

# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

## **INSPECTION REPORT ON**

### **Hulme Hall Grammar School**

Full Name of the School	<b>Hulme Hall Grammar School</b>
DfES Number	<b>356/6009</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>525931</b>
Address	<b>Hulme Hall Rd, Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire SK8 6LA.</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0161 485 3524</b>
Fax Number	<b>0161 485 5966</b>
Email Address	<b>secretary@hulmehallschool.co.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Philip Marland</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Gerald Pridham</b>
Age Range	<b>2-16</b>
Gender	<b>Co-educational</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March, 2007</b>

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

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

## **1. 1. INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the School**

- 1.1 1.1 Hulme Hall Grammar School was founded in 1928 as an independent day school for boys aged 7 to 16 and moved to its present site in 1931. In 1963, the school became a charitable trust and the following year it merged with a nearby girls' school. For a

number of years, the junior school and Nursery were located on the site of the girls' school but transferred to the main site in 1998. In addition to the main site, situated in a suburb of Stockport, the school owns 10 acres of playing fields about a mile away. The school buildings have been developed piecemeal over a number of years; their future development is now the subject of discussion by the governing body.

- 1.2 1.2 The school defines its aims as follows: 'The school aims to offer pupils of all ages and a wide range of ability a friendly, caring environment in which their individuality is respected. It seeks to identify and realise the potential of young people through purposeful teaching in the classroom and the skilful commitment of teachers outside it. Pervading all that it does is a firm belief in educating the whole person, so that while it celebrates the academic achievements of pupils, it values highly their moral development and physical/creative skills and attributes which will enable them to be versatile and independent, whilst retaining a strong sense of humanity and social responsibility.
- 1.3 1.3 At the time of the last inspection, the number on roll was 289; it has now increased to 347, with a further 46 part-time pupils. The main increases have been in the senior school and in the proportion of girls; the number in Years 1 and 2 has actually declined. There are currently 14 full-time pupils (9 boys and 5 girls) in the Foundation Stage, 66 pupils (32 girls) in the infant and junior school and 267 pupils (101 girls) in the senior school. Most pupils come from within a radius of 20 miles, mainly from south Manchester and Cheshire. After leaving Hulme Hall, roughly one in ten pupils go on to independent and maintained sixth forms and almost all the rest into further education.
- 1.4 1.4 Pupils enter the school at different stages, but mainly at ages 3, 5, 11 and 14. Entry to the junior school is by means of baseline assessment and observation within the classroom setting; entry to the senior school is by baseline assessment and tests in English and mathematics. In all cases the tests are diagnostic, with the emphasis on identifying potential. Pupils are admitted if they can benefit from the education offered and have a reasonable chance of success at GCSE level.
- 1.5 1.5 The analysis of standardised tests indicates that the average ability of Hulme Hall pupils is in line with the national average. Therefore, if pupils perform in line with their ability they will achieve GCSE results in line with the national average for all maintained schools. Four pupils have statements of special educational needs and a further 159 are on the school's register of pupils with specific learning difficulties; in the vast majority of cases this means dyslexia and dyspraxia, problems with which the school has considerable experience. Approximately 15% of pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. English is not the principal language for 42 pupils, and 10 of them receive support.
- 1.6 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 2.1 The educational experience provided is satisfactory and is in line with the stated aims of the school. It has several notable strengths: the provision for pupils under five

years; the outstanding support for pupils with learning difficulties; and the wide range of options for Years 10 and 11, catering for the needs of pupils of all abilities. Nevertheless, in the junior school, the focus on language development and mathematics has resulted in an unbalanced experience for average and more able pupils in particular. Provision to support pupils' personal development is also limited. Since the last inspection, modern foreign language provision has improved considerably and is now a strength; that for information and communication technology (ICT) has improved but is still barely satisfactory.

- 2.2 2.2 In accordance with its aims, the school offers a broad curriculum and includes all the subjects of the National Curriculum. Religious Education (RE) is not taught in the school and the educational dimension offered by the subject is not replaced by any other subject in the curriculum. In the Foundation Stage, the curriculum is designed to help pupils achieve and progress beyond the Early Learning Goals of the National Curriculum. From Years 1 to 6, National Curriculum programmes of study are followed; French is taught to most pupils from the Nursery class upwards and personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is added in Year 1. However, in the junior school, the curriculum does not meet the aims expressed to provide '... a balance between academic subjects and the creative and performing arts.' The school is rightly concerned to ensure that pupils have a thorough grounding in English, particularly as a significant number have learning difficulties in that area. However, pupils spend more than a third of curriculum time on the subject, and those who do not take French have even more. This is unnecessary, particularly for those who do not have language learning problems; as a result the curriculum is unbalanced and pupils have too little time for drama, music, physical education (PE), design and technology (DT) and science.
- 2.3 2.3 In the senior school, the curriculum is much better balanced. A second modern foreign language is added in Year 7, along with drama, and more time is allocated to DT and PE. All pupils follow a broad curriculum in Years 10 and 11; this includes English, mathematics, science, PSHCE and games, together with up to five options. The addition of more practical options such as DT, home economics, child development, PE and drama is in line with the school's curriculum aims and caters better for the wide range of ability of pupils in the school. A number of non-GCSE courses are provided for the few pupils for whom GCSE is not suitable. The provision for PSHCE is uneven and in some years it only takes place when there is no assembly.
- 2.4 2.4 The school provides equality of access and opportunity for most pupils to its curriculum, though rather too many are excluded from a modern foreign language for extra language support. Occasionally, pupils miss lessons in other subjects, also to accommodate language support.
- 2.5 2.5 The enrichment provided by extra-curricular activities in the junior school is of high quality. In the junior school in particular, pupils' experience is enriched by visits to museums, galleries theatres and other places of interest. Pupils spoke favourably about the experiences that they gained on such outings and they were clearly beneficial. They particularly enjoyed taking part in the choral event at the Manchester Arena. Further enrichment is provided by the extra-curricular activities which cover a wide range of physical, aesthetic and practical areas, and the children take part with enthusiasm. In the senior school, however, the situation is barely satisfactory and the findings of the last report have not been adequately addressed. At the time of the inspection, only six activities were arranged. At present, only those doing the child care course are involved in voluntary service in the community and no formal structure is in place for pupils to

- engage in work experience, although some make their own arrangements which are noted in their records of achievement.
- 2.6 2.6 The school prepares students well for each stage of school life and for life after they leave the school. In the junior school, the transition between the various stages is helped by the fact that pupils continue working with staff whom they know, and they are in familiar surroundings. When pupils enter the senior school, everything is done to help them to settle in. This includes a preparation day at the end of Year 6 to help pupils to get to know the routines in the senior school, and a visit to a country park in September, where pupils have a chance to get to know each other outside the context of the classroom.
- 2.7 2.7 The school helps students to choose appropriate subjects in Years 10 and 11 with a comprehensive options process, which includes parents' meetings and careers advice. An outside agency provides general advice and specific information for individuals to help them prepare for life after Hulme Hall. It conducts individual interviews with a view to helping students move on to employment and post-16 education opportunities. Pupils very much appreciate the help they receive.
- 2.8 2.8 Overall, curriculum planning throughout the school is good and is based on the National Curriculum. In the junior school, this documentation is followed closely and is not always adapted to meet the needs of the particular pupils and classes. Curriculum policies and schemes of work in the senior school are more individual, whilst meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. Those for English and science are particularly well developed and those for mathematics, history and ICT are all useful.
- 2.9 2.9 The provision for those pupils identified as having learning difficulties is outstanding. A thorough screening process leads to comprehensive programmes of extra help, which are carefully and regularly monitored. This support is invaluable in enabling the relevant students to improve their learning and realise their potential. The school does not currently have an effective policy to identify and meet the needs of gifted and talented students. A small number of students have English as an additional language. Extra help is available and the needs of these students are catered for effectively.
- 2.10 2.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.11 2.11 In keeping with a philosophy which values pupils' development and aims at fulfilling their potential, the school has maintained and in many cases improved the strong academic standards reported at the time of the last inspection, and achievement in sport, drama, and to a lesser extent music, is also good. Boys and girls achieve equally well, and pupils with learning difficulties or for whom English is not their first language make good and sometimes outstanding progress in relation to their abilities. Standards at GCSE level have improved considerably since the last inspection. Learning skills are at least sound and pupils work enthusiastically and diligently.
- 2.12 2.12 By the end of the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes), almost all pupils have achieved the Early Learning Goals and some have started the Year 1 programme of the National Curriculum. Progress is particularly strong in language development; children are articulate, have a good vocabulary and speak confidently to adults. ICT skills are also well developed. Children have a good grasp of number and

- understand the notion of 'more than' and 'less than'. Their personal, social and emotional development is striking; they are confident, independent and relate well to each other.
- 2.13 2.13 In Years 1 and 2, pupils achieve sound standards in mathematics and English, particularly reading; standards in other areas of the curriculum are more limited, largely because these subjects are not allocated enough time but partly because teaching strategies do not take enough account of the needs of more able pupils. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress.
- 2.14 2.14 Overall standards in Years 3 to 6 are sound and pupils with learning difficulties make at least good progress because of the attention given to their development. Pupils are orally competent and fluent, and written English is, for the most part, accurate. Standards of creative and expressive writing are not as good, since this aspect of writing does not receive enough attention. Pupils are competent over a wide range of mathematical activity, but the most able do not reach the standards of which they are capable because the work they are given does not present enough challenge and they do not carry out enough mathematical investigations. Standards in other subjects are sound.
- 2.15 2.15 In the senior school, pupils achieve good standards in relation to their ability by the time they reach GCSE examinations. Imaginative writing in English is good and pupils write sensitively about the literature they have read. Work in mathematics is competent, particularly in respect of graphs and their interpretation. Standards in art are high throughout the school and the quality of some portrait drawings is outstanding. Pupils have a good grasp of scientific principles but the work is too tightly controlled for able pupils to achieve their full potential. The same limitations apply to history and geography. Standards in modern foreign languages have improved considerably since the last inspection and pupils both speak and write fluently and with confidence.
- 2.16 2.16 The school does not enter pupils for national tests at age 7, 11 or 14. GCSE results are good in relation to pupils' ability and have improved considerably since the last inspection. Over the period 2003 to 2005, the proportion of pupils achieving five or more grades A\* to C had increased by a half since 2000, and was significantly higher than the national average for all maintained schools. The proportion of entries awarded A\* or A grades, whilst above the national average, was not as high as should have been expected, given the overall quality of results, an indication that the most able pupils were not achieving their full potential. A small but significant number of lower-attaining pupils took non-GCSE examinations in text-processing, ICT and mathematics and achieved outstanding results. Standardised national statistics indicated that Hulme Hall pupils made above average progress to GCSE compared with all maintained schools, and in 2005 Hulme Hall was the leading school in the borough according to this measure. Lower-attaining pupils and pupils with learning difficulties made the most progress. Pupils for whom English is not the first language also made good progress.
- 2.17 2.17 In keeping with the school's aim of developing the whole person, achievement is valued and recognised in other spheres. For its size, the school achieves a good degree of sporting success; two boys represent the county at rugby and a girl plays lacrosse for the North of England. A Year 8 boy is the national squash champion for his age group and a Year 10 boy is a member of the Great Britain windsurfing squad. In athletics and cross country, pupils are regular medallists at regional and Independent Schools' Association's (ISA) competitions. The school has excellent drama facilities and each year mounts successful productions. Nearly half the pupils have instrumental lessons and take

national music examinations; one pupil has achieved Grade 8 in trumpet but other results are more modest.

- 2.18 2.18 At most stages and in most subjects, pupils are knowledgeable and can apply their knowledge and skills well in new situations. Year 10 pupils, for instance, used their knowledge of physics to discuss the advantages of different sources of energy. Overall, pupils have sound learning skills and good attitudes to work.
- 2.19 2.19 Pupils listen attentively and are generally articulate. They spoke confidently about their work when being interviewed and Year 5 pupils were fluent and imaginative when discussing the effects of the Blitz on individuals and families. As they progress through the school, pupils develop sound reasoning skills, particularly in history and science, and Year 10 pupils, for example, produced balanced arguments for and against the use of nuclear power. The standard of pupils' grammar, spelling and creative writing is satisfactory across all subjects, and the significant number of pupils with learning problems such as dyslexia make particularly good progress, thanks to the very effective work of the learning support department. Creative and imaginative writing is not well developed except in the senior school, where the GCSE coursework in English was of a high standard. In general, however, the development of writing skills for the average and above average pupils is limited by the excessive use of worksheets which do not give pupils enough scope to explore ideas and write extensively and independently. For the same reason, pupils do not learn how to make notes adequately. The presentation of written work is generally good.
- 2.20 2.20 Pupils are competent mathematicians and apply their skills well in statistics and in science where they are proficient in changing the subject of a formula and representing data graphically. Pupils in the Foundation Stage used non-standard units to measure their teddy bears, and older pupils showed themselves competent at interpreting graphs and drawing conclusions from statistics.
- 2.21 2.21 The development of ICT skills and their use in lessons remains unsatisfactory. Resources have improved considerably since the last inspection but are still insufficient. Progress is being made in the junior school and pupils were observed using the interactive whiteboard. Elsewhere in the school, ICT resources were seen in use only in ICT lessons, and the work scrutiny produced little evidence of its use in other subjects.
- 2.22 2.22 Pupils are conscientious and co-operative; they enjoy their work and activities, settle quickly to their tasks and persevere even when the work is uninspiring. When they are given the opportunity to work co-operatively with others and in teams they do so effectively. Year 9 pupils, working together to calculate how many handshakes there would be at a party, listened to each other, evaluated theories sensibly and arrived at the correct answer.

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

- 2.23 2.23 The overall quality of spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is satisfactory. Pupils grow in confidence during their time at the school but other aspects of their spiritual growth are left to chance; they have a strong moral sense and sense of community; their cultural development is satisfactory but is largely unplanned. The school's aims stress the importance of the development of the whole person, and the school ethos is one of support and encouragement of the individual within a caring community. However, the school lacks a clear, coherent strategy for personal

development and it does not have a high enough priority in school planning. Staff in general, particularly in the senior school, are not aware of the issues and personal development does not appear either in departmental schemes of work or in plans for in-service training. PSHCE is not well developed in the senior school and, for some year groups, takes place only when there is no assembly. Assemblies are too infrequent and not well enough planned to contribute effectively to spiritual development, and the absence of religious education, regretted by some pupils who were interviewed, limits the opportunities for pupils to explore and develop their own beliefs. The school is aware of these issues and has plans to address them but little progress has been made since the last inspection when many of the same reservations were made. No monitoring takes place to identify the range and quality of what is achieved in pupils' SMSC development.

- 2.24 2.24 Pupils are increasingly self-confident as they absorb the values of the school and are reassured by the support they receive. The school receives a significant proportion of pupils with learning difficulties who had been unhappy at their previous schools. When interviewed, they were unanimous in declaring that they had gained considerably in self-confidence and their sense of self-worth because of the support they had received. Their parents expressed the same views. The encouragement that teachers give to pupils to participate to the best of their ability in all activities and the recognition they receive for even the smallest achievement, whether in or out of school, make a great contribution to their sense of identity as an individual and member of the school. They feel they are valued. Spiritual development is not, however, planned or clearly recognised as significant, and opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop their own beliefs and responses to the world they live in are too few and occur by chance. Examples were seen in Year 10 history, when pupils discussed Nazi attitudes to medical experimentation and eugenics, and in a Year 8 lesson about architectural styles, dealing with single-point perspective, which focused initially on the Art Deco period, before the discussion turned to more general questions of aesthetics.
- 2.25 2.25 Pupils are presented with a clear moral code and develop strong moral values. They are set a good example by staff, and are well able to distinguish between right and wrong. The PSHCE programme provides a sound basis for the secure discussion at the appropriate age of questions relating to relationships, drugs and alcohol. Moral issues are sometimes dealt with when they occur in the curriculum and pupils are helped to form their own view, but too many opportunities are missed. The school has a clear code of conduct and sets high standards of behaviour. In discussion, pupils recognised that the rules are fair and sanctions fairly applied. At all times, pupils are encouraged to think of the effect of their actions on others and for the most part they live up to the expectations of the school. Specific instances were observed of unassuming thoughtfulness and consideration between pupils of differing abilities and interests.
- 2.26 2.26 Pupils' social development is good and stems from the opportunities they have to work together and take responsibility. In class they work well in mutually supportive groups, and enrichment activities give them valuable opportunities to establish new relationships and assume leadership roles. Trips and visits foster their social development and contribute to the confidence that pupils showed in conversation with the inspection team; however, these trips are more common in the junior school and the early years of the senior school. For example, Year 7 pupils take part in a geography trip early in the autumn term which enables them to consolidate as a year group. In both the senior and junior schools, pupils value the opportunity to hold positions of responsibility such as prefects, house and team captains which enable them to contribute to the school

community and help to prepare them for adult life. The potential of the house system to contribute to pupils' social development and sense of community is not fully exploited; there are not enough houses and the number and range of house competitions is too limited. Within the framework of the PSHCE programmes and in subjects such as English, history and geography, pupils have the opportunity to discuss social and environmental issues and develop their own response. As a result, pupils are very aware that they are privileged and regularly and willingly take part in charitable activities, raising significant sums of money. The senior school charities committee selects a main charity for the year and organises fundraising events for it. The close association with a single charity develops in pupils a deeper understanding of its role and importance. The PSHCE programme covers important aspects of citizenship and government, and the school council enables pupils to experience democracy at work. In the junior school, the election of house captains follows the procedures of a parliamentary election, giving pupils great insight into the process.

- 2.27 2.27 Pupils enjoy a sound cultural experience throughout the school. They learn about their own heritage and culture through visits to the theatre, galleries and other places of interest. Pupils participate in musical events and use the school's excellent facilities to put on high quality dramatic productions. Art is also very strong and striking examples of pupils' often thought-provoking work are displayed for others to appreciate and emulate. Year 11 coursework on display shows an awareness of 'high' and 'low' culture in the media, with particular relevance to the characteristics of current teenage culture. All these experiences enhance the knowledge that pupils gain from their study of history, geography, literature and the arts. The understanding of other cultures is much less well developed and the traditional role of RE in this respect is not replaced by any other coherent policy. The religious festivals of the major religions are marked but the lack of a context reduces their impact. Nevertheless, a few good examples of the use of other cultural references have made a strong impression on pupils: Year 11 pupils creating a raga, and Year 7 pupils understanding and imitating Aboriginal art. Most impressively, a junior school teacher dressing in a sari to demonstrate aspects of Indian culture inspired girls in the class to wear their own saris and perform a dance in assembly. This was followed by a poetry lesson about a child feeling isolated by the colour of her skin, with the class writing her letters of support.
- 2.28 2.28 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.29 2.29 The quality of teaching is generally good; it is supportive of the school's aims and enables the pupils to make good progress in their acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding. In a significant proportion of lessons, the quality of teaching was outstanding and challenged pupils to think in interesting ways, beyond the requirements of the examination syllabus. In only a few lessons, teaching was less than satisfactory, because planning failed to take account of the needs and abilities of the pupils and the methods adopted did not engage their interest. The strengths of the teaching lie in the commitment of staff and the particular expertise of the learning support department in analysing the learning difficulties of pupils and helping them to overcome their difficulties so that they achieve much better than might be expected in public examinations. The teaching of pupils whose first language is not English is also skilled. Nevertheless some of the methods used do not encourage independent thinking and the

most able are not sufficiently challenged in some subjects. Assessment is sound but not enough use is made of the data to monitor pupils' performance and the work of subject departments.

- 2.30 2.30 Teachers have appropriate knowledge and understanding of their subjects and the subject matter being taught, and the great enthusiasm shown by many engages pupils and enables them to both learn and enjoy. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to think for themselves and to apply their knowledge and understanding. The dynamism and enthusiasm of a Foundation Stage teacher enabled children to make rapid progress in their understanding of 'long' and 'short'. In a Year 8 art lesson, the clarity of instruction given in explaining how to build up a portrait of a face led to high attainment in a difficult task. In some work in science, pupils are led to apply their knowledge to the world around them, using their knowledge of conductivity to choose the most appropriate materials for saucepan and kettle handles, for instance. Even so tasks are often tightly prescribed, leaving pupils insufficient scope to pursue a topic independently so that the most able in particular make less progress than they should. Where the teaching provided only limited opportunities for investigation and experimentation, in science and mathematics for example, pupils were less engaged and made less progress.
- 2.31 2.31 Teaching in most areas is well planned and uses effective methods. Teachers have a great deal of information about the aptitudes and needs of their pupils which enables them to plan brisk, well produced lessons which generally take account of pupils' abilities and circumstances. This is particularly true in the case of those with learning difficulties linked to reading and writing. However, the same methods are used with the average and more able pupils where they are less appropriate. The carefully constructed worksheets which provide good support for those with learning difficulties restrict the initiative and independent learning of the more able pupils so that they do not develop higher-order learning skills sufficiently well. Too often, teaching methods are not differentiated enough to meet the varying learning needs within the class.
- 2.32 2.32 The range and quality of resources to support teaching is generally sound, particularly in the junior school, though the budget for science is low and there are shortages in this subject. ICT resources have improved significantly but shortages still exist in individual departments and the lack of effective co-ordination over access to the computer suite between the junior and senior schools sometimes results in the equipment not being used as much as it might be. Junior teachers are beginning to make effective use of the interactive whiteboards; in the senior school, little evidence was found of computers being used in subjects other than ICT. Library provision is inadequate in terms of the number and range of books and is biased towards the younger end of the school. It is not a useful resource for independent learning and research.
- 2.33 2.33 Marking and assessment are carried out regularly in most subject areas, though the quality varies. A whole-school marking policy exists but it is not widely followed and it is in need of updating. Practice is particularly good in ICT, where the target skills and skills acquired are recorded on a clear monitoring grid, and also in modern foreign languages (MFL) where units are assessed against National Curriculum criteria and marking is detailed indicating to pupils how the work can be improved. In MFL also, pupils are involved in evaluating their own work and setting targets. In science, regular 'quick quizzes' are used to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. Elsewhere in the senior school, much of the marking is not analytical enough and does not indicate to pupils how they can improve their work, and the use of assessment to inform teaching strategies is not well developed. Assessment is very effective in the Foundation Stage;

detailed assessments are carried out and recorded in Foundation Stage profiles. Practice is sound elsewhere in the junior school but often it is not clear enough to pupils how they might improve their work. Regular internal tests and examinations are held throughout the school and the results are recorded efficiently by the teachers.

- 2.34 2.34 The school has a significant amount of assessment data, some of it standardised, which is used very effectively by the learning support department to analyse learning problems and work out strategies for dealing with them. Not enough use is made of the data and the analysis of external examination results to monitor pupils' progress and attainment in a systematic manner and provide some measure of the effectiveness of the teaching.
- 2.35 2.35 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. 3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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

- 3.1 3.1 The school attaches considerable importance to the care and welfare of pupils and has maintained the good standards reported at the time of the last inspection. In the junior school, the quality of care is now outstanding. Staff know their pupils well, and good relations and a caring atmosphere prevail throughout the school. Arrangements to secure pupils' welfare, health and safety are good and are kept under constant review. Child protection procedures are now comprehensive.
- 3.2 3.2 The excellent standards of care and guidance in the junior school are the result of the regular, close contact between teachers and their pupils, allowing teachers to build up a comprehensive picture of their charges which is preserved in the thorough records. Support and guidance is less effective in the senior school because the registration time is too short and the mentoring periods when pupils have one-to-one contact with their tutors do not occur often enough. Nevertheless, teachers show genuine concern for their pupils, who feel very well supported, an opinion confirmed by parents, but provision relies on informal rather than formal structures. When they were interviewed, pupils across the senior school talked about teachers being 'kind', always 'willing to listen', and several pupils cited good relations with teachers as being the best thing about the school. The support and care that they receive increases pupils' self confidence and is reflected in the very strong relationships among pupils. Learning support assistants also make a good contribution to pastoral care as they help those who find it difficult to organise themselves to prepare for the beginning of the day.
- 3.3 3.3 Pastoral arrangements in the junior school are very effective; the head of the junior school, who is responsible, holds regular meetings with tutors and the form time at the beginning of each day provides a good forum for identifying and dealing with any pastoral issues. In the senior school, year heads provide very good support through year team briefings and informal conversations. They hold pastoral but not academic records and are able to achieve some monitoring of the system by reading the mentoring reports which are usually completed by the form tutors. The deputy head has overall charge of the pastoral system and provides guidance when asked, but does not fully evaluate the process.

- 3.4 3.4 The school's measures to promote good discipline and behaviour are clearly defined and pupils are well aware of the code of conduct. The system of rewards and sanctions emphasises positive behaviour, self-discipline and responsibility for one's own actions. The conversion of merits to house points encourages links and connections across years, as does the fact that the houses span both sections of the school. The annual treat for the winning house is much appreciated, although the system is more popular with younger pupils than it is with the older ones. Clear anti-bullying policies and guidance ensure that pupils are aware of the issues associated with bullying and of what steps to take. Pupils have confidence in the approach and no evidence of bullying was found during the inspection.
- 3.5 3.5 Effective child protection measures are in place. The designated child protection officer has received appropriate training and that of all the staff is up to date. Governors attach considerable importance to child protection and one of them has a specific responsibility for it. Attendance and punctuality are both good. Attendance and admission registers are kept efficiently. Supervision at lunch and playtimes is adequate. Sound policies and procedures are in place and up to date to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards and fire practices are held regularly. Detailed risk assessments are carried out before all visits to identify any hazards.
- 3.6 3.6 The school takes health and safety seriously and has nominated a senior teacher as the health and safety officer. She inspects one area of the school each week, collects notes of safety issues from staff and takes appropriate action. The health and safety committee, which includes a governor, meets termly. A few minor health and safety issues have been brought to the school's attention and risk assessments in the science department need review.
- 3.7 3.7 Only one member of staff has full first-aid qualifications but others are undergoing training. A suitably equipped medical room is available for pupils who are unwell and good records are kept of accidents and any medicines administered.
- 3.8 3.8 The catering service is very well organised; it provides a wide range of healthy, appetising and well prepared meals which are much appreciated by the pupils, and lunchtime is a civilized occasion. Healthy snacks are available at break.
- 3.9 3.9 The school's own bus service is a considerable asset to the school, ensuring safe transport for pupils, and it is a factor for some in their choice of school.
- 3.10 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.11 3.11 The sound links with parents and the community reported at the last inspection have been strengthened and are now good. Parents are pleased with the quality of education their children receive. They are provided with varied information about the school through the school prospectus and the website. They are kept in touch with forthcoming events through the school calendar and newsletters, and the quality of reports is good. Sporting and charity links with the local community are strong.
- 3.12 3.12 The parents of approximately two-fifths of the pupils responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire and the vast majority were pleased with the quality of education

their children received. Parents were most satisfied with the progress made by their children, particularly those with learning difficulties, the attitudes promoted by the school, and the quality of help and guidance. A significant number were disappointed with the number and range of extra-curricular activities in the senior school and had concerns about the amount and quality of information they received and the opportunities to discuss their children's progress. The inspection team agrees with the positive views of the parents and also their reservations about the extra-curricular activities, which have not improved since their limitations were pointed out in the last report, but the team believes that parents receive good information and have ample opportunities to discuss their children's progress. However, the team does agree that the timing of two parent evenings at the end of the year comes too late for parents to take remedial action if there are problems.

- 3.13 3.13 Parents have plenty of opportunities to be involved in school life. They are invited to matches, concerts and dance and drama productions. A very strong and active parent-teacher association organises numerous fund raising activities and makes significant contributions to the school each year. The direct involvement of parents in the day-to-day work of the school is restricted to helping on the school trips made by pupils, especially in the junior school. Staff encourage parents to listen to their children read at home and to support them generally in their learning.
- 3.14 3.14 Parents are provided with good information about the school and its activities; they are kept in touch with forthcoming events through the school calendar and newsletters, and the homework diaries are used effectively to maintain day-to-day communication. The newsletter is well-produced but is published only once a term. The prospectus is concise, clear and attractive, and highlights the school's ethos and aims. Parents also receive a handbook at the beginning of their child's time at the school which outlines all the school's policies. The school's website includes information about pupils' achievements both in school and in the community. Parents' evenings for all years are held to discuss pupils' progress and, for Year 9 parents to provide information about options in Year 10, though the timing of some of them is not helpful. Written reports are issued once a year; they are well structured and comprehensive and provide a clear picture of pupils' achievements, not only academic ones but also in respect of activities and personal development. In addition, they include targets to improve pupils' performance in each subject. Pupils also receive progress reports every half term which parents find very informative.
- 3.15 3.15 Parents are very satisfied that their concerns are dealt with promptly and sensitively and most of these are resolved informally. A comprehensive, formal, complaints policy is in place and an examination of correspondence indicates that recent complaints have been dealt with thoroughly and comprehensively.
- 3.16 3.16 The school has strong links with the local community. Local primary schools are invited to the children's authors event held each year at the school, an enriching experience for all the children. Hulme Hall pupils are actively engaged in raising money for local charities, for example they raised nearly £8,000 for a hospice in 2006. Pupils provide displays for local libraries and churches, and the choir performs at local retirement homes and the Manchester arena at Christmas as part of the massed children's choir. The school takes part in local drama and musical festivals and competes, often successfully, in district and national sporting competitions. In the past, outside agencies have also used the schools' facilities. Local orchestras and drama companies have used the theatre and the ISA Northern Drama Festival has been held here for the past three

years. The school also uses the local community as a resource, hiring local sports facilities and swimming pools to enhance the provision being offered to pupils.

- 3.17 3.17 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 4.1 The quality of governance is sound and is improving rapidly. The governing body is new, having replaced the previous governing body in September 2006. It consists of nine governors, most of whom are parents or former parents. Governors bring to the task a wide range of experience in law, banking, accountancy, industry and commerce but none are independent of the school and none have a background of expertise in school organisation and management. They are energetic and well organised and have set up sub-committees for health and safety, marketing, ICT, finance and education, which meet termly. The main board is very active and meets monthly.
- 4.2 4.2 Through the auspices of ISI, the accredited bursar of a major independent school was invited into the school to examine financial, contractual and organisational arrangements. He found that the accounts were in order, but that a number of important policies were not in place; management accounting was lacking; there were no detailed, termly accounts; and budgetary procedures needed review. The necessary action to deal with these issues is being taken.
- 4.3 4.3 The governing body takes its responsibilities seriously and is fully aware of the pace of change, particularly in the field of health and safety legislation. It has joined the Association of Governing Bodies of Independent Schools (AGBIS) and members have undergone training. The governing body has appointed a human relations consultant to look at contracts. A health and safety consultant has carried out an audit and an external consultant has been employed to look at risk assessment. Governors are currently drawing up a five-year plan for the future of the school. Curricular and staffing issues are largely delegated to the headmaster, who, nevertheless, submits new policies to the governing body for approval.
- 4.4 4.4 Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. However, there are, as yet, no formal arrangements for consultation with parents or teachers, and governors do not routinely visit the school to observe the educational experience at first hand.

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

- 4.5 4.5 The overall quality of leadership is good, and this is reflected in the quality of education and the effective care of pupils. Over the last six years, the headmaster has shown steadfastness of purpose and a clear strategic sense of the educational direction of the school, which fulfils its aims and enables most pupils to fulfil their potential and gain in self-confidence and self-esteem. He enjoys the respect and confidence of pupils, parents, teachers and governors. His vision is shared by the staff, but is not underpinned

by a well-developed management structure, so that the quality of management is only satisfactory, as it was at the time of the last inspection.

- 4.6 4.6 Currently, too much responsibility and too many mundane tasks fall to the headmaster who does not have enough time to step back and plan strategically. This is because the management structure does not operate as a team as effectively as it could. For example, the senior management team has limited scope and does not represent all the main constituents of the school. The members do not have sufficient delegated authority and do not meet frequently enough to ensure that the school moves forward with enough energy and purpose in order to fulfil the vision of the leadership. Heads of department are responsible to the headmaster, but the management role of the deputy headmistress with regard to the pastoral system is less well defined. The headmaster is aware that management is not as effective as it might be, and plans are in place to strengthen the structure and delegate more responsibility.
- 4.7 4.7 One consequence of the current situation is that senior managers do not monitor well enough the implementation of whole-school policies, all of which are in place. Heads of department and other middle managers carry out the current tasks efficiently, including generally good schemes of work, but because they do not have clear, fully developed job descriptions, they are not in a position to provide management which is as supportive as it could be for their teams, and do not fully understand their role in implementing school policy and monitoring the results. Heads of department are required to explain annually why their results are as they are, but this is not based on a rigorous enough analysis of the data available.
- 4.8 4.8 The current school development plan has been largely accomplished and a new one is being drawn up. Heads of department have established their own priorities for the future, though without the benefit of a rigorous evaluation of their current position. No clear consultative procedures are in place to establish whole-school priorities to submit to the governing body.
- 4.9 4.9 The school has a good number of well qualified and committed staff, who are well deployed according to their expertise and who have a sufficient amount of time to accomplish preparation and marking tasks. Recruitment procedures are efficient and secure, and careful checks are carried out both with the Criminal Records Bureau and in respect of qualifications, medical records and references. Contracts are in place but job descriptions are not clear enough. The recruitment and induction of new teachers to the school, including those who are newly qualified, is good and they feel secure and welcomed. The school has a well-conceived appraisal scheme which includes an evaluation of teaching and the setting of targets, but priorities for in-service training are not sufficiently determined by the results of appraisal and the imperatives of the school development plan.
- 4.10 4.10 Communication and consultation are generally good, though much better in the more closely-knit junior school, where decisions often emerge through consensus and staff are mutually supportive. In the senior school also, there are regular meetings where all have the chance to air their views, though most decisions are taken centrally and the explanation for them is not always made clear.
- 4.11 4.11 The school finances are managed very efficiently by the bursar who keeps a careful check on all expenditure. The establishment of departmental budgets is, however, unsatisfactory and sometimes wasteful.

- 4.12 4.12 School administration is generally effective, though hampered by deficiencies in the management arrangements highlighted above. The school office is efficient and welcoming, though rather overstretched, and the excellent catering, transport and maintenance services do further credit to the school. The level of technician services is low.
- 4.13 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 4.14 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

## **5. 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

### **Overall Conclusions**

- 5.1 5.1 Through the leadership of the headmaster and the commitment of staff, the school goes a long way towards meeting its aims. In particular, it is successful in 'identify(ing) and realis(ing) the potential of young people...' particularly those who have specific learning difficulties. The generally good teaching is well adapted to their needs, though less so in the case of the more able. The educational experience for the senior school is good and the range of options in Year 10 fulfils the needs of all. The same balance is not found in the junior school curriculum. The care, support and guidance provided by the staff enable pupils to gain considerably in self-confidence and self-esteem but the overall provision for personal development is insufficient and lacks coherence. Leadership is good and the school is very clear about what it stands for, but the management structure and practice are not strong enough to ensure that the school's intentions are implemented fully and effectively.
- 5.2 5.2 The school has made significant progress in a number of areas since the last inspection. The school is more aware of its strengths and inspires confidence in parents so that the school roll has increased significantly. A greater sense of unity exists. Overall academic standards have improved considerably, though the most able still have a little way to go to achieve their full potential. Provision for modern foreign languages has improved greatly and it is now among the stronger subjects. Progress has been made in respect of ICT but further improvement is necessary. Nevertheless, weaknesses in respect of the provision of extra-curricular activities and for spiritual development remain, and the provision of in-service training is still not sufficiently focused.
- 5.3 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 5.4 In order to make further progress, the school should:
1. 1. review and reinforce management structures, ensuring that responsibilities are clearly defined, in order to develop and improve the implementation of school policies and to evaluate their effectiveness;
  2. 2. develop and implement a coherent policy for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils;

3. 3. review the curriculum of the junior school to achieve a better balance of experiences;
  4. 4. ensure that tasks and teaching styles are better matched to pupils' levels of ability and attainment, particularly for those who are of average and above-average ability;
  5. 5. put in place the necessary in-service training for staff to carry out the above recommendations successfully.
- 5.5 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

## **6. 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 6.1 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 6.2 A bursar from another school joined the reporting inspector on the preliminary visit as part of the Independent Schools' Bursars Association (ISBA) scheme, spending the day with the bursar's department. The principal findings have been included in the relevant sections of this report.

### **List of Inspectors**

Mr John Marshall	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Day	Director of studies, IAPS school
Mr Steven Jandrell	Headmaster, ISA school
Mrs Susan Mitchell	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Catherine Sams	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Vivien Tabone	Headmistress, ISA school
Mr Andrew Ward	Head of sixth form, HMC school