



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

BETHANY SCHOOL

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Bethany School

Full Name of School	Bethany School
DfE Number	886/6036
Registered Charity Number	307937
Address	Bethany School Goudhurst Cranbrook Kent TN17 1LB
Telephone Number	01580 211273
Fax Number	01580 211151
Email Address	hmsec@bethanyschool.org.uk
Headmaster	Mr Francie Healy
Chair of Governors	Mr Roger Stubbs
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	345
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (242 boys; 103 girls)
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 218
Number of Boarders	Total: 127
	Full: 90 Weekly: 37
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 2014. 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 boarding intermediate inspection was in October 2013 and the previous ISI full standard inspection was in March 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.

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.

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 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

Mrs Roberta Georghiou	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Deborah Leonard	Team Inspector (Headmistress, GSA school)
Mr Nicholas Marchant	Team Inspector (Housemaster, HMC school)
Mrs Helen Wainwright	Team Inspector (Deputy Headteacher, Society of Heads school)
Mr Michael Windsor	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Ms Myra Rodgers	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mr Paul Johnstone	Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Head, COBIS school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	8
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	9
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	10
(d) The quality of boarding	11
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	14
(a) The quality of governance	14
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	14

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bethany School was founded in 1866 by Joseph Kendon as a boarding school for boys from the East End of London. It is now a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils from 11 to 18 years, overseen by a board of governors. It is situated on a 60-acre site in the Weald of Kent, close to the town of Goudhurst.
- 1.2 The school is committed to giving young people in a changing world an education for life, set on firm foundations of Christian values. Its goal is to ensure that all pupils are able to unlock their full potential, both academically and on a personal level, and leave fully prepared for the next stages of their lives.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection a new headmaster and members of the senior management team have been appointed. A new accommodation block has been built for sixth formers and three of the boarding houses have been refurbished.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 345 pupils on roll, 242 boys and 103 girls. Of these, 127 were weekly or full boarders and 113 were in the sixth form. The majority of the pupils are of white British origin. Amongst the boarding pupils, a majority are from overseas. Of these, the largest group is from Hong Kong and mainland China. Day pupils travel to the school from neighbouring towns and villages in Kent. The school has five boarding houses, of which one, for sixth-form pupils, is co-educational. All pupils belong to one of the houses.
- 1.5 The ability profile of pupils in the senior school is broadly in line with the national average, with a wide spread of abilities represented. The ability profile of pupils in the sixth form is slightly below the national average for pupils in sixth form education. Of the 211 pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 124 receive additional support from the school. Three pupils have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. There are 45 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) and receive additional support from the school.
- 1.6 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 Pupils are well educated. They benefit from a broad curriculum and excellent extra-curricular activities. Relationships between pupils and teachers are highly positive and encourage pupils to become confident learners. Teaching is good, often characterised by a swift pace and the use of creative and stimulating resources. Teachers have thorough subject knowledge. On a few occasions lessons are too teacher led and lack challenge and pace, which hinders pupils' progress. Pupils employ information and communication technology (ICT) confidently but its use is often directed by the teacher. These shortcomings inhibit effective independent learning. Pupils with SEND or EAL make good progress because they are well supported by teaching that recognises their individual needs. Arrangements for the most able pupils have limited effect because teaching does not always include work of sufficient challenge to stretch them and the availability of extension activities is inconsistent.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. Most pupils display a mature and considerate attitude to others. They appreciate the cultural diversity of the school and are keen to learn about faiths and traditions from one another. There are excellent arrangements to care for the pupils. Staff know the pupils extremely well and provide them with a high level of individual support. The house system provides them with the opportunity to build friendships across year groups. Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good. Recruitment checks on staff are appropriately made but the recording of these has not always been meticulous. All errors had been rectified before the end of the inspection. The quality of boarding is good and allows pupils to develop confidence, tolerance and independence. The medical centre is well equipped and provides separate accommodation for girls and boys, which meets a recommendation of the previous inspection. Boarders enjoy some excellent facilities. The quality of food is variable, demonstrating that a recommendation of the previous inspection has not been fully met. The provision of snacks and water is ample, thus fulfilling part of the same recommendation.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management, including links with parents, are good overall. Governors provide adequate oversight of the school and support and challenge for the school's management. An annual review of safeguarding takes place. Minutes of governors' meetings reflect that this is thoroughly carried out; this meets a recommendation of the previous boarding welfare inspection. Oversight of the recording of recruitment checks on staff has not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency in the single central register of staff appointments, and in records of staff safeguarding training. In addition, prior to the inspection, some policies did not fully reflect requirements. Governors have ambitious plans for the school and fulfil their responsibilities for educational standards, planning and investment. Leadership staff set a clear direction for the school and are effective in monitoring and self-evaluation. They have addressed successfully two recommendations of the previous standard inspection by enhancing the role of housemasters and housemistresses and by evaluating the way in which tutors are deployed. Priorities have been set for further pastoral development and achieving greater consistency and sharing of good practice. The school has excellent relationships with parents, who are actively involved in the life of the school and extremely positive about all aspects of their children's education.

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.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Increase the opportunities provided in teaching for pupils to become more independent in their learning.
 2. Ensure that all of the most able pupils have opportunities to extend their capabilities and that teaching provides them with appropriately challenging activities.
 3. Monitor the recording of staff recruitment checks and safeguarding training for staff more systematically and with greater care.
 4. Ensure that the provision of high quality, varied and nutritious food is consistent at all meals.

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 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims to ensure that all are able to unlock their full potential academically.
- 3.3 The pupils develop good knowledge, understanding and skill in curricular and extra-curricular activities. They are confident in speaking. Their listening skills are more variable and dependent upon their levels of concentration. When they pay close attention they can develop complex arguments. For example, younger pupils explored one another's ideas to reach a sophisticated understanding of the nature of comedy in English. Pupils are competent in their reading and writing. They can reason logically. For example, while building robots they solved problems associated with remote control. Independent thought in written work is less evident because exercises set do not always encourage such an approach. Pupils display well-developed creative skills. A-level textiles sketchbooks are completed imaginatively and garments are meticulously produced. Most pupils apply confident mathematical skills. They are proficient in ICT, using it for word processing and research, and to maintain data and organise their work, when teaching encourages this. Pupils enjoy sport and are confident in most games.
- 3.4 A broad and varied programme of extra-curricular activities allows pupils to develop their skills and talents to high standards. Around a quarter of the pupils play a musical instrument to a good standard. Pupils achieve success in speech and drama examinations. They have gained awards in mathematics challenges at all ages. Pupils achieve well in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. In sport, pupils gain county representative honours and occasionally have achieved national representation, for example in football.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been in line with the national average for all maintained schools. Most pupils reaching the end of Year 11 proceed to the sixth form, the large majority within the school; a few leave to take up apprenticeships. Results at A level have been in line with the national average for maintained schools. The majority of sixth-form pupils gain places at university or on art foundation courses, some after a Gap Year. A few move into employment or the armed forces.
- 3.6 The level of attainment at GCSE, supported by standardised measures of progress, indicates that pupils make good progress in the senior school. This is confirmed by lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work. The level of attainment at A level and standardised measures of progress indicate that pupils make progress in the sixth form that is appropriate in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. Evidence from lessons and work scrutiny shows that, currently, pupils in the sixth form are making good progress overall.
- 3.7 The achievement of pupils with SEND is good, confirmed by standardised data and performance in lessons. They achieve highly in many areas and in line with their peers in public examinations, indicating good progress. Pupils with EAL become competent in English and achieve in line with their peers in public examinations,

often with notable success at A level in mathematics and science. The achievement of the most able pupils overall is in line with expectations.

- 3.8 Pupils have mostly positive attitudes to their work and their involvement in activities. They take considerable effort with their work, often presenting it to a high standard. They work well with one another and respond positively to their teachers. The pupils participate enthusiastically in their extra-curricular activities and enjoy new challenges.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The curriculum is broad and fully supports the school's aims. It is regularly reviewed and enhanced to provide suitable choices for pupils of all ages, abilities and needs. It covers the requisite areas of learning and ensures that pupils acquire speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills.
- 3.11 In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum includes the National Curriculum subjects. The majority of pupils study French. Those pupils with SEND for whom it is appropriate receive support from specialist learning support staff instead of studying French. All pupils in Year 7 gain experience in Mandarin, and Spanish is introduced in Year 9. Some of the most able pupils work towards the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). In Years 9 to 11 all pupils, including those with SEND or EAL, follow GCSE courses. All take a core of subjects, which includes separate sciences, and then choose from a further 14 subjects. Those with EAL study for external qualifications in English. Setting enables particular provision for more able pupils; those in the top sets take English literature and statistics examinations.
- 3.12 In the sixth form, most pupils follow A-level courses, selecting from over 20 subjects. In addition, the school offers BTEC courses in physical education and music. Some provision is made for more able, gifted and talented pupils, including working towards the EPQ, and further mathematics. The school's scholars' programme is designed to challenge and extend these pupils across the age range but it is not available to all. The Pengelly Society invites specialists to speak to the sixth form on a range of interesting subjects throughout the year. Balance is maintained in any presentation of political issues.
- 3.13 The well-planned programme in personal, social, health and cultural education reflects the school's aims and encourages respect for others. Careers guidance includes advice when pupils are making choices; for example, pupils in Year 11 are helped to find work experience. A well-structured programme provides guidance for entry to university and active assistance for those pupils considering alternative career paths, such as post-18 apprenticeships.
- 3.14 All pupils are involved in the excellent extra-curricular programme, which is wide ranging and comprehensive. They take part in activities in support of the curriculum. Pupils have visited chemistry festivals, and they participate in mathematics challenges and a national science, technology, engineering and mathematics competition. Opportunities to develop business skills are provided through Young Enterprise and the Apprentice Challenge. School plays, theatre visits and masterclasses, for example in directing, add to pupils' experience in English and drama. Younger pupils learn to build and program robots, survive in the outdoors using bushcraft skills and publish an online magazine.

3.15 All pupils are involved in the sporting programme, which includes recreational sports and competitive fixtures. Many Year 10 pupils take part in the DofE at bronze level, with a few continuing to silver and gold. This includes volunteering in the local community, for example with cub groups or dance classes. The pupils engage in several charitable fund-raising activities every year, often to the benefit of local good causes. The houses also raise funds for their chosen charities. Inter-house competitions, such as in public speaking, further extend the pupils' opportunities to develop their skills. Overseas trips are valued by the pupils. These have included visits to Venice, Berlin, Paris and the Himalayas in recent years, alongside a cultural exchange to Taiwan. Older pupils consider that such trips give them a global outlook, of benefit in their future lives.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

3.16 The contribution of teaching is good.

3.17 Throughout the school, teaching is successful in promoting the pupils' progress and supporting the school's aims. Detailed and careful planning is evident in most lessons. Some teaching is excellent because planning takes account of the individual needs of all pupils, including those with SEND or EAL and the most able. This results in all pupils making excellent progress and the most able achieving highly. Less effective planning results in a lack of direction and fails to provide different approaches suited to the needs of individual pupils.

3.18 Teachers have thorough subject knowledge. This is often accompanied by dynamic delivery, a swift pace and appropriate changes to classroom activity to ensure that the pupils' concentration is maintained. In such teaching creative and stimulating resources are used, for example model making in geography and biology. The most successful teaching includes a variety of tasks well matched to the pupils' needs, but this is not a consistent feature in all teaching, and when absent, pupils lose interest.

3.19 The use of ICT often provides support and stimulation for pupils' learning. Many learning resources, including those for pupils with SEND or EAL, are held within the school's virtual learning environment, to which all pupils have access. All pupils routinely make assured use of laptop computers and ICT in their lessons. When such use is directed by staff it does not always lead to independent thinking. Many classrooms and departments feature bright and interesting displays of pupils' work and posters relevant to the subject. These enhance the learning environment and often provide additional support for pupils with SEND.

3.20 Teaching is carefully planned to include useful homework. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of pupils indicated that they do not feel the homework set helps them to learn. Inspectors found that the homework given is appropriate in amount and focus. In discussions, most pupils said that they value the homework and generally find it to be balanced and effective in supporting their learning.

3.21 Excellent relationships between teachers and pupils encourage the pupils to become more confident in their learning. Teachers offer a great deal of support outside the classroom, and pupils are very positive about the support they receive. Teachers promote tolerance and respect, and are non-partisan in coverage of political issues.

3.22 Effective structures and systems are in place to identify and cater for the needs of pupils with SEND or EAL. Appropriately trained specialist staff have very good understanding of the pupils' individual needs. They prepare individual educational

plans (IEPs) for pupils with SEND and these are communicated effectively to enable all teaching to incorporate suitable strategies. Similarly, pupils who have EHC plans are carefully monitored and suitable provision is made for their needs. Records are maintained and they are reviewed on an annual basis. Pupils with EAL have their needs assessed and an IEP is prepared for each one. Specialist teaching includes effective approaches to helping them learn English. Parents of pupils with SEND who responded to the questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive about the support their children receive.

- 3.23 Teaching makes good use of tracking data to identify the most able pupils but demonstrates limited provision to challenge them. This limits the progress of these pupils.
- 3.24 Marking, assessment and target setting are thorough and effective. Pupils receive useful and specific advice on how to improve their work. They said that they value the consistent and thorough approach to marking and were able to show how their work had improved as a result of advice given to them.

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 This meets the school's aim to give pupils an education for life in a changing world. A number of pupils join the school having previously had a difficult experience of education. The strong structures of support and the inclusiveness and warmth which permeate the school ensure that pupils are able to build their confidence during their time in the school. By the time pupils leave the school, they are self-assured and ready to face the challenges that await them.
- 4.3 The spiritual development of pupils is excellent. The life of the school is underpinned by Christian values that are promoted by staff and acted upon by pupils. The chapel plays a key role in the collective experience of pupils, who recognise importance in a spiritual life. Pupils prayed and reflected together in an activity prayer space with sincerity, and listened respectfully to an older pupil who reflected upon his faith. They are sensitive to non-material aspects of life, such as when they express themselves creatively in art and drama. They have developed an easy approach to pupils of other faiths and enjoy exploring different approaches to spiritual understanding.
- 4.4 The moral development of pupils is good. They display a clear understanding of right and wrong, and they accept the need for appropriate sanctions in school. Most pupils display a mature and considerate attitude to others, and they show commitment to those less fortunate than themselves, as evidenced by the sixth-form fund-raising committee and a full programme of charitable activities. Pupils have a keen understanding of British values. For instance, a sixth-form group reflected intelligently on how British values might be defined, while in a house assembly pupils discussed the nature of equality in British culture. Pupils have appropriate knowledge of national institutions, including of English law, and respect the democratic process.
- 4.5 The social development of pupils is good. They understand the need to act as responsible members of the school community and the benefits of contributing to wider society, for instance through the DofE. They show respect to those of different abilities and backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics. Although behaviour is not always exemplary, pupils usually show respect to one another and to their teachers. They are keen to take on positions of responsibility within the school community, for example within activities and school councils, and respect the role played by prefects and peer mentors. By the time pupils reach the sixth form, they have well-developed personalities and strong social skills.
- 4.6 The cultural development of pupils is excellent. They appreciate the cultural diversity of the school and are keen to learn about differences in traditions from one another. Pupils take the opportunity to participate in the cultural life of the school through assemblies, school performances and celebrations, and they appreciate opportunities to visit the theatre and experience life abroad, such as in the exchange with a school in Taiwan.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Staff throughout the school know pupils extremely well and they provide them with a high level of individual support, in line with the school's aims. This enables pupils to fulfil their potential, from both an academic and personal perspective. In their responses to questionnaires, both pupils and parents expressed appreciation for the care that staff show for pupils. A clear and logical structure is in place to support the care of pupils, and tutor teams work effectively. This meets the recommendation of the previous full inspection. Communication flows smoothly between staff and the senior management team.
- 4.9 Relationships amongst pupils are strong, and both day and boarding pupils praise the family atmosphere of the houses. The house system provides excellent care for pupils, giving them a clear sense of identity and the opportunity to build friendships across year groups. Older pupils contribute to pastoral care, for example by joining the prefect team or acting as a peer mentor. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, ensuring that pupils feel supported and valued. Pupils are able to identify a member of staff to whom they can turn if they have concerns.
- 4.10 Pupils display an awareness of the importance of healthy living, and the range of food offered at lunch allows healthy choices to be made. Pupils have ample opportunities to develop their physical fitness through an extensive and inclusive programme of sports and activities. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.11 The school takes great care to promote good behaviour, with a particular focus on the virtues of kindness, respect and tolerance. In their responses to the questionnaire, a small minority of pupils said that teachers are not fair in giving rewards or sanctions. Inspectors found that systems are clear and that sanctions are employed appropriately. The school monitors its discipline measures and had already noted some differences of approach amongst staff. Suitable steps have been taken to ensure greater consistency in giving sanctions and rewards. The school actively promotes measures to prevent bullying and cyber-bullying. When questioned by inspectors, pupils said that instances of both are rare and were confident that they would be dealt with appropriately. Records confirm this to be true.
- 4.12 In their questionnaire responses, a minority of pupils said that they did not feel the school listens to their concerns. Evidence gathered during the inspection showed that well-established channels of communication enable pupils to raise concerns. These include the school council, suggestion boxes, the food committee and the cyber council. Leaders either act on pupils' suggestions, for example by enabling access to websites for learning in response to a request by the sixth form, or provide a reason as to why actions cannot be taken.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.14 The safeguarding arrangements have regard to official guidance and in doing so take due account of the needs of the pupils, including those with SEND. Those with designated responsibilities liaise closely with the local children's services and designated officer. Staff recruitment checks and safeguarding training are carried out appropriately although there were minor clerical errors in the completion of the single central register of staff appointments and the record of safeguarding training at the time the inspection was announced. These had all been remedied by the end of the inspection. Appropriate policies are implemented effectively, although prior to the inspection some out-of-date references were included. These were all rectified immediately. Inspectors found that all staff had read and understood the most recent guidance.
- 4.15 The school employs robust systems to manage any health and safety risks across the site. Emergency fire equipment is visible and well maintained. Fire drills and risk assessments are carried out effectively and accurate records are kept. A planned maintenance programme limits the risk from other potential hazards. Laboratories and workshops are spacious and contain the relevant emergency equipment, facilitating safe working. The school site is well maintained. The health and safety committee has representatives from all appropriate areas and its work is monitored by a designated governor.
- 4.16 The medical centre is well resourced and procedures ensure that medication is dispensed safely. All staff have completed first-aid training. Since the previous inspection changes to the parking arrangements and barriers in the car park have been introduced successfully to reduce congestion and improve pupil safety at the beginning and end of the day.
- 4.17 The admission and attendance registers are completed appropriately and records are kept for three years. The school has robust systems to check promptly any pupil absence.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.19 The boarders' personal development is clearly promoted by their boarding experience, enabling them to develop key qualities such as confidence, tolerance and independence. A sixth-form achievement record supports individual preparation of these pupils for the next stage of education. Sixth-form boarders say that they are well prepared for life beyond school, not least through encouragement to do their own laundry. Inspectors found boarders to be courteous and considerate with one another and with adults. Boarders enjoy being part of their house communities, which are marked by strong and supportive friendships. They appreciate the family atmosphere, the good relationships with each other, and the care and kindness of the staff. House staff show great dedication to boarders, providing a high level of comprehensive care. Relationships flourish at all levels. The combined support of house staff, tutors and all academic staff encourages strong academic and pastoral progress. This is further enhanced by the tutor system. All boarders described a variety of adults whom they trust and to whom they can speak when the need arises. Details of two independent listeners and other helpline numbers are displayed, including that of the Children's Commissioner for England. Boarders have adequate training to assume responsibilities as prefects, monitors and listeners, enabling them to develop leadership skills and independence. Boarders with SEND or with EAL are well integrated and supported within boarding.
- 4.20 Boarders are confident in expressing their opinions to staff. They said that they are able to advance ideas through various councils, in-house meetings and suggestion boxes. Recent use of such channels led, for example, to improving access to some websites for sixth-form learning.
- 4.21 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. New boarders attend an induction weekend that introduces them to life at the school and familiarises them with their new houses and the local area. They are given detailed handbooks and are assigned a 'buddy' on arrival. New boarders said that everyone is friendly and helpful, and that they have quickly settled. Robust policies are in place for the care of boarders who are unwell, and these are implemented well. The nurses and house staff provide excellent medical care, further supported by a school counsellor. Boarders said that they are well looked after at the well-equipped medical centre, with a 24-hour on-call rota. House staff are appropriately trained in the administration and recording of medication. A doctor holds weekly surgeries, and the medical centre can also access local services. This ensures that the needs of boarders are met at all times. The medical centre has separate accommodation for boys and girls, meeting a recommendation of the previous boarding welfare inspection.
- 4.22 Boarders enjoy excellent boarding facilities, particularly the house kitchens, in which they can prepare evening snacks with one another, sometimes joined by staff family members. Boarders enjoy further socialising in their comfortable common rooms. Boarding accommodation is clean, and is well lit, heated, ventilated and maintained, and an ongoing programme of refurbishment ensures regular improvement. Boarders can personalise their own areas to further add to the widespread homely feel. Laundry is carried out to a high standard on site. In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of boarders said that they felt their belongings are not safe. Inspectors found that all boarders have access to lockable spaces where these were needed.

- 4.23 In responding to the questionnaire, a large majority of boarders were dissatisfied with the quality of food. During the inspection, this view was found to be widespread, particularly in relation to weekday evening meals. Boarders stated that portions are sometimes uneven and that variety is limited in menus, as are healthy options. Inspectors found a good choice of food available during the inspection week, particularly at breakfast time, but accept that this is not always the case. Boarders gave clear and consistent examples of limitations in both choice and quality, and the school acknowledged these. The recommendation of the previous boarding welfare inspection has therefore not been fully met. Special dietary requirements are catered for. Boarders have effective contact with the catering staff, who are aware of their needs. A minority of responses to the pupil questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with the provision of drinking water and snacks outside mealtimes. Inspectors found that the school provides ample after-school snacks in the houses, including fresh fruit, and sufficient access to drinking water, thus meeting this part of the recommendation from the previous inspection.
- 4.24 Boarders enjoy a wide range of activities after school and at weekends, including supervised access to nearby towns. The extensive grounds and natural beauty surrounding the school further enhance the boarding experience. A small minority of boarders responding to the questionnaire were not happy with the balance of free time and activities. Inspectors found that boarders had suitable free time, appropriately balanced with an excellent programme of activities. Boarders questioned by inspectors agreed that the balance is suitable.
- 4.25 Communication with parents is maintained by telephone or internet calls and email. A small minority of boarders responding to the questionnaire said that it is not easy to contact friends and family from the school. Boarders said that they could contact their families but that differences in time zones can make it difficult. The school seeks to facilitate contact at reasonable times. Boarders have access to world affairs through newspapers, appropriate internet facilities and television.
- 4.26 The effectiveness of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is good. A health and safety policy is effectively implemented. Well-documented fire evacuation records show that drills are carefully carried out in boarding time and boarders clearly know evacuation procedures. All staff, including ancillary support staff, receive regular training in safeguarding procedures. Recruitment checks on staff have been appropriately carried out. The required checks are also carried out on individuals over the age of 16 living in boarding accommodation. Sufficient numbers of boarding staff are on duty at all times, and boarders know how to contact them. Procedures for signing in and out of houses ensure that staff know the whereabouts of boarders at all times. The boarding houses are secure, and boarders say that they feel safe. Their view is supported by parents responding to the questionnaire. Effective policies promote good behaviour, and these are implemented with great success. An effective anti-bullying policy is operated. Boarders say that bullying, including cyber-bullying, is not an issue in their school and are confident that should these occur they would be appropriately managed by staff. Inspectors found that staff know the procedures to follow in such instances.
- 4.27 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. The school's statement of boarding principles is suitable, available to parents and staff, and implemented. The houses are well run in line with the aims of the school. In response to the questionnaire, parents were extremely positive about the boarding provision. Boarding staff are very effectively led by senior management, with regular appraisal and opportunities for further training. The appointment of a

head of boarding has raised the profile of heads of houses. Internal house inspections have been introduced, and opportunities created for staff to broaden their experience through carrying out duties in other houses. Consistency of practice has been established across houses, enhanced by regular weekly meetings. School questionnaires to parents and boarders further strengthen regular feedback and are taken into account in plans for the further development of boarding. Minutes of meetings reflect the thoroughness with which governors approach their responsibilities. Safeguarding is on the agenda of all board meetings, thus fulfilling a recommendation of the previous boarding welfare inspection.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing body supports the aims of the school and provides for oversight of all areas through its committee structure. In addition to termly board meetings, five committees meet regularly and a further two as required. Minutes of these meetings confirm that governors debate and respond to issues and also ensure that they regularly review child protection and health and safety measures. Through these and through regular visits to the school they discharge their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. Governors are drawn from a range of professional backgrounds, including education, finance and ICT. They undertake specific tasks such as particular oversight of subjects and aspects of the school. They demonstrate commitment to the school's ethos; those who live locally visit the school regularly and take pride in the achievements of the pupils. Several have further links with the school as parents or as former pupils.
- 5.3 The governing body is effective in challenging and supporting the school's management. Working with senior management, it sets the strategic direction and exercises careful financial control. It has ambitious plans for the school. These are evident in the recent building programme that has been initiated.
- 5.4 Governors understand their duties in monitoring statutory requirements but implementation is not wholly consistent. An annual review of safeguarding takes place. Minutes of governors' meetings reflect that this is thoroughly carried out; safeguarding is placed upon the agenda of all board meetings and discussions duly recorded in minutes. This meets a recommendation of the previous boarding welfare inspection. A number of clerical errors in the single central register of staff appointments and records of safeguarding training had not been correctly identified in monitoring and, prior to the inspection, some policies did not fully reflect independent school regulations. These were swiftly remedied before the end of the inspection.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 At all levels of responsibility, the leadership and management of the school are effective in the discharge of their delegated responsibilities and they strongly support and promote the aims of the school. They provide the required policies to cover all aspects of the pupils' education and welfare. Prior to inspection these contained some out-of-date references; all were promptly corrected before the end of the inspection.
- 5.7 Senior leaders set a clear educational direction for the school, reflected in the good quality of the pupils' education and the excellent standard of their personal development. The school's strategic plan and the learning and teaching action plan reflect the aims of the school. They include an emphasis upon providing each pupil

with the greatest possible individual attention and ensuring that all pupils are able to unlock their potential, both academically and on a personal level. All staff are involved to ensure that the vision is applied consistently in practice. Through collaborative sharing of ideas, management has developed the curriculum and pastoral care processes.

- 5.8 Leadership and management are effective in monitoring and self-evaluation in most areas. Heads of department take an active role in monitoring the performance of their areas of responsibility and in reviewing whole-school priorities as a group. Academic leadership uses self-evaluation effectively to identify areas for improvement. This, alongside the annual departmental reviews, ensures that priorities are identified and targets for each department set. Regular monitoring of the work of middle managers and their teaching staff, through assessing the quality of pupils' work and lesson observations, ensures that targets are largely met but there has not yet been sufficient attention paid to the needs of the more able pupils, nor to encouraging independent learning in lessons. A recent feature of review is the introduction of a parents' survey to evaluate specific educational aspects.
- 5.9 A thorough programme of regular meetings held between tutors and house staff assesses the needs of the pupils in their care and then adapts provision in response to their findings. Such meetings have enhanced and developed the role of house masters and house mistresses, and created a strong culture of self-evaluation within the houses. This meets both recommendations of the previous full inspection. Tutors are effectively deployed and their management appropriately overseen. They share good practice and are consistent in approach. At the previous boarding inspection it was recommended that boarders' concerns about food should be rectified. The quality of food is still variable, meaning that this recommendation has not been fully met.
- 5.10 The school appoints appropriately qualified teaching and support staff in order to meet its aims. Pre-appointment checks are made appropriately although there have been some clerical errors in recording them, which were immediately rectified when identified to the school. The induction of new staff is thorough and well managed, as is the appraisal system, which is supported by continuing professional development. Recent staff training has included reforms to examinations and sessions linked to whole-school priorities. All staff are suitably trained for their roles in safeguarding and welfare, health and safety.
- 5.11 The school maintains excellent and constructive relationships with parents. The overwhelming majority of parents who completed the questionnaire were satisfied with the education provided and the availability of information, and said that their children are well looked after.
- 5.12 The school has a suitable procedure for responding to complaints. Any concerns are handled promptly and usually resolved informally. Those parents who responded to the questionnaire said that the school handled well any concerns they had.
- 5.13 Parents are actively involved in the life of the school. They are welcomed into the school at all times. The parents' association, Friends of Bethany School, actively supports the pupils through fund-raising activities, and in building links and relationships between parents and the school. A considerable number of parents have joined the newly formed online Bethany Network, to engage with the school

and others associated with it. Through this network parents volunteer their services for professional business and careers advice, for the benefit of the pupils.

- 5.14 The school provides all the required policies and information for the parents of current and prospective pupils. The excellent website, supplemented by a parent portal, headmaster's blog and fortnightly newsletters, is attractive and contains a rich variety of information about school life. The use of social media for parents is encouraged and a mobile telephone app now exists to enable easier access to school information.
- 5.15 Reports to parents describe pupils' progress and are thorough and clear. Parents of pupils in Years 7 to 11 receive three full reports and three grade cards annually, whilst the parents of sixth-form pupils receive five written reports. These reports provide useful information about how to improve further. Parents may meet subject staff at an annual parents' evening for each year group. Parents who completed the questionnaire responded very positively about the information they receive about their children.

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