

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Bramley School

Full Name of the School	<b>Bramley School</b>
DfES Number	<b>936/6363</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>270046</b>
Address	<b>Chequers Lane, Walton-on-the-Hill, Tadworth, Surrey, KT20 7ST</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01737 812004</b>
Fax Number	<b>01737 819945</b>
Email Address	<b>burgessp@bramleyschool.surrey.sch.uk</b>
Headmistress	<b>Mrs Paula Burgess</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Anne Morrell</b>
Age Range	<b>3 - 11</b>
Gender	<b>Girls</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>15<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2006</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. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The school was founded in 1945 and became a charitable trust in 1971. The school caters for girls aged three to eleven who mainly come from the local area. One hundred and nine girls attend the school, with thirteen attending on a part-time basis in the nursery. Forty-three girls are in the pre-prep (Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2) and sixty-one in the prep (Years 3 to 6).
- 1.2 The school is non-denominational with a Christian ethos and provides for pupils from a variety of faiths. Governors and teachers seek to provide a happy and intimate ethos together with the all round development of the girls' physical, academic, creative, social, emotional and spiritual development. In order to achieve this aim the staff places emphasis on the provision of:
  - a broad, modern, balanced and challenging curriculum;
  - an education that fosters the girls' talents;

- the necessary social skills to develop relationships and to foster collaboration;
  - encouragement for the girls to be independent in taking responsibility for themselves and their learning;
  - a safe, supportive and stimulating environment.
- 1.3 Girls enter the Early Years provision without any form of selective assessment in the order of their registration. They join in the term directly following their third birthday. When girls seek to join the school in other year groups, they have assessments in English, mathematics and in verbal reasoning as the school seeks to ensure that new entrants have abilities broadly in line with those in the class they are to join.
- 1.4 Girls' average ability is above that of the national average and if the girls are performing in line with their abilities their results in national tests will be above the average for all maintained primary schools. Although girls take the national tests at the end of Years 2 and 6, the results are not moderated externally and therefore comparison with the national results is not secure. Of the 109 girls, 13 are receiving support for their learning difficulties. No girls have a language other than English as their principal language. A small minority of girls come from multi-ethnic backgrounds.
- 1.5 Since the last inspection, considerable change has taken place in the management personnel. A new headmistress has been appointed and with the retirement of the deputy head, a new management structure has been implemented.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Little Bramley	Nursery
Reception	Reception
Year 1	Year 1
Year 2	Year 2
Lowes	Year 3
Middles	Year 4
Uppers	Year 5
Tops	Year 6

## 2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The girls enjoy a broad and interesting educational experience which strongly meets the school's aims of enabling them to have a good all round education and to grow in self-confidence. The opportunities provided enable girls to have a rich and happy experience, as well as reaching the intellectual, personal, physical and aesthetic standards required for them to enter the senior school of their choice. Emphasis is placed on reminding girls to make the most of their time in the school as 'every minute counts', as an exhibition at the heart of the school reminds them. Parents are very supportive of the range of experiences provided for their daughters.
- 2.2 Significant improvement has been made to the curriculum since its inspection in 2000. It is very well planned with due account taken of the school's aims. It is supported by detailed and thorough schemes of work and best use is made of teachers' subject knowledge. Useful links are made between subjects, as seen in a current study of the Egyptians. Information and communication technology (ICT) is carefully planned so that it is used in a range of subjects where it is appropriate. More attention is now given to sport. Good attention is paid to environmental issues both in the curriculum and through the school's emphasis on recycling and ensuring that the school site is free from litter. The director of studies provides very effective management of the curriculum, working in close collaboration with subject co-ordinators and the remainder of the senior management team.
- 2.3 The curriculum is inclusive, with the school paying considerable attention to ensuring that all girls have

access to the education provided. All girls have access to the activities provided, with a considerable focus being placed on girls working together. This emphasis on teamwork in the curriculum is well illustrated in the work undertaken by all girls on the story of the Giant Turnip, in which many people were required to work together to pull it up. All girls made suggestions as to how they could contribute to the life of the school. Their results are well displayed in a prominent part of the school to act as a reminder of a central aim of the school.

- 2.4 Due attention is given by teachers in all subjects not only to the skills particular to individual subjects, but also to the essential skills of speaking and listening, literacy, numeracy and the use of ICT. Particular emphasis is being placed in the curriculum on improving the essential skills needed in writing as part of the school's plan for improvement. Regular purposeful opportunities are provided for girls to explain their ideas and to discuss. Emphasis is placed on the provision of well-chosen opportunities for girls to think for themselves in challenging situations as part of the school's plans for improvement. A good start has been made, for example in mathematics and ICT, but such opportunities are not yet consistently provided across the school. Considerable attention is given to the girls' aesthetic and creative development, for example by the increased attention given to art.
- 2.5 Preparation for the move to senior schools is thorough. Teachers know their pupils very well. This information is used very effectively to help girls and their parents in choosing their senior schools and then meeting the necessary entry requirements.
- 2.6 The timetabled curriculum is effectively complemented by a programme of extra-curricular activities that are extensive for a school of this size. Girls speak very well of these activities which are very well attended. The wide range includes sport, ICT, art, drama, music, science, as well as a homework club. Regular visits to places of educational interest, for example to Hever Castle, Hampton Court, the Imperial War Museum, and more local places of interest, enrich the curriculum.
- 2.7 Recent improvements by the headmistress to the arrangements and procedures for the support of pupils with learning difficulties have ensured that these pupils are properly supported. A small minority of parents who responded to the questionnaire before the inspection expressed concerns about this aspect of the school. Inspection evidence shows that effective arrangements are now in place for the systematic identification of girls with a learning difficulty, and where necessary, individual education plans (IEPs) have been drawn up and implemented by the staff. Support for girls with physical disabilities is exemplary. Staff are fully aware of girls who are particularly gifted or talented and take due account of this when planning their work. The need to make current informal arrangements more explicit and systematic has been identified.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.9 Girls are generally well grounded in the knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects and activities and they learn to apply them effectively. In mathematics and science, girls make good progress and reach good standards in relation to their abilities. In English, although girls make good progress in speaking and listening, in reading, and in writing creatively, the standards they attain are satisfactory rather than good as a significant proportion of girls are not secure in spelling accurately, and in using grammar and punctuation correctly. The school is aware of this and improvement in this area is the number one priority in the implementation of the school's plan for development. Girls have made marked progress in this area over the past term. The strengths in mathematics, science, and in speaking, listening and reading noted at the last inspection have been maintained.
- 2.10 By the end of the Foundation Stage, girls have attained the nationally recommended levels for children of that age. As a result of the good quality teaching they receive, many have made very good progress, especially in their personal, social and emotional development and have successfully begun work on the National Curriculum programme of study prior to entry to Year 1.
- 2.11 By the time they leave for the senior school of their choice, girls of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties, have achieved well in all areas of the education provided by the school. In art, paintings by older girls on a theme of 'Narnia' are of a high standard. Recently, girls have won prizes in the local mayor's art competition. Girls are successful in speech and drama examinations and have won gold medals at festivals. Girls demonstrate good knowledge in religious education, especially about world faiths, and this understanding is reflected in their excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Success in sport is improving with victories in local netball tournaments.

- 2.12 Girls enjoy their work as they have excellent relationships with their teachers who make lessons interesting and relevant. Girls settle very quickly in lessons and activities, and concentrate well and work hard. They explained to inspectors that teachers made the work 'fun', but also made it 'hard enough'. In the many opportunities provided for girls to collaborate, for example in discussion and when using ICT, girls work together very well. At times, girls make particularly good progress when the teaching provides them with challenging opportunities to think for themselves, for example in mathematics and ICT. Such provision is currently an area being developed as part of the school's improvement plan.
- 2.13 Girls successfully undertake research, both in school and at home. Of particular note was a science investigation undertaken collaboratively by girls in Year 6 during a holiday, which resulted in the production of interesting DVDs to illustrate their findings. Girls show good skills in making notes and in working independently.
- 2.14 Girls show considerable skills in speaking and listening. In lessons, they listen very attentively to their teachers. They discuss avidly, for example when teachers ask them to discuss their ideas in pairs before answering the questions posed. Girls demonstrate great confidence and skills in explaining their ideas and views, and arguing their point of view. In a personal and social education lesson in Year 3, girls explained clearly whether their favourite person was a good role model or not. In Year 1, girls explained their proposals for a fitness plan for a cat in the story they were reading. Girls across the school read fluently for their ages as considerable emphasis is placed on reading, both in the Foundation Stage and for girls in Years 3 to 6, in their form times at the end of the day. Girls successfully write using a good range of genres and for varied purposes. Their writing is usually neat and well presented but is not always as accurate as it should be.
- 2.15 In mathematics, girls gain good standards in knowledge, skills and understanding. Girls in Year 1 show good understanding of the value of each number in numbers up to 100. In Year 6, girls confidently calculate using indices. Girls across the school use their mathematical skills in subjects such as science and geography. They develop competent skills in ICT, which are usefully employed in other subjects such as English and design and technology.

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

- 2.16 Throughout the school, the girls demonstrate outstandingly well-developed spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. It is implicit throughout the school day, in the ethos of the school and by the example set by teachers. The school's commitment to achieving these aspects of the girls' development and to help them grow in self-confidence and become responsible and caring members of the community within a happy environment is well met. The spirit of tolerance and respect is reflected throughout the school which encourages all girls to treat everyone with consideration and courtesy whatever their beliefs and makes a significant contribution to girls' personal development. The provision has improved considerably since the last inspection, particularly in the area of cultural development.
- 2.17 Teachers effectively build girls' self-esteem and knowledge of personal worth through valuing them as individuals, and through the support they provide. Throughout the school, girls develop a strong understanding of their own and other people's beliefs and values. In assemblies and religious education lessons, girls are encouraged to develop strong spiritual awareness. Well-planned opportunities are provided to learn about world faiths, beliefs and observances, for example when girls meet the local rector or an Imam and visit places of worship. The detailed and thorough personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme enables girls to talk about, and reflect on, their own feelings.
- 2.18 Girls have a well developed moral sense and from an early age demonstrate a growing understanding of the difference between right and wrong, not only in terms of keeping to the rules, but also in doing what is morally right. Across the school, girls appreciate the fairness of the school's system of rewards and sanctions. The school rules are respected and understood and girls competently explain why the rules are necessary. Girls are courteous to each other and to their teachers and visitors. The school thrives on goodwill and co-operation in line with its aims and this in turn enables girls throughout the school to develop a strong moral code.
- 2.19 Girls show a high degree of social awareness which is evident from the youngest age. Children in the nursery, for example, relate well to each other and are encouraged to take account of others in their daily

routines, by taking turns and sharing resources. As girls move through the school they are given a variety of responsibilities. These range from performing simple, but necessary duties reliably to being house captains or librarians when in Year 6. These responsibilities are taken seriously and girls undertake their roles conscientiously. Such opportunities not only give girls a sense of self-worth and increased self-confidence, but they also encourage initiative and independence when for instance, older girls help younger girls during lunchtimes or help them change their books in the library.

- 2.20 Throughout the school, girls demonstrate a growing sense of social and moral responsibility for others and help raise money for a number of charities. Valuable experiences are provided by the numerous educational visits, including a number that are residential, where girls successfully learn to interact with each other and show respect, tolerance and consideration. Through the school council, girls have an opportunity to express their views and make suggestions for the development of the school. Girls have relevant and interesting experiences to learn what it means to be a citizen, for example when they attend courses organised by the local police.
- 2.21 Teachers set a good example for their pupils and encourage them to relate positively to one another, to take responsibility and participate fully in the life of the school. The girls' strong sense of community and the warmth of relationships are strongly evident throughout the school.
- 2.22 Since the last inspection, the provision for cultural development has improved significantly. Girls have many opportunities to appreciate their own and others' cultural traditions across the curriculum. Younger girls look at different cultures through a range of festivals and through their 'topic work'. Older girls develop their awareness and knowledge through the study of world religions, including Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Sikhism, and Islam. Cultural values and experiences are effectively broadened through subjects such as art, French, literature, and music, and through educational visits. Regular involvement in school events and productions adds considerably to girls' cultural development.
- 2.23 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of girls [Standard 2].

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

- 2.24 The teaching has many good features and is good across the school. Several instances of outstanding teaching were seen. The teaching has improved since the last inspection, particularly in Years 1 and 2. Despite a significant number of teachers joining the school in the past year, the consistency of the good quality of the teaching reflects the effectiveness of the leadership and management of the headmistress and senior staff.
- 2.25 At the heart of the successful teaching are teachers' enthusiasm for their pupils to do well and the excellent relationships between adults and pupils. A very purposeful atmosphere is seen in most lessons. The teaching enables girls to be interested in their work and to learn for themselves. Teachers are clear about what they want girls to learn and share this purpose with them. Good humour both by the adults and by the girls is often present in lessons. It is not surprising that girls report that teachers make learning fun whilst ensuring that it is challenging. In line with the school's aims, teachers and pupils regard good behaviour as the norm.
- 2.26 Teachers are hardworking, conscientious and have a secure command of the subjects they teach. In the pre-prep, teachers have a good understanding of the needs of young children and of the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Teachers in the prep make effective use of their specialist subject knowledge; a considerable improvement since the last inspection.
- 2.27 Lessons are well-planned and take proper account of what has been learnt before. Activities in lessons are interesting, as well as being challenging. Effective use is made of the available resources. Care is taken to ensure that work is suitably matched to the spread of ability found in each class. Useful opportunities are provided for girls to discuss issues. In most lessons, the teacher gives girls the opportunity to discuss the questions posed in small groups before answering. At the end of most lessons, teachers provide appropriate opportunities to sum up how the lesson has gone.
- 2.28 Following the recent introduction by the headmistress and the special needs coordinator of improved procedures, comprehensive support is now provided for girls with learning difficulties. Where necessary, girls have IEPs which teachers use carefully to plan their work. Good support is often provided by the

teaching assistants.

- 2.29 Although arrangements to identify and support more able girls are informal in that the school has identified the need for them to be codified into a policy and procedures, good support is provided for these girls. Lessons are carefully planned to provide appropriate challenge whilst enabling the rest of the class to play a full part in the lesson. More able girls do particularly well when teachers pose open-ended questions that encourage the girls 'thinking skills'; an aspect of the school's plan for improvement. Questions such as 'What makes you think that?' or 'Explain your idea' are used well in mathematics and ICT. In other subjects, there is a significant proportion of questioning that is closed, for example, questions that just ask for facts.
- 2.30 In the lessons where teaching is outstanding, the pace is very brisk and teachers include an imaginative range of activities. In a religious education lesson in Year 4, imaginative use was made of Hindu music to enable girls to learn about the Hindu god of creation. Across the schools, the pace in most lessons is brisk and time is used well; pupils make good progress as a consequence. An isolated instance of unsatisfactory teaching was due to the lack of pace and girls making insufficient progress as a result.
- 2.31 Effective arrangements are in place and implemented to assess and evaluate the standards girls reach in the subjects taught in line with the school's curriculum as indicated to parents. Teachers make the most of the favourable class sizes and know their pupils very well. In the Foundation Stage, good use is made of the national Foundation Stage profile. In Years 1 to 6, teachers use a range of assessments with emphasis placed on the use of national tests and assessing levels of achievement against the levels provided by the National Curriculum. Very good use of these levels is made to track pupils' progress and to predict appropriate levels for them to reach using nationally available information. Unfortunately, the school does not have the tests in Years 2 and 6 externally moderated and so the information on which predictions are made is not secure. A useful start has been made in using the information from assessment to make adaptations to the curriculum. Plans are in hand in the school improvement plan to use such information to plan individual targets for girls to achieve.
- 2.32 Teachers' marking is thorough and undertaken conscientiously. Good attention is paid to providing praise and encouragement. At its best, marking is a written dialogue between the teacher and pupil. Most marking does not however give girls written advice as to how they might improve their work and also provide them with feedback as to how well they are doing in the areas identified for improvement.
- 2.33 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

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

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

- 3.1 The care that the staff give to the well-being of the girls is outstanding and has successfully built on the good provision reported at the last inspection. Conscientious attention is paid to their welfare, health and safety. Staff know their pupils very well. Excellent relationships and a caring atmosphere that prevails throughout enable the school to meet one of its key aims.
- 3.2 The school is very successful in its aim to create a happy and supportive environment in which girls can grow in self-confidence. Parents are very appreciative of this. Girls take care to support each other, for example when they have a minor accident in the playground. In discussions with inspectors, and in the questionnaire completed by a random sample of girls prior to the inspection, girls commented that the school was very caring and friendly. They especially appreciate the family atmosphere. Girls are clearly proud of their school and enjoy being part of its community. As one girl said 'I wish I could stay here until I was 18, it is like home.'
- 3.3 Girls readily indicated that they would be willing to confide in an adult should they be experiencing difficulties. The girls showed that they were familiar with the school procedures and were clear about what to do if they had concerns. The ethos is one where care of the girls is central to the life of the school. Staff go the extra mile to ensure the well-being of the girls and provide very good role models, especially through their teamwork. The staff are effectively supported in their pastoral care by high quality policies and procedures that are implemented consistently by all staff, and overseen effectively by the senior management team. For example, girls speak highly of the arrangements for the 'feelings box' where they can

express their views. They are confident that staff take due notice of their suggestions or concerns.

- 3.4 The school's arrangements for promoting good behaviour are very detailed and thorough. They are known and respected by the girls who consider the rules to be fair. Thorough and conscientious attention is paid to the prevention of bullying. The anti-bullying policy is clear and is implemented very effectively; for example, well-chosen posters are displayed around the school. All girls spoken to said that they felt that bullying was not an issue in the school and should it occur, they had confidence that it would be taken very seriously and dealt with properly.
- 3.5 Successful arrangements are in place and effectively implemented to safeguard and promote girls' health and well-being. Detailed and conscientious attention is given to child protection. The policy is up-to-date and implemented consistently. Criminal Records Bureau checks have been made on staff and form a central part of the school's arrangements to recruit staff. Child protection officers have been designated and the necessary training has been undertaken. Emphasis is placed on healthy living both in the curriculum and in the preparation of meals. Girls are very appreciative of the quality of food provided.
- 3.6 Fire protection is thorough and all appliances and evacuation procedures are tested regularly. Routine suggestions from the Fire Department have been implemented. Fire risk assessments are up to date.
- 3.7 Effective arrangements are in place to ensure health and safety. A health and safety committee, which includes governors, meets regularly and the staff systematically undertake risk assessments. Thorough risk assessments are made for educational visits.
- 3.8 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**

- 3.9 Parents are very supportive of the school's aims and value the useful links they have with the school. In turn the school has developed productive links with the community to the benefit of the pupils. The strengths highlighted in the previous report have been maintained and links with the community have been further developed.
- 3.10 In their replies to the questionnaire sent out prior to the inspection, parents showed their particular appreciation of the progress of their daughters, the quality of teaching, the curriculum, the school's help and guidance and promotion of worthwhile attitudes and views. A small minority of parents who responded to the questionnaire expressed dissatisfaction with support for girls with learning difficulties, and extra-curricular activities. Inspection evidence confirms parents' positive views. As mentioned earlier in the report, the extra-curricular activities are extensive for a school of this size, and support for girls with learning difficulties has recently improved.
- 3.11 Useful opportunities are provided for the involvement of parents in the life of the school. Many parents provide much appreciated assistance. For example, they may help with educational visits, teas at sporting events, or assist with costumes in productions. Recently a parent has provided much needed help in cataloguing books in the library. Nominated parent class co-ordinators provide an important link between the school and its parents and also support the very effective and active 'Friends of Bramley Association'. Together they organise social activities such as coffee mornings and Christmas parties in addition to fundraising events which include an annual Christmas Fair, the Bramley Ball and end-of-year Barbecue and Barn Dance. The money raised from these events is used to benefit the pupils by purchasing equipment such as computers or musical instruments or for helping with larger projects such as the new library or outdoor play equipment.
- 3.12 Parents are provided with a comprehensive range of helpful information which keeps them well informed. An accessible website, regular newsletters, an informative prospectus, starter packs and detailed handbooks for parents and a comprehensive termly calendar provide a good insight into school life and encourage parents to feel part of the school. In the nursery, parents are kept well informed of their child's progress and parents often meet with staff informally at the beginning and end of each session. Parents are invited to attend workshops relating to particular curriculum themes. Recent themes have included phonics, handwriting, reading and mathematics.
- 3.13 Regular reports are sent to parents who acknowledge them as being helpful and informative, especially about their daughters' progress. In the better reports, parents are informed about any targets set, the

curriculum covered and comments about their daughters' achievements and attitudes to school. Plans are in hand to ensure that the next set of reports reflect the best practice.

- 3.14 The school handles the small number of parental concerns and informal complaints with due care. The vast majority of parents who completed the questionnaire indicated that the school had handled any concerns they had well. Parents have access to a more formal complaints procedure. The headmistress and teachers are approachable and accessible, providing an atmosphere in which all parents are made to feel welcome.
- 3.15 The school has many close links with the wider community and actively seeks ways to develop these links still further. For example, increased links have been made with Surrey County Council with regards to activities such as recycling and cycling proficiency.
- 3.16 Valuable links have been established with local senior citizens at Harvest and Christmas times. Close links have been maintained with the neighbouring church and its Rector in addition to establishing links with places of worship of different religions. Girls, parents and staff are very involved with the local May Pageant, making costumes and taking part in the procession. Older pupils are involved in competitive sports fixtures against a good number of other schools and regular visits are made to museums, environmental centres, and other places of interest. The range and extent of links with the local community contributes well to the girls' all round personal development.
- 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. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 Effective governance ensures a good quality of education is provided for pupils at every stage, in line with the school's aims.
- 4.2 The structure of the governing body enables it to provide effective oversight of the school. Members of the governing body offer a wide variety of relevant skills and expertise to the school. As a result of the high quality information provided by the headmistress, their consideration of the school improvement plan and their own working knowledge of the school, they are fully involved in the development of the school. They contribute appropriately to financial planning, investment in human and material resources and the school's educational well-being. For example, they have made a considerable investment in the provision for ICT. Meetings are well documented and include discussion of all aspects of school life ensuring that the school's aims are clear and successfully implemented. New governors are well briefed and a detailed induction process is currently being developed.
- 4.3 Governors are very supportive of the school management team and staff. The governors are well informed and have a good insight into the working of the school. They have a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and provide effective advice and support. They visit lessons, talk to staff, attend social functions, and become familiar with what happens during the school day. Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities for monitoring the quality of the school's provision, including how well it meets its aims, regulatory and legal requirements and act as a 'critical friend'. Good relations between the governors and staff are strongly fostered. Governors support the school in many ways and are generous with their time and areas of expertise.

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

- 4.4 Leadership and management are strong and have improved considerably since the last inspection. The outstanding leadership of the headmistress has enabled the formation of a senior management team that has flourished and become very effective in articulating the school's aims. This is evident from the positive ethos, the girls' excellent spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and the outstanding pastoral care.
- 4.5 The headmistress's leadership embodies the aims and values of the school. Very good teamwork and effective communication are the hallmarks of the school's leadership and management. The educational direction set by the headmistress is admirably supported by the senior management team and ensures that the school's aims are reflected in policies and procedures. The head of Early Years has effectively

developed a team that has improved the education provided for the younger girls. The director of studies and leader of pastoral care ensure consistency in their areas despite a considerable turnover of staff. The team has a good understanding of the school's strengths and of those areas that need development.

- 4.6 Curriculum co-ordinators have a comprehensive understanding of the strengths and areas for development within the area of their responsibility. All contribute to the formulation of the school development plan which is carefully prioritised in line with the school's aims, a significant improvement. Clear action plans are drawn up and implemented. Regular and thorough reviews check the progress and implementation of the plan. The recent changes to the management systems and procedures to identify and support girls with learning difficulties have improved the provision made for these pupils.
- 4.7 The successful management is reflected in the hard work and commitment of the staff to do the best for their pupils. Important initiatives, such as the development of an agreed policy for teaching and learning, and emphasis on the teaching of spelling, including phonics are supported by training both inside the school and by attendance at courses further afield. Teacher appraisal is now established and is being used well to support individual teachers and also to support school developments. Helpful arrangements are in place for the induction of staff new to the school and for newly qualified teachers.
- 4.8 The prudent management of finances by the governing body ensures that resources are sufficient for the curriculum. Very good provision is made in ICT for a school of this size. The school is well administered and runs smoothly. The care provided by those who administer reflect the school's aims and contributes to the positive ethos. Very good use is made of the accommodation, which is well maintained. Well-organised displays of girls' completed work add considerably to the learning environment.
- 4.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.10 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

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

### **Overall Conclusions**

- 5.1 The school is successful in its aim to provide a caring and supportive environment in which girls are happy and are good 'all rounders'. The provision made for girls' personal development and for their pastoral care is outstanding, reflecting the commitment of the staff to do the best for the girls in their charge who are provided with a broad, relevant and interesting curriculum.
- 5.2 Levels of achievement are good in mathematics and science. Achievement in English is satisfactory rather than good, partly due to considerable changes in specialist staff over the past three years. The improvement of girls' achievement in English, particularly in their correct use of grammar and punctuation, and accuracy in spelling correctly is the priority in the school's plan for improvement. Since January, girls have made good progress in these areas. Girls are successful in creative aspects of the curriculum and increasingly in sport.
- 5.3 Exemplary leadership by the headmistress, well supported by the senior management team, together with effective governance and good quality teaching ensure that girls are well supported in their learning. Work is in progress to provide them with more opportunities to think in different and even more challenging ways. Considerable improvement has been made to assessment procedures and plans are in hand to enable better use of the information gained to set targets for girls to aim for.
- 5.4 Since the last inspection good improvement has been made. The school is better managed, with improved monitoring of the work of the school and effective development planning. The curriculum is better planned and is much more in tune with the school's aims. The strengths reported previously have been maintained.
- 5.5 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.6 In order to build on its improvement since the last inspection and to further achieve its aim of enabling girls

to become good all rounders who attain good academic standards, the school should:

1. continue to place the current emphasis on enabling girls to improve their use of correct grammar and punctuation, and their accuracy in spelling;
2. improve the use of assessment information by
  - setting targets for girls to aim for;
  - ensuring that assessments made of levels of attainment are standardised against national standards;
  - ensuring greater consistency in marking girls' work, particularly by providing them with useful ideas as to how they might improve their work;
3. implement fully plans to provide girls with consistent opportunities to think in different and even more challenging ways.

5.7 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

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

6.1 The inspection was carried out from 15<sup>th</sup> May to 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2006. 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.

### **List of Inspectors**

Rod Sharman	Reporting Inspector
Tony Blackhurst	Headmaster, IAPS Preparatory School
Gail Purt	Retired Headmistress, GSA Junior School