



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

University College School

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|------------|-------------------|
| Full Name of School | University College School | | |
| DfE Number | 202/6018 | | |
| Registered Charity Number | 312748 | | |
| Address | University College School Frognaal Hampstead London NW3 6XH | | |
| Telephone Number | 020 7435 2215 | | |
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| Email Address | seniorschool@ucs.org.uk | | |
| Headmaster | Mr Kenneth J Durham | | |
| Chair of Council | The Rt Hon Sir Brian Leveson | | |
| Age Range | 11 to 18 | | |
| Total Number of Pupils | 845 | | |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (781 boys; 64 girls) | | |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): | 0 | 11-16: 538 |
| | 3-5 (EYFS): | 0 | 16-18: 307 |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: | 845 | |
| Inspection dates | 08 Nov 2011 to 09 Nov 2011 | | |
| | 05 Dec 2011 to 07 Dec 2011 | | |

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2005.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

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

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

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 University College School (UCS) was founded in 1830 as part of University College London and moved to Hampstead in 1907. The UCS foundation, now independent of the University, comprises three schools: UCS Senior School (for boys aged eleven to eighteen and girls aged sixteen to eighteen); the Junior Branch (for boys aged seven to eleven), which was inspected concurrently with UCS; and The Phoenix (for boys and girls aged three to seven), which was inspected in January 2011. All three schools maintain the founding Benthamite principles of religious tolerance, respect for the individual and the development of independence of mind. . The first girls were admitted to the sixth form in 2008. UCS is governed by a council composed of nineteen members.
- 1.2 The aims of UCS are to: provide a stimulating and enriching education within a liberal and tolerant environment; encourage intellectual curiosity, breadth of study, independence of mind, tolerance, confidence and self-expression; prepare pupils for life beyond school; and enable pupils to contribute to local, national and global communities.
- 1.3 Of the 845 pupils in the school, most are from professional families and the cultural mix is representative of the local area; 307, including 64 girls, are in the sixth form. Of the 115 pupils identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 31 receive specialist learning support; 2 pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) and there is one pupil for whom English is an additional language (EAL).
- 1.4 Entry into Year 7 for pupils not in the Junior Branch is by the school's own entrance tests and interview; entry into Year 9 is by preliminary assessment and interview and is conditional upon performance in the Independent Schools Examination Board (ISEB) Common Entrance examination. Entry to the sixth form is by entrance tests and interview. Music Awards and means-tested bursaries are available. The ability profile of the school to GCSE is far above the national average for boys in maintained schools and above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection, UCS has introduced a co-educational sixth form, new sports facilities, increased provision for bursaries, and completed projects including an indoor sports centre, a building to house modern foreign languages, design and technology (DT), and art, and a new reception area. Internal and external play spaces have been upgraded, office accommodation increased, and teaching space reallocated to give every academic department a suite of specialist rooms, including a resource centre and office.
- 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.

Senior School

| School | NC name |
|--------------|---------|
| Entry | Year 7 |
| Shell | Year 8 |
| Lower Remove | Year 9 |
| Remove | Year 10 |

| | |
|--------------|---------|
| Upper Remove | Year 11 |
| Transitus | Year 12 |
| Sixth | Year 13 |

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils are very well educated and the school fulfils its aim in providing an education that stimulates intellectual curiosity and independence of mind and prepares pupils effectively for the next stage of their education and for their lives after UCS. The quality of pupils' academic achievement and progress throughout the school is good. Individual needs of pupils across the ability range are identified; there is good provision for those with SEND, an area which was recommended for action in the previous inspection report, together with opportunities for stretching and challenging the most able pupils in several subjects. Results in public examinations at all levels are above the national average for maintained selective schools. The academic curriculum is broad and offers an unusually high degree of choice and together with the excellent extra-curricular programme fulfils the school's aim of offering a broad range of opportunity and of experience that will develop the individual talents of every pupil. Pupils' positive attitudes to their learning contribute significantly to their progress and achievement and they are keen to help one another; for example, sixth formers eagerly volunteer to act as academic mentors to younger pupils. Teaching staff are hardworking, well qualified, knowledgeable and approachable and they willingly provide additional support in response to requests from pupils. Inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, marking and assessment within and across departments do not always ensure the very highest outcomes for pupils' progress.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent. In line with the school's aims, pupils respect people of all creeds and backgrounds, appreciate the value and importance of contribution, and develop the self-knowledge and self-esteem that will enable them to lead independent lives. Relationships between pupils and staff and with peers are a real strength of the school and pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development is outstanding. Arrangements for safeguarding are robust. Pupils appreciate the accessibility, support and commitment of their teachers; they have a choice of individuals to turn to with any concerns and feel happy, safe, well known, valued and very proud of their school.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent; leadership is strong, decisive and caring and has provided the vision that has secured developments in all areas of the school since the previous inspection. The members of the cohesive and approachable senior management team (SMT) show concern for the welfare of all staff and pupils. There is effective development planning and incisive self-evaluation at governor, headmaster and SMT level and there are examples of excellent middle management, although sharing of good practice at this level does not yet extend across all departments. The school maintains effective links with parents and they expressed high levels of satisfaction with virtually all areas of the school through their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure consistency in the quality of teaching through monitoring and the sharing of good practice across the curriculum.
2. Improve the quality, frequency and consistency of the tracking and feedback of pupils' progress, within and across departments, to equal current best practice in the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' overall achievement is good. They are very well educated, and the school is successful in achieving its aims of providing an education that stimulates, enriches and informs.
- 3.2 Pupils of all ages show high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. Their abilities in speaking, listening, and logical and independent thought are a real strength of the school as is their creativity, as evidenced in art and DT. They are highly articulate, have many opportunities to express themselves and achieve highly in debating. They also develop their physical abilities well, making good use of recently improved facilities for indoor sport. Their written work is good overall, with some excellent examples seen in English and history. Pupils use mathematics confidently in subjects across the curriculum, and effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) was seen, for example, in geography and modern foreign languages. However, encouragement of the use of ICT by pupils in lessons is inconsistent.. Pupils have very positive attitudes towards learning; they work well together and also take responsibility for their learning from an early stage and willingly participate in homework club and departmental clinics.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve success, including county, regional and national representation, in sports including football, rugby, cricket, tennis, basketball fencing, swimming, sailing and martial arts. Excellent levels of attainment are reached in national or international competitions, for example in debating and creative writing, and in mathematics, science and linguistics Olympiads; many pupils pass auditions for national music and drama groups.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been far above the national average for boys in maintained schools and above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. IGCSE performance has been above international norms and results in mathematics are also above UK norms, where the benchmark is higher; results in science are similar to UK norms. Results at A Level are far above the national average for maintained schools and above the national average for maintained selective schools. In 2010 for girls and in 2008 for boys the results were far above the national average for maintained selective schools.
- 3.5 Results at GCSE are good in relation to pupils' abilities indicating that their progress in Years 7 to 11 is above the average for pupils of similar ability, as supported by nationally standardised measures of progress. In the absence of standardised ability or progress data in the sixth form, it is not possible to make a statement of comparative progress in Years 12 and 13. However, as judged by inspection evidence, including lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work, progress in the sixth form is judged to be good in relation to pupils of similar abilities. Pupils are highly successful in gaining entry to their first choice of university.
- 3.6 The school has successfully addressed the recommendation in the previous inspection report regarding provision for pupils with SEND. There are thorough arrangements for screening new pupils, identifying SEND, disseminating information, and providing individual help when needed. The school does not

specifically identify able gifted and talented pupils, believing in enrichment for all; there is no formal monitoring to ensure that the most able pupils are fully challenged. Some excellent independent work was seen across year groups, including outstanding extended projects from the small Year 13 pilot group. The library strongly supports pupils' learning.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.7 The curriculum and extra-curricular provision make a positive contribution to the good quality of pupils' achievement and their personal development. The quality of the curriculum is good overall, in accordance with the school's aim of offering a broad range of opportunity and experience that will respect the individuality of each pupil, develop pupils' individual talents, interests and potential and prepare them effectively for their life beyond school. Thus, provision in Years 7 to 9 supports the school's ethos of a very broad non-prescriptive core curriculum. The school maintains as a fundamental principle that religion, in any form, should neither be an entry requirement nor a taught subject.
- 3.8 Pupils are offered an unusually wide freedom of choice of subjects at GCSE to suit their individual interests. They take ten GCSE subjects including a compulsory core of English, English literature, mathematics, one science and one modern foreign language and options including Latin, Greek, German, physical education, and ICT. A-level options include history of art and philosophy. The school has taken care to choose the most suitable examination syllabuses in line with the abilities of its pupils, and has recently adopted the IGCSE in a number of subjects.
- 3.9 The curriculum makes the provision set out in the relevant statements of special educational need and there is good provision for pupils with SEND and EAL. There are some opportunities for pupils to extend beyond examination specifications, for example in English. A drive to enrich the curriculum includes an 'Ideas' programme for Year 7, which is being piloted in Year 8 this year, enrichment periods for the sixth form, and the opportunity for a small, selected group of sixth formers to take the extended project qualification. The recent introduction of an enrichment week has enhanced further this important area of school life, with a range of master classes, guest speakers and the inspiring exhibition, seen during the inspection, of pupils' work to demonstrate the 'perception of landscape'. A science week has also been introduced.
- 3.10 The extra-curricular programme is excellent and allows pupils to experience a broad range of opportunities and to develop their individual talents, in keeping with the school's aims. There is a wide range of sports, which have been enhanced by the building of the 'Sir Roger Bannister Sports Centre, and an extensive variety of musical ensembles and choirs together with a rich diversity of drama productions each year. An activities week is held in the summer term. The extensive and varied provision of clubs and societies includes bee keeping, dissection club and life drawing and is complemented by a wealth of school trips and visits, giving all pupils opportunities to pursue their interests and to develop initiative and self-confidence. A number of clubs and societies, and many of the imaginative fundraising events under the community action scheme, are led by pupils. Links with the community are excellent, giving pupils a wide range of volunteering opportunities such as running activities days and a Christmas party for local children less fortunate than themselves; working as teaching assistants to children with significant learning difficulties in local primary schools; and working with gifted and talented children at

Westminster Academy, together with projects further afield in Romania and India. This extensive programme of activities, made possible by the commitment and enthusiasm of many staff, is strongly supported and valued by the pupils. It plays a valuable part in fulfilling the school's aim of educating pupils to recognise and respond to their own responsibilities within local, national and global communities.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The overall quality of teaching is good; intellectual curiosity, breadth of study and independence of mind are highly valued and most teaching does much to support those attributes. Teachers show good subject knowledge and are highly effective in supporting pupils' learning, progress and achievement and the overall aims of the school. They are very well supported by the non-teaching staff and facilities and resources are generally excellent.
- 3.12 Of the lessons observed during the inspection three-quarters were good and more than a quarter were excellent. However, teaching styles vary widely and pupils are aware of the consequent differences in learning experiences. The best teaching is genuinely inspirational; in a sixth-form lesson on electrical circuits there was a sense of shared scholarship and intellectual challenge that stretched the most able whilst offering encouragement and support to those for whom the material was more demanding. The least satisfactory lessons are overly teacher-led and lack both stretch and pace to the detriment of pupils' learning.
- 3.13 The use of ICT in support of teaching has increased significantly since the previous inspection; all classrooms have digital projectors and the school network is extensive, reliable and efficiently maintained. Recent building developments have enabled increased provision of ICT resources and almost all areas have wireless provision, although classroom resources still fall short of demand. The virtual learning environment (VLE) is used well by many staff and a number of departments run their own web resources beyond the school network. However, ICT is not yet integral to all teaching across the curriculum.
- 3.14 Homework is set regularly. The volume of work set is sometimes inconsistent across time and across departments with some pupils in lower years occasionally overwhelmed by peak workloads; a significant number of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that teachers did not monitor their workload. The best marking is encouraging but also analytical and identifies opportunities for further improvement; some other marking lacks rigour and detail with inconsistencies within and across departments. A number of pupils feel that teachers are not always fair in giving rewards and punishments and do not always treat pupils equally, but beyond the pupils' questionnaire responses no evidence was found to support these concerns during the inspection. The quality of assessment and the use of assessment data have improved since the previous inspection. Information is used to identify pupils' potential and some teaching is informed accordingly, alongside SEND profiles. Such analysis is still being developed and is, in part, constrained by a lack of uniform assessment data both within and across departments.
- 3.15 The teaching and learning development group has considerable potential to promote the sharing of excellence throughout the school and its work is beginning to have an impact on teaching. Cross-departmental teaching has been of invaluable benefit to those staff who have participated and effective team teaching occurs in science and DT. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teaching staff has been

formalised since the previous inspection and the appointment of a CPD co-ordinator has done much to focus interest and encourage progress in this area.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent and a notable strength of the school. The school's aims of caring for the emotional as well as the academic well-being of its pupils and of creating a liberal and tolerant environment in which everyone is valued and encouraged to develop a sense of personal worth, are fully met. The pupils show a deep pride in and affection for their school, feel valued and thrive within the happy and supportive environment. They are confident young people, without being arrogant, and have a real sense of their own identity within the context of the school.
- 4.2 Many of the curricular and extra-curricular activities support pupils' spiritual development and pupils show excellent respect, support and concern for one another. Their ability to make reasoned ethical judgements is impressive and they are given many opportunities to express their own feelings as well as wider concerns.
- 4.3 The main formal input to pupils spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is through the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, which deals with sensitive and controversial topics and fosters the development of personal integrity through the exploration of issues such as moral values and the uniqueness of the individual. For example, a thought-provoking PSHE lesson was seen, in which the use of imagery in the media was effectively debated and contemporary and historical topics included the recent civil unrest in the UK and the experiences of Holocaust survivors.
- 4.4 Pupils are kind to each other and show respect for those who teach and care for them. The impressive participation of pupils in the local and global community helps them to gain an appreciation of those less fortunate than themselves. This is reflected in their enthusiastic, imaginative and highly successful annual fundraising for the local, national and global charities they have chosen through Community Action. Pupils also give willingly of their time through community service, for example, working with disadvantaged children in both the local and the global communities through links with Kidsco and annual visits to Romania and India. The recent 'Tour de UCS' is a good example of the initiative, originality and commitment shown by the pupils in their charity fundraising.
- 4.5 Pupils' social and cultural development is excellent. They are notably articulate and are able to express their views with confidence. They take advantage of sporting and educational visits to experience different cultures around the world, such as the rugby tour of Italy, the art trip to New York and geography fieldwork in Sicily. Good understanding of different cultures was seen, for example in language lessons and through an investigation of deprivation in London in geography. The partnerships with Westminster Academy and a school in Uganda further enhance pupils' cultural awareness. The pupils also benefit greatly from the displays of their exceptional work in art, the high quality of drama and music within the school, and environmental initiatives presented by the sustainability group. Pupils display racial harmony and good awareness and understanding of public services and institutions.
- 4.6 In keeping with the school's ethos of valuing all pupils, it aims to enable them all to offer service to the community. Opportunities for leadership exist via the system of monitors through sport and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. This is

exemplified at the sixth form level by identifying a captain and vice-captain of monitors along with teams of senior monitors and deme captains. The chance to take on responsibility is an area that pupils indicated, through their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, that they would like to be developed further, particularly within the younger year groups.

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

- 4.7 The quality of pastoral support and guidance for pupils and of the arrangements for their welfare, health and safety is excellent and consistent with the school's aim to care for all of its pupils as individuals, to be concerned for their emotional well-being, and to help them to develop a similar care and respect for the well-being of others. A team of dedicated tutors, deme and year wardens, a school counsellor and a school nurse very effectively monitor pupils' well-being. The school nurse makes a significant contribution to the pastoral care of the pupils and the first aid training for staff. A simple but effective reporting system ensures excellent communication between the nurse and pastoral managers. Pupils are very well balanced, confident and self-possessed; the positive relationship between staff and pupils is a major contributory factor to this outcome.
- 4.8 Since the previous inspection, the introduction of co-education in the sixth form has prompted a review of pastoral and gender issues across the school. The introduction of a girls' deme, together with a significant increase in the team of sixth-form managers, has ensured the pastoral support of all pupils and this is much valued by them. Support for pupils applying to university is very good and has kept in pace with the rapid growth of the sixth form. A homework club provides much valued support for younger pupils who need care after school and this is run with great imagination and sensitivity by the learning support department. In a number of subjects, sixth-form pupils act as academic mentors.
- 4.9 The school has effective procedures for promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying consequent upon the excellent communication between pastoral staff, year and deme wardens and form tutors. Presentations on topics including gambling, misuse of drugs and online safety make a significant contribution in preparing pupils to protect themselves. This important information is also shared with parents through evening sessions. During the inspection visit, pupils made an impressive contribution in this area when they spoke to their younger peers about being 'street safe'.
- 4.10 The safeguarding arrangements have full regard to official guidance and all staff are aware of child protection procedures and benefit from a tailored training programme on safeguarding. Risk assessments are completed and reviewed covering all aspects of school life, including off-site visits. Very effective and comprehensive policies, procedures and training effectively reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are very effective; any accidents are recorded appropriately and there is very good provision for pupils who are ill or injured. The school has an appropriate plan in place to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.11 Catering staff are imaginative in creating interesting and topical menus and pupils are encouraged to eat a healthy diet and to enjoy the benefits of exercise. Site security has been significantly improved since the previous inspection with the completion of a reception office. The admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained and stored correctly.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The council is fully supportive of the pupils' academic and personal education and contributes significantly to the school's achievement of its aims underpinned by the Benthamite philosophy. In 2009, the chair initiated a full review of the workings of the council and redefined the range and remits of its sub-committees, which include finance and general purposes, education, and access and outreach. A full audit of the expertise of council members was undertaken and their excellent breadth of experience, knowledge and interest, and very high level of commitment, contributes positively to the strategic planning for the development of the school. Individual council members hold specific responsibilities including oversight of child protection and safeguarding, access and outreach. Financial management is highly effective and has enabled the council to invest in high-quality educational facilities, resources, teaching and support staff and to optimise use of the school site through imaginative capital development programmes.
- 5.2 Council members have an excellent insight into the ethos and workings of the school. This is achieved through regular meetings of full council and its sub-committees and review of the five-year development plan and the annual measurement of school performance, which includes seven different indicators. There is an effective induction process for newly appointed council members and a comprehensive council handbook. Governors attend a range of training courses and receive regular updates on educational and legal topics. A council strategy day in 2010 enabled discussion of important issues with the SMT and other senior members of staff across the foundation. The headmaster and vice master attend all full council meetings and all members of staff are invited to join council members at a dinner following the first meeting of the academic year.
- 5.3 The highly committed, knowledgeable and decisive leadership of the council provides invaluable support to the headmaster and SMT. All members of council take seriously, and discharge effectively, their responsibilities for the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of pupils. School policies are reviewed annually both by sub-committees and by the full council. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents were virtually unanimous in their high level of satisfaction with the governance of the school.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is good with some excellent features. Leadership is strong, inclusive and caring, allowing much scope for teachers and pupils to develop their individual professional and personal skills, in keeping with the aims of the foundation. The cohesive, mutually supportive and accessible SMT has a keen focus on professional respect and support for the welfare and development of all staff and pupils, which is much valued. Administration of the school is very effective and all areas of the site are very well maintained. Leadership and management reflect clear educational values which seek to engage and stimulate critical enquiry within a supportive and confident learning environment. Since the previous inspection, building developments have enabled the suiting of rooms to the benefit of departmental management. Senior appointments have created a clearer

line management structure which is beginning to support innovation and to identify and disseminate best practice in teaching and learning and professional development. Although school-wide monitoring of the discharge of middle management responsibilities and the implementation of academic policies is being strengthened, consistently high standards in teaching, learning and assessment are not yet found throughout the school. The well designed pilot scheme for tracking pupils' progress benefits from the provision of standardised assessment data from a number of departments, but not yet from all.

- 5.5 Leadership and management have very effective systems of self-evaluation and clear priorities for improvement have been set. Annual department reviews contribute to the focus on academic benchmarking and broader performance data considered by the council. High standards of care and welfare are maintained by senior pastoral staff, with records of pastoral concern being kept, and shared, with senior staff. These concerns are then followed up and acted upon very effectively. Targets for the following year are set in both academic and pastoral areas and appropriate action plans are drafted and reviewed.
- 5.6 All members of staff are regularly and suitably trained for their roles in safeguarding children and assuring their welfare, health and safety. The school's arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors are rigorous, thorough and fully compliant. The central register of appointments is properly maintained.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.7 Links and relationships between parents and the school are good and support the aims of the school and the education of the pupils. Parents are encouraged to support the cultural life of the school, attending events such as plays and concerts. The development of 'UCS Active' has further developed opportunities for parents to engage with the sporting life of the school.
- 5.8 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate that parents are highly satisfied with the education provided for their children. They greatly appreciate the curricular and extra-curricular experiences offered; the quality of care and support; and the quality of relationships between teachers and pupils. A small but significant number of parents wanted further opportunities to engage in the wider educational aims of the school.
- 5.9 The inspectors found no evidence to support the dissatisfaction of a number of parents with the information provided by the school about their children's progress. Where concerns have been identified by teachers, parents or pupils, parents receive clear and useful interim reports about their children's work and progress each half-term. Full written reports, received by all parents twice a year, provide a clear picture of pupils' performance and clear advice and guidance on how they can improve their work.
- 5.10 The required information for parents is readily available; the school VLE provides details of all main school policies and parents receive email bulletins about forthcoming school events and activities, termly newsletters and an annual school magazine. All parents are invited to at least one full consultation evening per year to discuss their children's progress and in Years 7, 9, 11 and 12 there are additional evenings focusing on induction and curricular or higher education choices as appropriate. There are also information sessions for parents on subjects relating to pupils' welfare and safety.

- 5.11 The school takes parents' concerns seriously. The vast majority are dealt with speedily and informally through teachers and heads of year; the headmaster addresses anything more serious both thoroughly and sensitively. Where a concern cannot easily be resolved the school has a comprehensive complaints policy. A very high percentage of parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that the school has handled well any concerns they have had.
- 5.12 The headmaster and vice master share attendance at committee meetings of the parents' guild, which organises a range of social events such as firework displays, barbecues and quizzes throughout the school year and raises funds for both the school and the broader community.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of council, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Janet Pickering

Mr Darren Ayling

Mr David Forster

Dr Jennette Jefferies

Mr Ian Yorston

Reporting Inspector

Senior Deputy Head, HMC school

Director of Studies, HMC school

Deputy Head, GSA school

Director of Digital Strategy, HMC school