematics. In the senior school, results at GCSE have been exceptional in relation to the national average for maintained schools and above the average for pupils in maintained selective schools. International GCSE results have generally been higher than UK norms. Results at A level are exceptional in relation to the national average for maintained schools and well above it for maintained selective schools. Over these years, ninety per cent of GCSE grades have been A* or A, a proportion further improved in 2015. Twenty-five per cent of A-level pupils also took the EPQ and all achieved an A*.
- 3.6 In the EYFS, children, including those with SEND or EAL and the more able, make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. Nationally standardised measures indicate that progress is good in the junior school and high in the senior school in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. In the sixth form, standardised measures and inspection evidence indicate high progress. The school's data indicates that pupils with SEND make faster progress than their peers and that the progress of more able pupils and those with EAL is in line with their peers.
- 3.7 Pupils excel in extra-curricular activities. Junior pupils were finalists in the GDST Young Choir of the Year competition and the chamber choir has repeatedly won at a local music festival. Senior school pupils achieve high standards in a wide range of academic and creative areas, including winning a national Chinese reading competition and the GDST Bake Off contest. Sixth-form pupils are successful in university essay competitions, have won the National Cipher Challenge and

showcased work at the Young Furniture Makers Exhibition. Young Enterprise teams regularly reach national finals.

- 3.8 Most junior school pupils transfer successfully into the senior school. A very large majority of sixth-form pupils are accepted on to their first-choice course, mostly at highly selective universities. In response to the questionnaires, almost all pupils said that they are making good progress and most parents were pleased with their children's progress. Pupils with SEND or EAL achieve highly in their academic studies and extra-curricular activities, alongside their peers.
- 3.9 Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptional. They enjoy their lessons and are fully engaged, whether working together or individually. They are quietly confident when presented with new ideas and concepts, so that progress for all is rapid. Pupils have excellent organisational skills, running many clubs and activities, and they successfully initiate and organise charity events.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 In the EYFS, a wide range of educational programmes linked to the seven areas of learning provides appropriately resourced and stimulating activities, with specialist teaching in music and physical education. This gives all children, including those with SEND or EAL and the more able, every opportunity to do well, to reach the expected levels of development and to be ready for the next stage in their learning.
- 3.12 In the junior and senior schools there is extensive coverage of all the requisite areas of learning, above and beyond those demanded by the National Curriculum. All aspects of personal, social, health and cultural education (PSHCE) are successfully explored during tutor time, and there is an outstanding programme of lectures and workshops, carefully designed to meet pupils' needs. The sixth-form programme is extensive; there is a wide range of academic courses accommodating individual choices and pupils are strongly encouraged to pursue their own academic interests. The pupils appreciate, and make good use of, the additional freedom and take full advantage of the many academic and leadership opportunities.
- 3.13 Curricular provision is extensive and focused on meeting the needs of the full range of ages and abilities. Academic support for pupils with SEND is well organised through the use of specific education plans. The needs of pupils with EAL are carefully assessed and, where necessary, are met through specific education plans and English lessons linked to their academic needs. Throughout the school, there are excellent opportunities for the most able to challenge themselves and to extend their own learning. The EPQ is offered in the sixth form, and pupils throughout the school can take part in a wide range of local and national qualifications and competitions. The senior library offers excellent provision as a research base for individuals and classes, as well as for the popular and successful quiz teams. The curriculum fully supports the aims of the school to develop confident and courageous women. Curricular and extra-curricular provision is regularly reviewed, often in consultation with pupils, and appropriate changes made.
- 3.14 Extra-curricular provision is extensive. There are many sporting opportunities for pupils of all levels of ability, from those who simply want to enjoy sport to those who wish to take their skills to county, regional and national level. Pupils benefit from opportunities provided by the Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The provision for art, drama and music is excellent throughout the

school. There is an extensive range of day trips and residential visits, which are highly popular and foster excellent personal development. In response to the questionnaire, a very few parents commented that there is not enough extra-curricular provision in the junior school. Inspection evidence showed this not to be the case: a wide range of clubs is provided, from gardening and felt club to chess, judo and football.

- 3.15 Links with the community are excellent. Children in the EYFS enjoy visits from both a doctor and a dentist, and older pupils take full advantage of the school's proximity to the universities and other institutions in Oxford. There are opportunities for pupils to show their care for others. In the EYFS, for example, children take part in a skipping challenge to raise money for their chosen charity. Many older pupils benefit from the experience of running science classes for local primary school children, and they work alongside pupils from local schools for senior drama productions. The careers programme is outstanding, featuring many opportunities for pupils to explore the world of work.
- 3.16 Pupils have excellent opportunities, both in curricular and extra-curricular activities, to develop an understanding of fundamental British values. They analyse the role of the European Union in geography and have the opportunity to participate in the Model United Nations organisation. There is a balanced presentation of political views; for example, pupils studying politics evaluated arguments for and against Liberal Democrat actions during the coalition.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.17 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.18 Teaching fully supports the aims of the school by helping pupils to become self-confident, ambitious and independent learners. Throughout the school almost all teaching is characterised by imaginative planning and a firm grasp of the pupils' academic needs. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and engage pupils fully so that they participate well and make rapid progress. Teachers in the EYFS have very high expectations; they enthuse the children and skilfully motivate them to learn. Teaching staff are ably supported by knowledgeable teaching assistants, and adults regularly engage in meaningful conversation with the children, carefully waiting for them to respond when answering open-ended questions. Throughout the school teaching demonstrates creativity, enthusing pupils and developing in them a love for learning; for example, in Year 10, a Jacques Prévert poem extended pupils' cultural knowledge as they reinforced their understanding of the past tense. In the sixth form teachers encourage and inspire pupils, extending their understanding and knowledge well beyond examination requirements.
- 3.19 In the large majority of lessons observed teaching was excellent, with all lessons of at least a good standard. Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent and, through the creation of an atmosphere of mutual trust, teaching provides a strong learning environment that enables pupils to make rapid progress. Lessons are lively and challenging. Throughout the school, teachers' skilful use of open-ended questioning challenges pupils to think for themselves; pupils are encouraged to be reflective and to take responsibility for their own learning. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of pupils indicated that their teachers help them to learn, and most said that their teachers encourage them to work independently.

- 3.20 Throughout the school, teaching caters extremely well for the many high achievers, with extension tasks and challenging activities included in the planning and delivery of lessons. In most lessons, teaching is well adapted to the full range of pupils' learning needs. In the EYFS, teachers provide well for different levels of ability, for example by arranging group work for phonics activities. All staff know how to promote the learning and development of each child and informative assessment provides clear information, enabling excellent plans to be made where every child's needs and interests are taken into account. In the senior school, provision for pupils with SEND or EAL is excellent and well monitored. Teachers provide a range of tasks that successfully challenge all pupils; freedom is frequently given to the more able, and support provided for the less able and those with particular needs. Provision in the junior school for pupils with SEND or EAL is good. Effective strategies for meeting individual needs were observed in many lessons, such as mathematics. In a small minority of lessons in the junior school, provision to meet the needs of all pupils, particularly the less able, was not as effective. Throughout the school, assessment is thorough and provides clear information on pupils' progress for staff, pupils and parents. Most marking is good and provides formative comments and effective feedback, enabling pupils to make excellent progress.
- 3.21 Teaching is well supported by a large range of high quality resources. In the EYFS, excellent resources are accessible to the children and provide them with many opportunities for active learning. The well-equipped senior school library provides an excellent setting for pupils to undertake research and enables independent learning to take place. Teachers prepare many of their own original, highly effective resources; excellent examples were seen in history, geography, English and modern foreign languages. These high quality resources ensure that lessons contain academic rigour and foster independent and co-operative learning. The variety of resources employed by teachers throughout the school leads to stimulating discussions and involves pupils in a great deal of collaborative work. For example, in a Year 7 science lesson pupils used a range of apparatus to develop their investigative skills by testing differences between green and red apples.
- 3.22 Teaching promotes tolerance and respect, and is non-partisan in the coverage of political issues.

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 pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils throughout the school are mature, highly articulate and caring individuals. They are self-confident, unafraid of challenge, know themselves well and have an infectious enthusiasm for life and learning. They value and respect themselves, as well as others, thus fulfilling the school's aim for them to be aware of the impact of their actions on those around them.
- 4.3 Pupils' behaviour is exemplary from their earliest years and they have a clear sense of right and wrong. In response to the questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents said that the school consistently achieves high standards of behaviour. Children in the EYFS develop skills for the future; for example, they understand that all must take responsibility and work together when clearing up. They learn about British values of respect and tolerance by listening to others carefully and playing together well. They vote to decide which poem to read and discuss how to resolve conflict using characters in a story. They make appropriate choices about healthy food at lunchtime. Their personal development is strong and, as a result, they are extremely well prepared for their transition into Year 1.
- 4.4 Pupils have a highly developed understanding of a wide range of cultures and faiths, and are tolerant towards those who are different from them. They discuss sensitive issues with insight and empathy in assemblies, PSHCE and religious studies lessons. In the EYFS, staff actively promote diversity and plan opportunities for the children to learn about others from different countries. Senior pupils were challenged by the vision of Malala Yousafzai for improving the world for young women, as part of their studies on human rights.
- 4.5 Pupils are sensitive to non-material aspects of life and show well-developed aesthetic and spiritual awareness. For example, a Year 9 art class drew inspiration from a recent trip to Coventry Cathedral as pupils designed and made pieces of pottery.
- 4.6 Pupils demonstrate a compassion for others. For example, junior pupils worked well together to support a charity providing assistance dogs, choirs sing in nearby residential homes and sixth-form pupils help in local food banks.
- 4.7 Pupils show initiative and accept responsibility willingly as they contribute positively to the school community. They learn the value of democratic institutions as they raise concerns through the school council, vote for pupil representatives and take part in school consultations. They understand and combat discrimination, actively seeking to raise awareness of vulnerable groups and encouraging one another to be inclusive. Pupils demonstrate excellent leadership skills as prefects and 'form buddies'. Senior pupils initiate and organise a wide variety of extra-curricular activities, and younger pupils develop their leadership skills as house point monitors and by leading tours for visitors.
- 4.8 The wide-ranging PSHCE programme, supplemented well with talks by carefully chosen outside speakers, enables pupils to develop a clear understanding of British values. Year 6 pupils learn about the civil and criminal law of England, and a visit by a local policeman helps the EYFS children to understand and respect British

institutions. Pupils have a thoughtful and perceptive awareness of the public institutions and services of England, gained, for example, in an English lesson on Arthur Miller's play *A View from the Bridge*, where they compared legal and natural justice. They are encouraged to explore a range of political views and are confident in articulating their own beliefs, even if they differ from others, for example in a tutorial discussion on fracking.

- 4.9 Pupils' personal development is excellent. They understand and embrace their strengths and weaknesses, knowing that they do not have to be perfect in order to be successful. When they leave the school, they are equipped with resourcefulness and resilience, ready to take their place in the wider world and to make a positive contribution to society.

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

- 4.10 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.11 The school provides highly effective support and guidance for all its pupils. In the EYFS, each child has a key person providing excellent support. Junior class teachers ensure that the pastoral care of their pupils is a priority. Small tutor groups in the senior school, supported by strong pastoral systems, ensure that pupils' needs are identified and that concerns are dealt with at an early stage. Careers advice for senior pupils is outstanding. School counsellors provide confidential support and the vast majority of pupils said that they have someone to turn to. Almost all parents said that their children are well looked after at school.
- 4.12 Relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves are excellent. In response to the questionnaire, the vast majority of pupils said that they enjoy school and feel well cared for. In the EYFS, committed and caring staff know the children extremely well: children are happy, feel safe and appear emotionally secure. For older pupils, PSHCE lessons provide excellent opportunities for dialogue, and these promote supportive relationships and help to encourage and develop pupils' self-esteem.
- 4.13 The school has clear expectations of good behaviour, encouraged by a wide variety of rewards, certificates and celebratory occasions, such as the EYFS 'gold book' assemblies attended by parents. In response to the questionnaire, a few pupils said that rewards and sanctions are not given fairly. Inspection evidence showed that fair systems are in place, with many opportunities to gain rewards. Sanctions are rarely necessary, a point endorsed by pupils in discussions, who said that they are fairly applied.
- 4.14 Pupils and parents say that bullying incidents are extremely rare and when they do occur the school handles them swiftly and effectively. In the junior school a 'worry box' and 'time to talk' cards help to foster supportive and positive attitudes amongst pupils. Throughout the school, assemblies help to promote tolerance and kindness, and give pupils strategies for dealing with such things as cyber-bullying.
- 4.15 Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits and lunches are nutritious. Children in the EYFS enjoy a fruit snack and understand the importance of washing hands before eating. The excellent outdoor facilities and broad programme of sports and activities ensure that regular exercise is undertaken by all pupils.
- 4.16 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.

- 4.17 In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils said that the school does not ask for their opinions or respond to them. Inspection found that there are many opportunities for pupils to express their views, through surveys, consultation exercises, school councils and other representative roles. For example, junior pupils trialled a new school uniform and senior pupils have helped to design the new sixth-form curriculum.

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

- 4.18 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.19 Arrangements for safeguarding are thorough and fully in line with current statutory requirements. In the EYFS, adults diligently ensure that children are always well supervised. Good attendance is encouraged and parents are contacted if a child is absent. Adults are alert to possible risks that the children may face and have had recent training to recognise, and protect children from, extremist views. All staff, including those in the EYFS, receive high quality training in safeguarding procedures. This includes training on e-safety and extremism. The whole-school safeguarding policy clearly explains the actions to be taken in the event of any concern. Excellent links are maintained with the local safeguarding board and welfare agencies. Safer recruitment procedures are followed meticulously and accurately recorded. Pupils' safety, including e-safety, is given a high priority through careful supervision, curriculum teaching and co-operation with parents. An overwhelming majority of parents said that their children feel safe at school.
- 4.20 Highly effective arrangements for welfare, health and safety ensure that pupils and staff are well cared for. Policies comply with current regulations, are implemented effectively and are reviewed regularly. The Trust monitors and reviews all documentation and procedures to ensure that the school meets all regulatory requirements. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Regular testing of alarms and fire evacuation drills are undertaken; outcomes are effectively recorded and monitored to identify and maintain good practice. All school grounds and buildings are well maintained.
- 4.21 Thorough risk assessments are carried out for premises, for activities in school and for all trips and visits. The health and safety team includes members from all areas of the school; they meet regularly and provide highly effective oversight of the school's provision and activities.
- 4.22 Excellent care is taken of pupils who are ill or injured. Staff in the EYFS are trained in paediatric first aid, and the strong relationships between staff and parents ensure that the children's dietary and medical needs are well met. There are well-equipped medical rooms on all three sites and suitably trained staff support the health needs of all pupils well. Accident records confirm that procedures are effectively followed and they are consistently monitored to reduce risk. Excellent arrangements are in place to ensure easy access to buildings for any pupil with a physical disability.
- 4.23 Admission and attendance registers are suitably monitored, maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The GDST provides highly effective oversight, ensuring that the school meets its aims. The Trust's annual review is extremely thorough, covering every aspect of school life; educational standards are carefully scrutinised and challenging targets set. Careful financial planning ensures that investment in staffing, resources and buildings is carefully targeted. Since the previous inspection, the senior school site has undergone considerable development, the senior leadership team has been expanded and EYFS staffing ratios have improved.
- 5.3 Trust officers visit regularly to check regulatory compliance and to ensure that the school maintains high standards of health and safety. The Trust handles the final stage of the school's complaints policy and it is its responsibility to convene a panel, which includes an independent member, to hear the complaint. Recent practice has been fully compliant although one exception to the policy was permitted on a reasonable basis.
- 5.4 Governance of the EYFS is excellent. The annual review process has ensured that all adults have relevant EYFS qualifications and have access to many excellent opportunities to further their qualifications and skills, so meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection. The Trust is meticulous in its oversight of safeguarding, ensuring that designated safeguarding leaders are appropriately trained and that there is regular contact with the school about safeguarding cases and issues. It promotes the well-being of the pupils by interviewing them and staff about their understanding of safeguarding issues, so enabling the council to carry out the annual safeguarding review most effectively. These close relationships enable the Trust to offer well-informed challenge to the senior leadership team, encouraging innovation and development, such as the new sixth-form curriculum.
- 5.5 The members of the SGB have a wide range of expertise, and their local knowledge enables them to offer excellent support and advice to the school. They meet termly, receiving detailed reports on all aspects of school life, enabling them to gain a thorough understanding of the school, and they work with the Trust to further the school's development.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 At all levels of responsibility and across all sections, including the EYFS, the leadership and management fulfil the aims of the school and discharge their delegated responsibilities, particularly those for strategic planning, policy implementation and the safeguarding of children, highly effectively. Since the previous inspection, the school's management structure has been renewed and expanded; leadership staff in all parts of the school work very closely together to realise whole-school strategic aims and have ensured that the recommendations from the previous inspection have been met.
- 5.8 The school has a strong and clear educational vision to educate highly academic girls in a holistic way to enable them to become bold and confident learners. This vision, which emanates from the GDST, is understood and endorsed by the whole staff. It is achieved through thorough strategic planning, which is a strength of the school, with input from staff and pupils. The senior and junior strategic plans identify school priorities very clearly, and have been most effective in helping to achieve continuous school improvement and very happy staff and pupil bodies. In the EYFS, for example, adults provide a welcoming, and stimulating environment where equality is promoted and where children are inclusive of one another, regardless of faith or cultural background. Staff in the EYFS meet regularly to evaluate the provision, educational programmes and planning are carefully monitored, and clear targets are set to ensure further improvement. For example, EYFS classrooms are now located together on the ground floor, with easy access to the well-resourced outdoor learning environment.
- 5.9 The head and SLT are highly effective in fulfilling their roles. They lead policy making and review, and conduct a very comprehensive system of annual departmental review. This includes lesson observations, work scrutiny and pupil interviews, and ensures thorough consideration by the SLT of departmental performance.
- 5.10 Middle managers throughout the school are aware of development priorities and are fully committed to achieving them. Since the previous inspection, they have begun taking more responsibility for implementing, monitoring, self-evaluation and development and, as a result, departmental self-review is becoming more established. It includes the outcomes of work scrutiny, lesson observations and feedback from pupils.
- 5.11 Staff surveys, regular briefings, and staff and curriculum meetings achieve very good communication throughout the school and focus upon gathering the 'staff voice' and identifying development priorities. As a result staff are well informed, particularly about pastoral concerns, and initiatives, such as a new digital strategy, senior school timetable and curriculum structure and staff well-being benefits, have been introduced.
- 5.12 The annual process of individual professional review and target setting contributes to the school's strong culture of regular self-assessment. It has a very positive impact on the learning and development of the pupils. This high quality, rigorous system is in place for all teaching and support staff.

- 5.13 The school appoints and retains staff of a very high quality. Newly appointed teachers are required to undergo a thorough process of induction into the policies and practices of the school. All staff are required to keep up to date with policy reviews and sign to confirm that they have read them. Background checks on new staff and governors are carried out promptly and all aspects of recruitment procedures are robust. All staff, including those in the EYFS, receive appropriate training in safeguarding and welfare, health and safety. Staff at all levels and in all sections of the school benefit from a wide range of school, external and Trust opportunities for training and professional development, and these are warmly appreciated by the staff.
- 5.14 The school benefits from the excellent contribution made by non-teaching staff involved in catering, cleaning, premises and administration. They provide high quality support to pupils and enable the school to run very efficiently.
- 5.15 The school is very successful at instilling in its pupils values that encourage respect for others and an understanding of democracy. Staff in the EYFS promote equality and inclusiveness, and these values are very evident in the ethos of the whole school and in all the interactions and activities witnessed by inspectors.
- 5.16 Almost all parents are very satisfied with the education and support the school offers their children. In response to the questionnaire a very large majority were pleased with their children's progress and care.
- 5.17 Throughout the school, parents receive comprehensive fortnightly information bulletins containing reviews of recent achievements as well as details of forthcoming activities and events. Communication is virtually paperless and parents appreciate being able to receive information digitally. In the senior school, parents can communicate with teachers by email and the school aims to respond within 24 hours.
- 5.18 Parents say that the school, in line with its aims, puts the pupils first and are confident that it prioritises their children's well-being and safety. Children in the EYFS with additional needs receive excellent support as a result of strong, efficient partnerships between the school, parents, the local authority and outside agencies. Tutors and heads of year in the senior school and class teachers in the junior school work closely with parents to deal with any issues that may arise concerning a pupil's academic progress or well-being. Most parents value the ease with which they can contact the school. A very small minority of parents indicated the school has not handled their concerns well. Inspection evidence showed that there are clear procedures for dealing with any concerns or complaints. Recent practice has been fully compliant although one exception to the policy was permitted on a reasonable basis.
- 5.19 A few parents indicated in response to the questionnaire said that the school does not encourage them to be involved in events and other aspects of its work. Inspectors found that there are many opportunities for parents to be involved. The parent-teacher association organises many very popular social and fund-raising events, including well-attended fairs and fetes and a fireworks display. Other parents enjoy the many excellent opportunities available to attend productions and concerts. The visionary careers programme is actively supported by parents, who offer their considerable wisdom and advice in preparing girls for a wide range of careers. In the junior school, pupils enjoy the assistance of parents on a wide range of trips and visits. Recently, Year 6 pupils have benefited from learning about the

passions and careers of some parents, in support of their study of 'The Modern Woman'.

- 5.20 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school.
- 5.21 A few parents in response to the questionnaire said that they were not satisfied with the information they receive about their children's progress. Inspection evidence showed that, throughout the school, parents are well informed of the progress of their children through regular grade sheets and reports. Senior school handbooks outline a process of personal review by pupils and subsequent mentoring sessions with tutors, which precedes the publication of reports. Parents are then invited to respond. Senior school reports are fully detailed, contain information about pupils' progress and set appropriate targets. Junior school reports describe progress and set targets but some contain less detail. All parents have the opportunity to meet teachers in person at parents' evenings at least once a year. Parents of children in the EYFS have many informal and formal opportunities to talk with teachers. Welcome evenings and parent workshops ensure that they are well informed and welcomed. In the junior school, teachers are often in the playground at the end of the school day, when parents are able to discuss their children on a less formal basis.

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