

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Sheffield High School GDST

Full Name of the School	Sheffield High School GDST
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Age Range	4 to 18
Gender	Girls
Inspection Dates	4th to 7th February 2008

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 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 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

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 Sheffield High School, founded in 1878, is a selective independent day school for girls from 4 to 18 years. It is one of the 29 schools of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), the aim of which is to provide an all-round education of high quality for girls of intellectual promise, at an affordable cost. The current headmistress was appointed in January 2004.
- 1.2 The school aims: to create a welcoming, stimulating and happy environment in which girls enjoy learning and fulfil their potential; to foster independent learning skills; to offer rich opportunities for creative, personal, spiritual and emotional growth; to educate girls to keep themselves safe and healthy; to help girls to value friendship, develop moral integrity, a sense of social responsibility and respect for themselves and others; to develop successful young women who will make a positive contribution as citizens within a global community.
- 1.3 The school occupies a range of Victorian and modern buildings on an extensive site in the leafy suburbs of Broomhill in Sheffield, between the university and the Botanical Gardens. The recent acquisition of a property adjacent to the school site to house pupils up to Year 2, along with the extension and refurbishment of current buildings, has provided additional facilities for both the junior and senior departments. Planning is currently underway for developments to the sixth form facilities.
- 1.4 Girls come from across a wide geographical area; regular buses run from designated pick-up points throughout South Yorkshire, north Nottinghamshire and north Derbyshire. At the time of the inspection, the school had 1023 girls on roll, with 742 in the senior department, of whom 178 were in the sixth form, and 281 in the junior department, 32 of whom were in Reception classes. Girls come from a variety of social, ethnic and economic backgrounds but parents are predominantly professional or self-employed. In line with its aims, the school provides support in the senior department through means-tested bursaries and scholarships for able pupils who are economically disadvantaged. In the junior department, 22 places are partially funded by the government's nursery scheme.
- 1.5 At the age of four, entry is by informal assessment to ensure pupils will cope academically and socially. Entry to the junior department is dependent on the candidate's performance in the school's own entrance tests, and their attainment on entry is generally above the national average. If the girls are attaining in line with their ability, their achievement in national tests at seven and eleven years of age will be above that achieved by girls in all maintained primary schools. Following an entrance examination, most girls proceed from the junior to the senior department, where they are joined by an equal number from other primary and preparatory schools. Standardised tests taken by successive Year 7 groups indicate that the average ability of the pupils in the senior department is well above the national average. If girls are achieving in line with ability, their achievement at GCSE and A level will be well above the national average for all maintained secondary schools, but below the national average for maintained selective schools.
- 1.6 At the time of the inspection, the school had no girls with a statement of special educational need but 80 girls, those with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), were on the learning support register, the majority with an educational psychologist's report. In addition, a small number of girls for whom English is not their first language, receive extra support in literacy.

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a high quality educational experience which is successful in promoting pupils' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human, social and physical development. It is consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy of creating a warm, stimulating and happy environment in which girls enjoy learning and are encouraged to fulfil their potential. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced enrichment sessions in the junior department and broadened the senior department curriculum. In all subjects, considerable emphasis is placed on the acquisition and development of literacy and numeracy skills, together with good presentation. An extensive range of extra-curricular opportunities stimulates learning and foster girls' individuality.

Junior Department

- 2.2 The curriculum in the junior department is broad and balanced and contributes to girls' all-round educational development. At all stages girls experience a wide range of activities well suited to their ages and abilities. The recent acquisition of a site to house the younger girls has allowed for a significant expansion of specialist accommodation throughout the junior department and has provided an opportunity to broaden girls' educational experience. In Reception, the six areas of learning are well covered and the nationally specified Early Learning Goals of the Foundation Stage are completed. Access to new facilities provide excellent opportunities for outdoor learning, cooking and scientific experimentation. The curriculum for Years 1 to 6 follows the broad outline of the National Curriculum, with the addition of French from Reception, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) which is delivered effectively through circle time. The quality of the curriculum has been enhanced since the last inspection by the introduction of a new mathematics scheme and a more balanced humanities programme, an increase in cross-curricular work and greater emphasis on the development of information communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum. Lively enrichment sessions each term for Years 3 to 6 provide a valuable opportunity for girls to extend their thinking and investigative skills while working in mixed age groups on problem solving activities. However, although provision for the most able has improved since the last inspection, the use of tasks that create real intellectual challenge is not widespread.
- 2.3 The curriculum is planned effectively to meet the needs of all girls, thus providing equality of access and opportunity. Girls identified as having LDD are closely monitored by the learning support co-ordinator. Information collated by the learning support co-ordinator is made available to all staff, ensuring that the needs of these girls are met in all areas of school life.
- 2.4 An extensive lunch-time and after-school extra-curricular programme, ranging from sport to music and from first aid to Latin, supports the taught curriculum in the junior department. It is appreciated by the girls and seen by the school as an important part of its educational provision. Girls also benefit from visits to local places of interest, charity work and talks from a wide range of visitors such as the police.
- 2.5 The preparation for each successive stage of education is well managed. Year 2 girls move to the junior department after taster sessions during the Summer term. A smooth transition from the junior department to the senior department is carefully planned and includes a greater proportion of specialist teaching during Years 5 and 6, and visits to the senior department for some lessons.

Senior Department

- 2.6 In the senior department, the curriculum is broad and balanced overall, and it is well suited to the interests and aptitudes of the girls. The acquisition of skills in numeracy, listening and speaking is strongly promoted through a suitably wide range of traditional academic subjects. The curriculum is kept constantly under review to ensure that it meets the needs of girls. Since the last inspection, curriculum time for PSHE has been increased, drama has been introduced as a discrete subject in Years 7 and 9 and ethics has been introduced in Year 9. The breadth of study is very good both in languages, where most pupils study three modern or classical languages from Year 8, and in science, where the three sciences are taught separately. Provision for artistic and physical development in Years 7 to 9 is also good but opportunities for technological development, except in ICT, are very limited, as noted by parents in their responses to the parental pre-inspection questionnaire. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum concentrates on public examinations but the recommendation that all girls study an humanity, the inclusion of compulsory physical education (PE) in the core curriculum and the flexibility of timetabling for GCSE courses such as music and PE, ensure that suitable breadth and balance is maintained. In the sixth form, the breadth and depth of pupils' educational experience is maintained. The girls choose freely from a wide range of AS and A-level courses which includes critical thinking and psychology, and they also participate in an extensive and popular enrichment programme. PSHE is broad and well planned, with topics being covered within subjects such as science and religious education (RE) and through a well-structured and effective specialist programme.
- 2.7 An extensive and well-supported extra-curricular programme complements the taught curriculum and is seen by the school as an important part of the education that greatly benefits all girls. Sport is at the centre of the programme of activities, with numerous activities on offer for pupils of all abilities. Girls benefit from the wide range of clubs, visits and residential trips, many linked to academic subjects but others of more general interest. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and Young Enterprise enable girls to explore new interests and to engage in activities that promote teamwork and personal development.
- 2.8 A well-planned careers education and guidance programme from Year 7, together with work experience after GCSE, provides good opportunities for girls to explore and make informed decisions about subject choices and future career options. Girls spoke warmly of the help they had been given by both careers staff and tutors, who tailor advice closely to their individual need.
- 2.9 The curriculum is planned effectively to meet the needs of all girls, thus providing equality of access and opportunity. Girls identified as having LDD receive good support from and are closely monitored by the learning support co-ordinators. All staff can receive the information collated, ensuring appropriate provision across the school to meet particular needs. The few girls for whom English is an additional language are also well supported, with one-to-one specialist help with written and spoken English if necessary. Support for able, gifted and talented girls is very successful in some subjects and areas of the school but lacks consistency overall.

Whole School

- 2.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.11 Throughout the school, girls show enthusiasm for their learning and take pride in their work and achievements. They learn effectively, responding positively to the expectations of their teachers and achieve well in relation to their ages and abilities. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection. The school is successful in achieving its aims to foster independent learning skills through lively teaching and to encourage each girl to fulfil her potential.

Junior Department

- 2.12 In the junior department, girls are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding and this facilitates good learning and progress. Throughout the department, standards of numeracy, oracy and literacy are high. Girls speak, listen, write and read with confidence and enjoyment. They apply these skills effectively in a wide range of situations, such as when compiling a report involving the use of technical vocabulary in a Year 2 English lesson. Girls have a good understanding of numerical concepts and show considerable mental dexterity in handling numbers. Reasoning and investigative skills are also well developed, and girls show confidence and understanding in response to questioning in science and when carrying out independent research for projects. Girls develop good ICT skills and make effective use of them, particularly in project work. High standards of creativity are achieved through a wide range of different experiences in art, design, music and drama.
- 2.13 The good quality of teaching throughout the department prevents significant differences arising between the relative attainment of pupils in different classes or subjects, or between girls of differing abilities, whether in lessons or written work. Girls' attainment in national tests at the age of seven is good and at the age of eleven is high in relation to their abilities. Results in national tests at the age of seven over the last three years have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools and at the age of eleven have been far above. Results of nationally standardised tests indicate that girls make good progress in the junior department.
- 2.14 Girls work well independently, showing confidence when organising their work or making notes. They study and work very effectively in groups, listening to each other sensitively and sharing ideas. Girls generally arrive promptly to lessons and settle quickly and quietly to their work. They concentrate well and persevere at a given task. The girls have very positive attitudes, their behaviour is exemplary, they show great enthusiasm for their work and activities and they enjoy all the learning experiences that are offered.
- 2.15 Outside the classroom, girls achieve success in a range of activities and competitions. In sport, netball and hockey teams do well in local tournaments and individuals have received county recognition at swimming and hockey. A significant number of girls take speech and drama and also music examinations, with many achieving a high level of success.

Senior Department

- 2.16 In the senior department, pupils are articulate and both think and act creatively and critically. They are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding and this facilitates effective learning and progress. Girls speak confidently and with clarity, for example when leading a group warm up session in a PE lesson or when presenting an argument during a discussion. They listen attentively and both assimilate and recall information readily. Standards of numeracy and literacy are high throughout the department. Girls write well for a number of different purposes, grammar and spelling are accurate, and pride in their work secures high

- standards of presentation. Numeracy skills are well developed and girls are able to apply them effectively in subjects beyond mathematics, for instance in science and geography. Girls develop a wide range of ICT skills in Years 7 to 9 and make good use of them in a variety of situations and subjects including display, presentation and research.
- 2.17 The good quality of teaching throughout the department, clearly focused on the needs of the individual, contributes to there being no apparent significant differences in relative attainment between different groups of pupils. Achievement in all subjects is of a high level; however, the school has identified a small number of subjects where attainment is not always as high as in others, and where strategies to address this are being put in place.
- 2.18 Results in GCSE examinations over the most recent three years for which comparative data is available, have been good in relation to pupils' ability, being far above the national average for maintained schools; the results have also exceeded those in maintained selective schools. The proportion achieving A or A* has always been significantly above the national average. A-level results over the past three years were also good in relation to girls' abilities since they were well above the national average for all maintained schools and above the average for maintained selective schools overall. The proportion of A levels graded at A or B has consistently exceeded four-fifths. Each year a number of girls are commended by examination boards for high levels of achievement at both GCSE and A level.
- 2.19 Girls are skilled in taking good notes both in class and for homework. They organise their work well and, when offered the opportunity, study independently; this was seen, for instance, in Year 9 printmaking and also in English lessons. Girls study and work effectively in pairs and groups where excellent relationships are evident in the sharing of ideas and in the mutual respect shown.
- 2.20 With few exceptions, girls settle quickly to their lessons and show a high level of perseverance. They are not afraid to ask pertinent questions and challenge statements. Throughout the department, girls show commitment to and enjoyment of their lessons. Relationships among pupils and between pupil and teacher are open, warm and constructive.
- 2.21 The school's tracking systems are used effectively to monitor progress throughout the whole school. Results of nationally standardised tests indicate that girls make good progress from Year 7 to GCSE and also from GCSE to A level.
- 2.22 Since the last inspection, success in a widening range of activities has been achieved as a result of the department continuing to nurture and encourage girls' talents. Each year individual girls and teams have gained recognition at local, county and national level in academic, sporting and cultural competitions. Levels of achievement in competitive sport are particularly high and receive considerable recognition within the school. A significant number of girls reach high standards in externally assessed music and drama examinations, and older pupils enjoy considerable success in the Olympiads, Young Enterprise, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and a range of academic competitions.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.23 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the girls is a strength of the school. Both in the classroom and through a wealth of extra-curricular activities the school achieves its aim of helping girls to grow spiritually and to develop moral integrity, a sense of social responsibility and respect for themselves and others. Since the last inspection, the senior department has successfully reviewed its spiritual, moral, social and cultural provision through an extensive audit of the department's curricular and extra-curricular programme, identifying areas for future development.
- 2.24 Girls of all ages have a well-developed spiritual awareness. They show a high level of self-esteem and self-confidence through their words and demeanour. They are responsive to aspects of spirituality presented through a range of stimuli in different subjects, notably but not exclusively in RE, and through assemblies. Year 9 girls showed considerable insight when discussing what it is that gives people, whatever their faith, the strength to overcome great adversity. The school offers the girls many opportunities to develop spiritual awareness. It recognises that this goes beyond religious beliefs and encompasses each individual's sense of identity and self-worth. In assembly, girls have an opportunity for reflection and also to recognise and celebrate the achievement of others.
- 2.25 Girls have a clear moral sense and from an early age they learn to make responsible and reasoned judgements on ethical and moral issues. They understand and respect the school rules. A Year 6 pupil commented: 'rules are there to keep us safe'. Staff set high standards and girls respond positively. In the junior department, circle time provides a valuable opportunity for girls to explore and better appreciate others' opinions. Many ethical issues are raised in lessons, especially in science, English, history and RE. A video on social networking in an ICT lesson generated a lively and thoughtful debate on the use and misuse of the internet and the dangers of cyber bullying.
- 2.26 Socially, the girls develop into well-rounded and confident adults, willing to take responsibility for their own behaviour. The school has a very strong community spirit which is expressed in a quiet pride amongst girls, led by the example of staff, both teaching and non-teaching. From a young age, many girls contribute to the life of the school by holding posts of responsibility. In the junior department, team effort is seen in all areas of school life, including house captaincy, form and prefect duties and school council representation. Opportunities for responsibility and the development of leadership skills are valued, but kept in perspective, because all girls have an opportunity to hold an office for a short period of time. In the senior department, the opportunity to be a prefect provides an effective way of giving responsibility to sixth form pupils. Prefects take their roles very seriously, speaking warmly of the part they play in the smooth running of the school and the support they provide for younger girls. Further opportunities for girls to take on roles of responsibility are provided through the house system, sports teams and form duties. The school expects girls to think beyond themselves; many do this through making a significant contribution to charities both in time and in raising money. The school council and year group councils are well respected within the school, being seen as bodies that give girls a say in school life and which can and have brought about change.
- 2.27 The cultural diversity in the school and within the wider community provides a good basis on which understanding and harmony between different traditions are successfully fostered. Lessons in a range of subjects deal sensitively with such issues as do assemblies and talks by visiting speakers of differing faiths and cultures. This was clearly demonstrated by a special assembly celebrating Chinese New Year for which girls learnt a traditional song in Mandarin. Girls acquire a good appreciation of and a respect for their own and other cultures through

theatre trips and visits to museums and galleries. In addition, regular trips abroad, ranging from sports tours to language exchanges, successfully help them to explore unfamiliar cultures first hand.

- 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 Teaching is of a good quality overall, with a substantial proportion being outstanding. It enables girls to acquire new knowledge, to make good progress relative to their ability and to develop and use new skills. In doing this, the school meets its aim of enabling girls to achieve their potential. Girls with identified LDD are well catered for, through both the learning support department and their teachers, but provision for the most able is less well developed. The overall quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection with a greater diversity of approach in the junior department.
- 2.30 Much good teaching, a significant proportion of which is excellent, fosters in pupils a desire to learn and the ability to apply themselves intellectually and creatively to their studies. From an early age it encourages them to think and reason for themselves and to work effectively both independently and in groups. Teaching makes a marked contribution to girls' high levels of achievement throughout the school and to their success in public examinations. In the sixth form particularly, girls benefit from a varied and rigorous approach where questioning and discussion are often pupil led. This was seen to good effect in a lesson on the power of the media to influence public opinion. Physical effort is promoted through skilled teaching by specialists and other staff, both in lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
- 2.31 Teaching is well planned with clear learning objectives. It employs a suitable range of effective strategies throughout the school. Teachers know the girls very well and focus their lessons successfully on the needs and prior attainments of the majority of their pupils. In most subjects, extra, informal support is provided, both in and out of lessons, for those girls who require it. In the senior department, especially in the examination years, this is done most effectively through regular subject clinics. However, good provision in lessons for the most able is less widespread and, all too often, extension tasks are repetitive rather than challenging. Excellent practice was however seen in mathematics in the junior department. Good management of class-time allows for girls to make rapid progress, however teaching occasionally lacks pace and girls are not wholly engaged.
- 2.32 Teachers show a thorough knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Some lessons were greatly enhanced by teachers' effective use of technology. A wide range of resources is available in all areas of the school and their use contributes to the variety and effectiveness of teaching.
- 2.33 Teaching throughout the school includes regular assessment within lessons and, where appropriate, through tests and written homework. The best marking, in line with school policy, is thorough and detailed providing helpful and constructive comments to support girls' learning. However, standards of marking within and across departments in the senior department and across the whole age range in the junior department vary in quality and frequency.
- 2.34 The mutual respect and ease of relationships between girls and their teachers is central to girls' positive educational experience. This encourages good behaviour and creates an atmosphere of trust in which even the youngest feel confident to express their ideas and

opinions. It also encourages lively and often challenging discussion and debate and this was seen to good effect in a Year 10 PSHE lesson.

- 2.35 The school has a considerable amount of assessment data on the performance of girls, based on regular testing, the results of nationally standardised tests and in the case of older pupils, public examination performance. This data is used well by senior management and, to an increasing extent, by other staff to monitor girls' progress closely and to set targets. The school has in place good arrangements for girls' performance to be related to its own aims.
- 2.36 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 school provides good pastoral support and guidance for the girls and is fully effective in ensuring their welfare, health and safety. Pupils feel valued, listened to and cared for and, in line with the school's aims, learn to keep themselves safe and healthy. Since the last inspection, the high standards of pastoral care have been maintained and the pastoral system in the senior department has been reviewed and restructured to provide more effective support and guidance for all girls.
- 3.2 In the junior department, pastoral care is initially the responsibility of the form teacher but all staff, whatever their role, play a large part in the care and support of the girls. Staff know their pupils well and support and guide them in both their academic work and in their personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. All girls spoken to were very happy with their teachers and were confident that they would take time to listen to them. The girls work and play well together and are caring and thoughtful towards their peers, supporting and praising them frequently.
- 3.3 In the senior department, following the recent restructuring, a three-tier structure exists in Years 7 to 11 with a head of pastoral care, heads of year and form tutors overseeing the care of the girls. Staff have embraced the new structure with enthusiasm, commenting that it allows more time for one-to-one support for girls. Pastoral care in the sixth form is overseen by the head of sixth form and a senior teacher. Throughout the senior department, form tutors meet their tutees daily and deal informally with most pastoral matters, liaising with heads of year and other staff when necessary. Clearly defined roles, regular meetings and good lines of communication enable all girls to be monitored closely and any issues that arise to be dealt with rapidly and effectively. Additional pastoral support is provided by a counsellor and a nurse, who also plays an important role in the PSHE programme. Girls spoke positively about the care they receive and were in no doubt that they had numerous avenues of support for academic and personal issues. Relationships among the girls and also between girls and staff are very good. Girls are tolerant and supportive of each other, with younger ones speaking highly of their contact with their form prefects and other older pupils. Sixth formers spoke warmly of the relaxed relationships they enjoy with their teachers.
- 3.4 High standards of behaviour are expected and there are clear systems in place throughout the school for staff to deal with disciplinary issues, should they arise. More serious disciplinary offences are dealt with promptly and effectively. Girls are aware of the school rules and code of conduct and consider them to be fair and appropriate. The school has a detailed and comprehensive policy to safeguard against bullying and, although rare, such cases are dealt with promptly and sensitively. The rewards systems in both departments are clearly understood and act as an effective spur to hard work and achievement.
- 3.5 The school has effective child protection measures and all staff receive relevant training. Appropriate checks are carried out comprehensively for all staff. Medical arrangements in both departments are of a high quality, with good provision for girls who are ill and suitable numbers of staff qualified in first aid.
- 3.6 Health and safety arrangements are thorough and clearly laid down in school policies and procedures. Measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are comprehensive and all necessary risk assessments are in place. Registration is conducted correctly. Girls are

well supervised during all activities, the arrangements being appropriate to the age of those involved.

- 3.7 Catering arrangements for lunch are good with a wide choice of healthy and nutritious food available, in line with the school's healthy eating policy. The quality of food and the civilised atmosphere in the dining room are appreciated by the girls. In the junior department, choices are monitored and the girls are encouraged to try a variety of meals. The breakfast club is very popular and provides a good opportunity for girls, their parents and staff to integrate informally.
- 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 As a result of successful recent initiatives, the school has developed a very effective partnership with parents and an excellent range of worthwhile links with both the local and the wider community.
- 3.10 Parents are very appreciative of the excellent links maintained between themselves and the school, and the frequent parental contact is both valued and welcomed. The questionnaire completed by a high proportion of parents before the inspection showed a high level of satisfaction and confidence in the quality both of the education and of the pastoral support provided for their daughters. They appreciate the stimulating and happy environment in which girls enjoy learning and are encouraged to fulfil their potential, thus fulfilling the school's aims.
- 3.11 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in school activities and in the work and progress of their daughters. They regularly attend parents' meetings, sporting fixtures, plays and concerts, and provide much needed help in Reception and with trips and tours. A number also deliver or organise specialist talks and provide help with work experience. Throughout the school, parents have confidence in the accessibility and approachability of staff whenever they wish to discuss academic or pastoral matters. The head of the junior department's 'open door' policy is effective in making parents feel welcome if they have a concern about their daughters. The recently introduced and well-supported parents' forums provide valuable opportunities for dialogue between school and home. The Friends of Sheffield High serve it excellently both by raising funds and by providing a reassuring welcome to new parents.
- 3.12 High quality information about the school, including a range of well-drafted booklets, keeps parents informed about every stage of their daughters' education. The magazines, regular newsletters and the easily accessible website provide useful up-to-date information on all aspects of school life. Reports are clear and contain pertinent criticism, encouragement and suggestions for improvement. Increasingly, they also contain comment on extra-curricular involvement and personal development.
- 3.13 The school's system for dealing with parental concerns is efficient and effective. The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire felt that the school had handled their concerns promptly and with due care. Communications with the school, whether in person or by telephone, by letter or by email are efficiently handled. Parents are pleased by the manner in which their suggestions are received and by the very high level of tact and sensitivity displayed when appropriate.

- 3.14 A growing number of partnerships with local schools involve both staff and girls in a wide range of worthwhile contacts, including activities in science and mathematics, in sport and with minority languages such as Latin and Russian. Links of a charitable or educational nature also exist with foreign schools such as one in Florida and a village school at Jhum Para in Bangladesh. The school's facilities are made available wherever possible to outside groups and very careful attention is paid to relationships with those who live in the immediate vicinity of the school.
- 3.15 The school's ethos of service to the local community is also strong. The junior department has links with a retirement village where pupils provide musical entertainment, and many older girls do regular voluntary work, often through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Sixth form girls are actively involved with local schemes for asylum seekers and refugees. Positive steps are taken to increase girls' awareness of the needs of others and they respond with enthusiasm, demonstrated by the excellent charity work that is often locally focused and pupil led.
- 3.16 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 The school is very well governed, both centrally by the GDST and by its local governing body. They are both fully aware of their responsibilities to the school and assist the school very effectively in fulfilling its aims and in retaining its ethos.
- 4.2 The roles of the GDST and the local governing body are clearly defined to complement each other, ensuring that the management and development of the school are carried out to a high standard and are effectively monitored.
- 4.3 The GDST have overall responsibility for both the school's long-term strategic development and its financial management. They are well aware of their responsibilities, for example for child protection and health and safety. They have appropriate procedures in place to deal with them. The GDST are valued by staff, particularly the headmistress and the senior management team, for the expertise and support they provide, including in areas such as staff development and training.
- 4.4 The main responsibilities of the local governing body, which are taken very seriously, are to give support and advice to the headmistress and the senior management team and to liaise with the GDST on behalf of the school. All its members have a past association with the school, often as parents of pupils, and bring a wide range of expertise including in the fields of education and marketing. They work closely with the headmistress on the school's development plan, both in its construction and in monitoring its implementation. Links between governors and individual departments, including the junior department, provide an excellent opportunity for governors to increase their understanding of the working and needs of the school. The recent introduction of lesson observation by governors has proved valuable in this respect. The addition of the head of the junior department to the school's representation at governors' meetings has been effective in promoting the department as an integral part of a 4 to 18 school. Governors also support a wide range of school functions well and work hard to get to know the staff. This is much appreciated by the staff.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Clear direction and leadership ensure that high standards of educational provision are successfully promoted in line with the school's aims and ethos. Senior staff are well aware of the school's strengths and the areas in need of development. Since the last inspection, the management structure has undergone major changes; creating new posts and clarifying roles. The recommendation of the last report concerning junior department subject co-ordinators has been fulfilled.
- 4.6 The new management structure is clearly understood and well supported by staff. Senior and middle management roles are well defined and lines of communication clear. Through the wide range of consultative groups, such as the academic and pastoral boards and also working parties, all staff are effectively involved in the formulation of policy.
- 4.7 Those with management responsibilities are effective in analysing the school's needs, setting priorities and planning to meet these needs. They are aided in this by the wide-ranging annual departmental review which is closely linked to departmental development planning. However, some subject co-ordinators and heads of department are less successful at putting decisions into practice. Departmental development planning across Years 6 and 7 is good in

- some areas but consultation between those with subject responsibility in the junior and senior departments is not yet widespread.
- 4.8 Management at all levels is effective in drawing up and implementing appropriate procedures and policies. The checking and reviewing of their effectiveness by senior management is good, but in some areas formal monitoring by middle management lacks rigour.
- 4.9 The recruitment and retention of high quality staff are very well managed. Induction procedures for new staff and for newly qualified teachers are excellent and good records are kept. The annual review, with its emphasis for teaching staff on classroom practice, is valued by staff and is effective in identifying staff training and other needs.
- 4.10 Financial resources are very well managed by all departments, and all areas of the school are well supplied with materials that support teaching and learning. Careful financial planning in the junior department has ensured that the recommendation of the last report has been met fully. The school campus, recently enhanced by the updating and extension of buildings and the purchase of new infant facilities, is maintained to a high standard.
- 4.11 The administration of the school, overseen by the long-serving and knowledgeable business manager, is effective and efficient. The support staff are greatly valued and make a considerable contribution to the life and work of the school.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.13 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 Sheffield High School is successful in fulfilling its aims. Through clear and forward-thinking leadership and governance it serves its girls and their parents well. The excellent links the school has with the local and wider community ensure that girls leave the school with a sense of social responsibility and as young women well placed to make a positive contribution as citizens in a global community. The effectiveness of the pastoral system and the strong ethos of the school are reflected in the excellent relationships between girls and staff and among the girls themselves. From a very early age, girls develop moral integrity, a respect for themselves and others and an awareness of cultural diversity and spirituality. The high quality educational experience provided for girls of all ages, together with good and often excellent teaching, ensures that they achieve good academic results, enjoy learning and fulfil their potential overall, although support for the most able lacks consistency.
- 5.2 Under new leadership the school has improved in many areas since the last inspection and has responded well to its recommendations and those of the Ofsted nursery inspection. The development of curricular links between the junior and senior departments, the restructuring and strengthening of senior and middle management and the clarification of roles have been beneficial to both staff and girls. The purchase of the site for the youngest pupils and the subsequent upgrading of all junior department facilities, and the extension and ongoing improvement of sixth form and other specialist facilities ensure that the school can meet the current and anticipated needs of the girls. The school's leadership and management are aware of what they need to do to take the school forward.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has many strengths, but should take the following steps for further development and improvement.
1. Continue to promote links between the junior and senior departments in order to:
 - ensure consistency in the quality of the educational experience of girls across the school;
 - share good practice amongst all staff.
 2. Continue to develop the provision for the most able pupils in order to realise the school's aim of encouraging each girl to fulfil her potential.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 4th to 7th February 2008. 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

Miss Jane Hamilton	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Linda Hudson	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Jenny Clayphan	Former Head, IAPS school
Mr John Doulton	Former Head, HMC school
Miss Jacky Gill	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Sylvia Leyton	Former Deputy Head, GSA school
Mr Robert Lilley	Head, HMC junior school
Mrs Julie Thompson	Head of Department, SHMIS school
Mrs Yvonne Wilkinson	Head, GSA school
Mr David Woodward	Deputy Head, HMC school