

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

SIDCOT SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

12th – 15th February 2007

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Sidcot School

Full Name of the School	Sidcot School
DfES Number	802/6002
Registered Charity Number	296491
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Chair of Committee of Management (Governors)	Jefferson Horsley
Age Range	3-18 years
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	12-15 February 2007

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 was not carried out in conjunction with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full CSCI report can be found at www.csci.org.uk.

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.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 The school traces its foundation back to 1699 when the local Quaker meetings provided the necessary funding. In 1808, it was established by the Society of Friends as a public school for boys and girls in new purpose-built school buildings that it still occupies today. Over the years since then the school has been enlarged and extended through building programmes intended to meet the demands of changing educational requirements and curriculum developments. Continuing this tradition, work will start on a new centre for arts, music and drama later in 2007.
- 1.2 The school's philosophy and aims are based in the Quaker tradition which, for example, encourages the development of good in each person and the reasonable resolution of conflict, and seeks to promote whole-hearted participation in a community that is challenging yet free from ruthless or self-destructive competition. The school aims to develop the whole person and, while it seeks to secure the best possible academic success for its pupils, it also seeks to develop other qualities less easily measured by examinations and including:
- self-confidence;
 - self-discipline;
 - responsibility;
 - sensitivity to the needs of others;
 - constructive use of leisure time;
 - and an awareness of the spiritual dimension to life.
- 1.3 The school is not narrowly sectarian and pupils from all backgrounds are welcomed. Provision is made for a total of 484 full-time pupils (276 boys and 208 girls). The junior school has 143 pupils on roll: 10 under the age of 5; 41 aged 5-7; and 78 aged 7-11. In addition, 14 under- five-year-olds attend part-time. The senior school has a total of 361 pupils: 258 aged 11-16 and 103 over 16 years of age. One hundred and forty-two pupils are boarders (89 boys and 53 girls) in 5 boarding houses.
- 1.4 Up to the end of Year 11, the school is not selective and caters for a wide spread of ability amongst pupils who, it believes, will benefit from the education offered. In the senior school, the ability range is from below to well above the national average, with the majority of pupils in Years 7-11 being of average to slightly above the national average. The school observes that its pupils tend to be motivated and aspirational and this has a positive influence on their achievement. Entry to the sixth form is largely dependent on satisfactory attainment at GCSE and departmental assessment of their suitability for particular courses and subjects at A/AS level. Where pupils are performing in line with their abilities, they should be achieving results in public examinations that are at least in line with those achieved by all maintained schools nationally. The Academic English School (AES) offers a one year course to bring students up to speed with the English needed to cope with A-level requirements, and those applying are admitted following a successful interview and evidence of satisfactory prior learning.
- 1.5 Pupils come from a variety of social and economic backgrounds but predominantly they come from local farming families or those that are engaged in business or professional activity. At any one time, between ten and fifteen per cent of pupils are from families of Friends. Many have a long association with the school. The homes of the majority of boarders are in other parts of the country or abroad, mainly in Europe and the Far East.

- 1.6 The school caters for two pupils with statements of special educational need and identifies 81 who require learning support that is offered through the supplementary education department. English is an additional language (EAL) for 116 pupils, mainly from overseas, and just under half receive language support.
- 1.7 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 tables.

Junior School

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception
Junior 1	Year 1
Junior 2	Year 2
Junior 3	Year 3
Junior 4	Year 4
Junior 5	Year 5
Junior 6	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
Third Form	Year 7
Lower 4	Year 8
Upper 4	Year 9
Lower 5	Year 10
Upper 5	Year 11
Lower 6	Year 12
Upper 6	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school offers an education that is distinctive and of good quality. It is consistent with, and set to meet, the school's aims and philosophy and seeks to be as wide-ranging and flexible as possible, bearing in mind individual pupil interests and needs. The last inspection found that the structure to manage the curriculum, staffing and resources throughout the school's component sections was not effective but this has been greatly improved. All junior school pupils are now housed in one building, where the focus is on appropriate provision and coordination of the curriculum for pupils of this age range. The AES is now a department that is effectively integral to the senior school and provides for students for whom English is an additional or foreign language.
- 2.2 The school community operates in a caring and civilised environment that is supportive of all that is sought for pupils' educational experience. The curriculum successfully meets the school's aim 'to secure the best possible public examination success' as well as developing 'other qualities less easily measured by examinations'. It is well planned, ensures equality of access and promotes participation in activities and interests. In both the junior and senior schools the education provided contributes very effectively to pupils' all-round development and is successful in promoting their linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social development. Provision for aesthetic, creative and physical development is a strong and successful feature of what is offered and enables pupils from an early age to have experiences that are innovative and personally satisfying.
- 2.3 In all, the curriculum is well planned. In the junior school, the balanced curriculum contributes very well to pupils' all-round development and, in addition to all the subjects of the national curriculum and religious education, the addition of French, personal and social education (PSHE), library lessons and swimming adds suitable breadth. In some subjects, teaching by specialist teachers from the senior school and access to senior school facilities further extends the range and quality of what is offered. Attention to the development of literacy and numeracy is sound.
- 2.4 Within the senior school the subject choices for GCSE and A/AS level courses build on a programme in the lower part of the school that prepares pupils well and lays very good foundations in the skills of speaking, listening and numeracy. Curriculum review since the last inspection has led to decisions that are set to make for further interesting educational provision. The International Baccalaureate (IB), to be introduced in September 2007, is seen to be more in line with the Quaker ethos and investment in equipment and training for information and communications technology (ICT) has started to extend the range of what is offered. The AES offers a distinctive experience that enables its students to develop their competence in English and prepare those who are academically capable for success at A/AS level.
- 2.5 The experience of both junior and senior pupils within the academic curriculum is balanced and enriched by a suitably wide range and significant number of extra-curricular activities. Within its aims, the school sees this as a significant aspect of provision which offers 'education that goes beyond the formal classroom curriculum to encourage individual qualities, skills and interests through clubs, societies and other extra-curricular activities'. Most parents who responded to a questionnaire, issued in advance of the inspection, appreciated the range of extra-curricular provision on offer and junior school parents were particularly well satisfied. The school is aware that a few parents express the wish for more and that cancellation of activities at short notice creates disappointment and works hard to

meet expectations. A recent school questionnaire about sports provision has engendered alterations to provision and a constant concern to make good weekend provision for boarders is part of the continuing school development plan.

- 2.6 The preparation for each successive stage of education or entry to adult and working life is well managed. From the beginning, children are carefully initiated into the junior school and, through regular contacts with senior school staff, some lessons and activities in the senior school and participation in whole-school concerts and plays, junior pupils become familiar with the senior school. Year 6 pupils spend a well-constructed day in the senior school shortly before transfer and this provides further good induction into the ways of the senior school.
- 2.7 Careers education is effective and generally appreciated by the pupils, particularly as they move into the sixth form. From Year 9 onwards pupils start to gain understanding of what is on offer beyond the experience of school and what they need to do about it. Effective guidance is provided through sessions in the PSHE course and is supported by a good range of activities including: work experience and work shadowing; individual interviews for all pupils; advice and help associated with higher education; careers fairs; visits; the involvement of the Independent Schools Careers Organisation (ISCO), including the use of interest inventories and tests; and assistance from the local careers advice service (Connexions).
- 2.8 The school makes admirable provision for pupils requiring help and support associated with learning disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. Identification of need is systematic and specialist teachers communicate effectively with class teachers so that there is good awareness of the assistance pupils require.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 Given the non-selective nature of the school, levels of achievement are high, both in classroom subjects and in the wider curriculum, and admirably meet the school's aims. Standards are higher than at the time of the last inspection.
- 2.11 Throughout their time in the school, pupils develop a secure and thorough knowledge and understanding of the subjects and activities in which they are involved. They can apply these, using appropriate skills, and some of their work shows creativity and an ability to think and act critically: in design technology, pupils create artefacts showing individuality and flair, as well as considerable skill. Written work in English, at all ages and levels of ability, shows skilful arguing of a case based on personal experience, personal exploration of their reading, and engagement with the topic or theme. In Year 3, pupils were able to build on previous work on alliteration to provide suitable alliterative adjectives for the sea. Pupils often successfully apply previous knowledge to new work.
- 2.12 The needs of pupils of different abilities are recognised and thoroughly supported, so that most achieve equally well. Those for whom English is an additional language, make rapid progress. Those with other special needs, such as dyslexia, benefit from a high level of support that promotes confidence and good learning. The school has started to identify pupils who are gifted or talented but there is little sign in their work that they are catered for or challenged in any special way.
- 2.13 No national test results or other recognised standardised results are available to provide comparison of pupil performance at the end of Year 6. Examination results at GCSE have

- improved since the last inspection and are very good in relation to the pupil ability profile. The trend has moved steadily upwards over the last four years and available comparisons for the years 2003-2005 show that results have been above the national average of all maintained schools in all subjects except business studies, which is in line with national averages, and classical studies, which attracts too few candidates for valid comparison. Performance in drama, French, geography, German, ICT, mathematics and science is well above the national average for all maintained schools. The proportion of grades A and A* is rising quickly and, in 2006, at over 40%, is twice as high as the average achieved by maintained schools in the previous three years.
- 2.14 Results at AS/A2 level have also improved. At A level, in 2006, the proportion of grades A and B rose markedly from the 2004 and 2005 level of 61.5% to 73%. Particularly outstanding are the mathematics, further mathematics, chemistry and physics results, with those in mathematics being especially noteworthy because of the high number of students who take, and are successful in, the subject.
- 2.15 The school celebrates its success outside the classroom and pupils achieve good standards in art, dance, design technology, drama, singing and in other activities such as Young Enterprise. Participation rates are high and pupils approach these and other activities with considerable enthusiasm. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is well supported, attracts the interest of overseas pupils, and accounts for a good record of Gold, Silver and Bronze awards. A poetry competition offers encouragement for creative writing and pupils gain good results in Mathematics Challenge. Pupil exchanges with schools in France and Germany stimulate modern language learning. In sports matches, teams offer robust opposition to other school with some success. Some pupils achieve high standards in sport outside the school.
- 2.16 Throughout the school, most pupils speak confidently and express themselves clearly. Pupils are encouraged to speak out and make oral contributions. They can present their work to other class members, respect each other's views and listen intently to their teachers. In the senior school, oral expression was particularly good in drama, English, EAL, history, geography, modern foreign languages and science. Pupils in Years 3 and 5 pupils replied thoughtfully to questions and were extremely confident in talking about their school experience, Year 7 pupils talked very articulately about their work in mathematics and Year 8 pupils were able to give a clear explanation of how, in ICT, they had chosen the topic for an electronic presentation and how they had edited slides to gain particular effects.
- 2.17 The written work that was seen is competent, though little was really outstanding. Pupils have a very good grasp of mathematical concepts and apply them confidently across a range of subjects. In a Year 8 geography lesson, for example, pupils quickly manipulated figures from the board and Year 6 pupils used previously learnt mathematical skills to attack more complex concepts and problems associated with proportion and ratio.
- 2.18 Pupils are confident and competent and make good progress in specific ICT lessons. Effective use was made of ICT in a few other subjects and provided good examples of ways in which pupils' learning can be enriched and extended. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson, pupils worked successfully on an interactive whiteboard to complete a timed challenge involving the use of positive and negative numbers and in a Year 7 art lesson pupils used commercial software to create a portrait in the style of Julian Opie. AES students developed language skills through the use of ICT, where they were creating an electronic presentation of a scientific topic.
- 2.19 As they move through the school, pupils learn to use language effectively and are able to discuss and debate clearly and calmly in subjects such as geography, history and science. In

both Year 6 and Year 12 pupils took part in thoughtful discussions about climate change while in a Year 12 drama lesson pupils analysed and discussed their work with vigour and sensitivity to others' needs and feelings.

- 2.20 From a young age, most pupils take notes conscientiously and apply themselves diligently, regardless of how interesting they find tasks and worksheets. They work quietly and purposefully during private study and prep sessions. Given the opportunity, pupils develop and gain a great deal from independent research. Year 13 students of English, for example, carried out independent research on the background to William Blake's poetry; Year 5 pupils researched an Old Testament topic on their own or in pairs with skilled assistance from the librarian; and geography and history course work encouraged pupils to find things out for themselves. Most of pupils' work in the classroom, however, is carried out under direct instruction from the teacher. Even in sixth form lessons, there is sparse evidence of independent research or the development of study skills that would prepare students effectively for the next stage of education.
- 2.21 The high quality of cooperative working that is seen throughout the school clearly reflects its caring and supportive ethos and enables pupils to learn from one another in ways that are conducive to constructive learning. A conspicuous example was seen where Year 6 pupils combined with Reception to make a dragon for the Chinese New Year and both groups learned from each other.
- 2.22 In all lessons and activities, pupils work hard, change quickly and quietly from one activity to another and keep going on a task with enthusiasm and commitment. These qualities were found in several striking instances: in a swimming lesson, a pupil battled to complete a full length of backstroke; in ICT, a pupil insisting on finding a solution to a frustrating problem; a Year 2 pupil working stoically at the skill of counting up in tens, until she could prove to her teacher that she could do it.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.23 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils lies right at the heart of the Quaker philosophy and is exceptionally strong. This is evident in so many areas of school life and most particularly in the quality of relationships, the shared and individual sense of responsibility and the respect shown by pupils to all members of the school and the outside community.
- 2.24 Within the curriculum and extra-curricular activities, much provision supports and nurtures pupils' spiritual development by building their confidence and understanding of themselves and valuing their contribution. Pupils are confident and self assured and have very relaxed but respectful relationships with members of the staff. Special events add to pupils' experience and understanding of the spiritual. In Year 8, for example, pupils visit a healing and meditation centre and take part in a relaxation class. Lively displays in the classrooms and corridors of the junior school promote positive behaviour and the core Quaker beliefs. Spiritual development is most obviously centred round the weekly Meeting for Worship which provides space for self-examination and contemplation. Pupils approach this time with reverence and seriousness and within it have the opportunity to reflect on some core beliefs.
- 2.25 Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong and are able to discuss moral issues sensitively. As they move through the school they grow to understand the use of techniques that make for effective questioning and persuasive argument and engage enthusiastically in discussion of moral issues that are close to their beliefs. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons and the citizenship policy, embedded in schemes of work, give

opportunities for pupils to consider and understand their moral responsibilities, as in a Year 12 discussion on the effects of global warming and a Year 10 debate on juvenile crime. Outside speakers contribute to pupils' understanding of different perspectives on matters such as peace initiatives around the world and 'green' issues.

- 2.26 Strong social awareness is a significant feature displayed by the pupils, who recognise the part they can play towards greater social cohesion both within and outside the school. A very active programme of events raising money for charity includes a shoebox initiative at Christmas, Red Nose Day and the Wessex and Macmillan walks. An annual Fairtrade fortnight highlights the importance of considering and treating others fairly. In a Year 8 geography lesson, pupils discussed the social effects of taxation on poorer countries and an environmental issue was highlighted when, in a Year 7 music lesson, pupils wrote a Rubbish Rap. Good opportunities exist for pupils to learn about a variety of public institutions, about which they show some knowledge and awareness.
- 2.27 Appreciation and respect for other cultures is noteworthy. In strong contrast to the situation during the last inspection, when there was some isolation of overseas pupils, the school has worked hard to encourage the integration of pupils from overseas into the school community and this now works particularly well with no evidence of isolation. Pupils of all nationalities show tolerance and understanding and appreciate the richness of such diversity. In the European drama club, various sketches were rehearsed in German. The Chinese New Year has prompted several initiatives across the school: Chinese pupils for whom English is a foreign language gave a presentation explaining their history and tradition, while at both ends of the junior school the festival was celebrated through a joint study.
- 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 The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory, is predominantly good and occasionally outstanding and makes a significant contribution to the fulfilment of the school's aims. The best teaching is associated with the use of a variety of teaching methods and the opportunity for pupils to put their knowledge and skills into practice. Standards of teaching have been maintained since the last inspection.
- 2.30 Teaching enables pupils, including those with learning needs and those for whom English is an additional language, to acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding and develop new skills. Teachers know their pupils well. They understand the aptitudes and needs of the majority of pupils, plan well to meet their needs and enable them to make good progress in lessons and written work. The needs of more able pupils are not always well met, however, and these pupils do not necessarily benefit from work that is sufficiently challenging or develops and extends their learning appropriately. The integration of pupils for whom English is an additional language is very good; they are very strongly supported in their education. Teaching staff are aware of their needs and make a careful check of their understanding of the vocabulary used in text books. In a Year 12 statistics lesson, the teacher had to explain the meaning of the words 'hollyhocks' and 'smallholding', while in other lessons more technical and subject-specific language had to be explained.
- 2.31 Teaching is thoroughly planned and classroom time is well used. Much good teaching occurred when pupils were involved in practical activity or allowed to be creative, particularly in subjects such as art, drama and music. In this way, junior school pupils benefit from good use of some of the facilities in the senior school, such the sports hall, an extra-curricular art activity and use of ICT facilities in Year 3 music. Nevertheless, while

- teaching was generally effective, little variation was seen in the range of teaching methods employed.
- 2.32 Teachers have a good command of their subjects and in the senior school this knowledge frequently extends to public examination requirements which are effectively communicated to pupils and ensure that they are aware of what is required of them.
- 2.33 Departments and subject areas are resourced to meet perceived need, so that all have resources to support teaching and learning that are at least adequate, and are often good. Most resources are very well used, although the potential to use ICT as a teaching tool is not yet fully recognised. The new junior school building has been complemented with a good-quality and suitable range of resources that represent a considerable improvement since the last inspection and are supportive of teaching and learning. The impressive displays in the junior school reinforce the teaching effectively.
- 2.34 The majority of work is well marked although the implementation of departmental marking in the senior school is inconsistent. Throughout the school, the best marking includes comments that enable pupils to understand how to improve their work and make further progress.
- 2.35 The assessment of pupils' work is generally sound throughout the school. In the junior school, while assessment enables an accurate picture of each pupil's academic performance, it is not used as a diagnostic tool to influence short-term planning. In the senior school the use of assessment is variable but at best, in subjects such as art, mathematics, modern foreign languages and practical physical education, it is well used to inform lesson planning. Pupils are evaluated with reference to baseline and standardised tests in a number of years and formal end of year examinations and tests are also used to measure pupil attainment. The results of these are used by some senior departments to confirm and inform setting arrangements. All report grades and examination results are recorded and the analysis of testing and examination data is being used to a limited extent. In all, the school holds a significant amount of information about pupils' performance but does not yet have a formalised system that would make for a coherent approach to data analysis. The information is not used well to track pupil progress through the school or to build on the target setting that operates in a modest way for Year 11 pupils, following GCSE mock examinations. The school acknowledges that more could be done with all this data and is considering ways of committing them to computer.
- 2.36 Teachers' high expectations encourage pupils to behave responsibly. Pupils are attentive and considerate towards each other in lessons. The very strong relationships in class allow pupils to speak out without fear of being ridiculed if their answer is wrong.
- 2.37 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 quality of pastoral care and welfare of pupils is outstandingly good and, with one exception, the arrangements for the health and safety of pupils are very good. In all, this upholds the school's intention that 'everyone is responsible for promoting the exemplary atmosphere, relationships and quality of life at Sidcot'. The good standards of pastoral care, support and guidance that were indicated in the last report have been maintained and further improvement has been made.
- 3.2 In both the junior and senior schools, the care and attention to the individual is remarkably strong and owes much to the very good work of the boarding and pastoral teams, and dedicated teaching staff. Pupils are very well known and the informal staff network is effective in sharing information about pupils' strengths and weaknesses. Thorough documentation identifies staff roles and responsibilities, as well as the pastoral structure and procedures and ensures that the system is clear to staff and pupils.
- 3.3 The Quaker ethos encourages the excellent behaviour that is seen around the school and in the classrooms. The outstanding quality of relationships displayed between pupils and between pupils and staff promotes a mature, friendly and supportive community. A degree of trust is accepting of difference and allows pupils to be open and honest in talking about personal achievements or weakness.
- 3.4 Measures to promote good discipline are effective. Sanctions are fair and seen as such by the pupils. They are most effective when dealt with informally by the teaching or boarding staff. In the junior school, the excellent use of praise and encouragement works best to promote good behaviour. Procedures to handle sensitive issues, such as bullying, are firmly in place. The initial response to problems is usually quick and effective, although the resolution of the matter is not always made sufficiently clear to the parents or pupils involved.
- 3.5 A healthy lifestyle is promoted through the curriculum and the wide range of activities. The pupils appreciate the efforts made for their welfare through the health centre and the variety and quality of food at breakfast and lunch.
- 3.6 Many comprehensive policies ensure that arrangements for health and safety are in place and secure. Clear roles and responsibilities are identified for child protection matters, for creating risk assessments, for health and safety and to guide teachers responses to sensitive issues. Necessary training is undertaken by designated staff and the whole staff where appropriate and outside agencies are used where their expertise will add to that held within the school's staff and officers.
- 3.7 Child protection measures are in place and are successful. Checks on the suitability of all adults who teach or have contact with pupils are thorough and secure. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. While the school has in place necessary arrangements to ensure pupils' health and safety, those associated with monitoring where pupils are at the end of the teaching day are unsatisfactory and do not secure pupils' safety. Varying formal and informal arrangements are in use to record pupils' whereabouts but there are gaps that allow pupils to fall through the net, and the school does not have a complete record of where pupils are, who has gone home and who has stayed.
- 3.8 The school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:

- (a) put in place arrangements to ensure that the whereabouts of pupils are known and recorded at all times when they are under the care of the school [Regulation 3.(2)(b)].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.9 Parents are very pleased and positive about the quality of education and support provided for their children. Of those who returned the questionnaire seeking their views in advance of the inspection, a high proportion strongly support the attitudes and values that the school holds. They are satisfied with the range of subjects on offer and the provision of extra-curricular activities. There is general appreciation for the individual support that those requiring learning support receive and for the way they that they are so well integrated socially in and out of the classroom. Another questionnaire, issued by the school, had recently sought parents' views on sport provision and they appreciate being involved in this way, in the feedback they received and improvements that have been forthcoming as a result. The school works hard to keep parents informed and to develop worthwhile, productive links with the local and wider community.
- 3.10 Parents give a very positive impression of their involvement with the school, both in terms of the education and support their children receive and in the ways in which they are able to participate in various aspects of school life. Good communication is offered through an informative school newsletter and a copy of the lunch menu that is sent to parents weekly, either electronically or in hard copy. A strong parents' association has been established in the senior school and currently one is being developed in the junior school. These are positive initiatives and the senior association has recently undertaken fundraising to provide tents for The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme expeditions and some improvement of facilities in the health centre. Various other events bring the school community together including coffee mornings, cake sales, a weekly organic market and a Christmas bazaar which is run jointly by parents, pupils and staff. Parents very much value these opportunities to be involved.
- 3.11 Reports are provided at appropriate intervals. They contain helpful comments by all who are involved with a particular pupil and encourage the participation of both parents and the pupil through adding their comments. Parents' meetings are appreciated, although a few respondents would like more time to be made available on these occasions. Nevertheless, parents feel that they are encouraged to approach staff for further discussion at other times.
- 3.12 The school is keen to ensure that parental complaints are handled fairly and that a sympathetic response is provided as soon as possible. Most parents are satisfied with the efficiency and outcome, although some regret that matters sometimes take time to be resolved and would like to be kept better informed during the process of resolution.
- 3.13 Since the last inspection, the school has put greater emphasis on developing links with the community and continues to strengthen them. Most links are purposeful in knowing and being known in the local community and establishing the school as a responsible member of that community. The local rugby club leases pitches from the school, while some pupils join local teams for weekend matches. The nearby primary school and swimming club both make good use of the swimming pool. A small number of pupils take part in a course at a local Scuba Diving Centre which can form part of their The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme involvement, whilst offering assistance there to some with disabilities. Pupils are noted for their good behaviour around the locality and make excellent ambassadors for the school. In the junior school pupils make an annual carol singing visit to a retirement home. There is also a trainee teacher link with the local Community College and an exchange initiative with some thirty other institutions, pioneered by the art department and involving Year 11 pupils

in designing and building the website. The school currently benefits from having four Gap Year students from a variety of continents.

- 3.14 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].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.15 The last report by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate was in March 2005. The strengths that were identified have been maintained and much progress has been made on the points they made for improvement, especially the support for overseas pupils. The excellent integration of all pupils now makes for a truly international community that is enjoyed by all.
- 3.16 The heads of house and boarding staff have excellent knowledge of their pupils and relationships are very good. They are often informal in their interaction with one another but respect for the adults in the house is also evident. Fun and enjoyment were clearly observed.
- 3.17 A good range of activities is offered during the week and the boarders appreciate the balance of weekend activities, free time and time for further study.
- 3.18 The food was considered good during the day although the quantity and quality in the evening is not seen as sufficient by several pupils. In particular, some hungry boys would like more at supper.
- 3.19 The quality of accommodation and resources is adequate and suitable in all houses. The houses are warm, comfortable and have some homely touches. Some accommodation, such as shower facilities, is tired but the school has a rolling programme to deal with this.
- 3.20 The boarders are happy with their houses and appreciate the very good care they receive from hard-working staff.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The structure of the governing body and arrangements to support the general oversight and concern for the school are well in place and are capable of providing effective strategic direction. A good range of experience amongst governors, not least financial, has been established to ensure that the five sub-committees contain appropriate professional expertise that enables them to help the school in a variety of ways. The Quaker members are committed and effective in sustaining, maintaining and developing the character of the school, while a parent governor and two staff members make for a broad range of interest and representation. Governors are clear about their role, to provide strategic oversight and wise counsel, and the executive role of the headmaster in running the school.
- 4.2 The governing body as a whole is aware of its responsibilities in general terms and strong on financial planning to support educational provision, maintenance and development of buildings and oversight of the Quaker ethos. They are kept well informed by the head.
- 4.3 There is no doubting the commitment of most governors and several are in and around the school on a regular basis. They have a good knowledge of the school through such visits and attendance at the various social events, and are well known to staff. The governing body is aware, however, that more could be done to enable closer monitoring of the school's activities and understanding of what the staff does and moves are afoot to improve the situation. Recently, increased attention to educational issues through the education sub-committee has provided good support for the headmaster's deliberations.
- 4.4 The governing body is well informed and suitably placed to oversee the effectiveness of the school and its successes.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The overall leadership and management of the school gives clear direction and purpose and fully supports the school's aims in seeking to offer education that is consistent with the Quaker philosophy. The headmaster knows his school well and through confident and thoughtful leadership has enabled significant progress since the last inspection, while maintaining the good that he inherited. In this he is strongly supported by a senior management team that is well structured to provide oversight of all key aspects of the school's provision. The transition to the new junior school has been effectively organised and managed by the head of juniors, to establish provision that is pleasant and appropriate for the age and abilities of the pupils. The school is now poised to consolidate what has been achieved and to move forward under clear leadership.
- 4.6 Those with management responsibilities are fully involved in analysing the school's needs and setting of priorities through a comprehensive structure of committees and working groups that successfully involve staff at different levels and include governors and the School Council where it is appropriate. The process is evident through the quality of provision for pastoral care and recent careful planning for IB. Staff have been involved in bringing to fruition the planning for the arts centre. The school development plan is more tentative in addressing some big issues, such as assessment or pedagogy, but the school is aware of this and intends to take thinking forward.

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- 4.7 The school's middle management is responsible and pastoral heads and heads of house play a particularly important part in the success of the school. The financial management of departments is effective in supporting educational provision. The school secures well motivated teaching and support staff. Criminal Record Bureau (CRB) checks are carried out appropriately on all new staff and arrangements for the induction of new teachers are good, including those for newly qualified teachers to be monitored and trained appropriately. The system for appraisal of departments is effective but, as yet, appraisal of performance of individual members of staff is not fully implemented across the school.
- 4.8 Resources are in plentiful supply and those for the younger pupils in the junior school are greatly improved since the last inspection. The commissioning of a space audit has underpinned the ambitious programme of building for the new arts centre and supports considerations about the development of other areas of the school.
- 4.9 Communication within the school and beyond is effective and facilitated by prompt and efficient office procedures and administrative support throughout the school.
- 4.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school is highly successful in meeting its aims and this is palpably evident in the development of the personal qualities of its pupils as they move through the school. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, is predominantly good and occasionally outstanding. The curriculum is sufficiently broad and extends beyond the classroom into activities and visits that provide a range of experience that contributes to the education of the whole young person.
- 5.2 The school has many strengths and is outstanding in several important areas. The Quaker ethos pervades the school, supports all that affects pupils' life and work and makes for reflective young people. Pupils are exceptionally well known and cared for. Relationships between pupils, and pupils and staff, are remarkable for the respect and consideration offered to others. Pupils are at ease, confident without being arrogant and relatively mature in their approach to their peers and adults. The attention to EAL and learning support is consistent and of high quality.
- 5.3 The move to the junior school has provided a new and exciting environment and has the potential to further develop approaches to curriculum development that will ensure continuity and progress as pupils move forward into the senior school.
- 5.4 Under new leadership, the school has made several improvements that were called for in the last inspection. The structure to manage effectively the curriculum, staffing and resources throughout the school's component sections has been considerably improved by the opening of the new junior school building where provision and staffing is appropriate for all junior-aged pupils. A general consensus on the educational development of the school has been developed through a consultative process that involves governors, staff and, sometimes, pupils and is evident in the studied approach to the introduction of the IB. The resources for teaching and learning are now fully adequate to sustain the quality of work in the junior years. The overseas students in the AES have been fully integrated onto the main school site and attendance registers are completed satisfactorily.
- 5.5 The school complies with almost all of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present fully meet Standard 3 (welfare, health and safety).

Next Steps

- 5.6 Both the junior and senior schools have made significant progress since the last inspection. The following points identify areas that would make for further improvement.
1. Improve and extend the range and effectiveness of different teaching approaches and styles through:
 - routine monitoring, oversight and appraisal by senior managers;
 - development of the use of ICT as a teaching tool;
 - further encouragement of independent learning;
 - identifying and sharing the best practice that exists in the school;
 - learning, gained by in-service training or visiting other schools to observe effective practice.
 2. Ensure that the direction of the junior school is supported by adequate time for leadership and management tasks.
 3. Strengthen continuity between the junior and senior schools, through curriculum development that involves staff in both schools.
 4. Make consistent provision and offer appropriate challenge for the most able pupils.
- 5.7 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) put in place arrangements to ensure that the whereabouts of pupils are known and recorded at all times when they are under the care of the school [Regulation 3.(2)(b)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 12th to 15th February 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 and parents, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the health centre. 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

Mrs Beryl Fawcett	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Julie Bolter	Head of department, SHMIS school
Mrs Maureen Bradley	Former headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Wendy Foster	Former head, SHMIS junior school
Mrs Susan Goshawk	Former deputy head, IAPS school
Mr Michael Jacob	Deputy head, SHMIS school
Mr Daniel Phillips	Head of department, HMC school
Mr John Tolputt	Headmaster, SHMIS school