



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

SHEFFIELD HIGH SCHOOL GDST

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Sheffield High School GDST

Full Name of School	Sheffield High School GDST		
DfE Number	373/6021		
Registered Charity Number	306938		
Address	Sheffield High School GDST 10 Rutland Park Sheffield South Yorkshire S10 2PE		
Telephone Number	0114 2660324		
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Email Address	enquiries@she.gdst.net		
Headmistress	Mrs Valerie Dunsford		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Pam Liversidge		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	987		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	4-5 (EYFS):	32	5-11: 197
	11-18:	758	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	987	
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Anne Jones		
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	29 Jan 2013 to 01 Feb 2013		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State 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, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors 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.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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 school board governors, 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

Mr Michael Buchanan	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Victoria Hall	Team Inspector (Head, GSA Junior school)
Mr Stuart Brant	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, GSA school)
Mrs Susan Goff	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Miss Barbara Habayeb	Team Inspector (Vice-Principal, ISA school)
Mrs Sarah Haslam	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Tim Jenkins	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Stephen Jolly	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school)
Mrs Louise Harwood	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Sheffield High School, founded in 1878, is an independent day school for girls from 4 to 18 years in four sections, sixth form, senior, junior and infant schools. It is one of the 26 schools of the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), within which each school develops its own character, strengths and interests and shares with other GDST schools a consistent commitment to strive and succeed. The school is overseen by the trustees and executive officers of the GDST assisted by a local School Governing Board. The school is located in the Broomhill area of Sheffield, between the university and the botanical gardens.
- 1.2 The school aims to bring out the best in all the pupils and encourage them to develop their personal and intellectual talents to the full within a happy, structured and caring community and to leave as strong, open-minded, confident young women. There is a commitment to ensuring that talented and academically gifted pupils from all backgrounds have access to an education at the school. The school aims to foster independent learning skills. It seeks to provide opportunities for creative, personal, spiritual and emotional growth so that pupils value friendships, develop moral integrity, a sense of social responsibility and respect for themselves and others, and hence develop into successful young women who will make a positive contribution as citizens within a global community.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection the accommodation for senior school pupils has been extended and a regular programme of house events has been introduced alongside a new 2 week timetable.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, the school had 987 girls on roll, with 758 in the senior school, of whom 187 were in the sixth form, and 229 in the junior school, 32 of whom were in Reception classes as part of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). Pupils come from Sheffield and the surrounding area of South Yorkshire and the northern reaches of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. They are from varied social, ethnic and economic backgrounds and their parents are predominantly professional or self-employed.
- 1.5 Entry at the age of four into Reception is by informal assessment; entry thereafter is by the school's own tests. The pupils' attainment on entry to the infant school is above the national average. Most pupils transfer from the junior to the senior school after further assessments where they are joined by an equal number from other schools. Pupils in the senior school, including the sixth form, are above the national average in ability and a significant number are well above.
- 1.6 There are 13 pupils in the senior school who require support for their English and none in the junior or infant school. There are 38 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), all of whom receive specialist learning support from the school.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Throughout the school pupils receive an excellent education in accordance with the school's aims to stretch and challenge the pupils so that they leave the school as strong, open minded and confident women who are independent and who use their initiative. The quality of attainment and progress is excellent including that of children in the EYFS, those with SEND and those for whom English is an additional language (EAL). All pupils, and particularly those in the sixth form, demonstrate high levels of knowledge, advanced understanding relative to their ages and considerable skills in all that they do. They are mature and often show initiative and a great sense of enjoyment in learning and meeting intellectual, physical and creative challenges presented to them. Their exemplary behaviour enables lessons to flow without hindrance. Outstanding achievements reflect the pupils' willingness and desire to avail themselves as widely as possible of the myriad opportunities at school whether in the classroom or in the excellent range of activities. The consistency of the quality of the educational experience for pupils across the school has been greatly improved since the previous inspection. In the EYFS, the school grounds provide good opportunities for outdoor learning, although these are not fully exploited. The quality of teaching is excellent. Teaching is highly effective in helping pupils to secure their understanding and in promoting their progress. However, in some teaching the progress of more able pupils is hindered by an over-emphasis on examination criteria.
- 2.2 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent, in accordance with the school's aims. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and are keen to help each other. In lessons and elsewhere, pupils are co-operative and respectful, listening to the views of others and interacting with staff and peers in a relaxed yet purposeful atmosphere. Throughout the school they are active members of the community and willingly assume roles of responsibility and service. The pupils' awareness of other cultures is very strong and is significantly enhanced by the openness with which they happily discuss their own varied backgrounds. Pastoral care, and arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent, but indoor space for pupils to socialise or eat in comfort is limited.
- 2.3 The Council of the GDST provides effective and highly efficient oversight of the school. The local Board adds an important dimension to this oversight by successfully providing critical support to the Headmistress and knowledge of the local context. There is an excellent balance of challenge and confirmation and these factors add greatly to the success of the school. The school has responded well to the recommendations made in the previous inspection report. Senior managers have a strong vision for the school which is clearly and energetically imparted and is actively supported by all. This is a significant factor in the accomplishments of the pupils at all stages and in their personal development. Parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the school's provision and standards. Inspection evidence supports these views. The quality of links between the school and parents is excellent, and strongly supports the school's aims.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Regularly evaluate the progress of the most able to ensure it is not unduly focused on examination criteria.
2. Provide pupils in the senior and junior schools with a suitable amount of indoor space in which to eat and socialise during lunch time and breaks.
3. Increase the use of outdoor spaces for learning in Reception (EYFS).

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Pupils receive an excellent education in accordance with the school's aims to stretch and challenge them.
- 3.3 Pupils throughout the school demonstrate high levels of knowledge, advanced understanding and considerable skills in all that they do. They are mature and often demonstrate initiative. They show a great sense of enjoyment in learning and meeting intellectual, physical and creative challenges such as when launching an extreme altitude balloon probe or playing as shop keepers in Reception. They are comfortable and often eloquent when speaking and show an excellent ability to write cogently and with persuasion even, in the case of older pupils, in a foreign language. Most children in the EYFS are able to produce clearly written, simple sentences using their phonic skills to make plausible attempts to spell unfamiliar words. They speak clearly and confidently using well-developed vocabulary to express and clarify their ideas and feelings. Older pupils are creative, often bold, think independently, and relish applying their high level, general knowledge in discussion or during lessons such as general studies or personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils' application of mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT), their logical thinking, and their organisational capability are all advanced, and enhance their achievements. Pupils readily engage in physical activities and sports with great success.
- 3.4 Outstanding achievements in curricular and extra-curricular activities reflect the pupils' willingness and desire to avail themselves as widely as possible of the opportunities at school. Pupils excel in a wide variety of activities within the school, the local community and at national level, for example, in mathematics challenges, science Olympiads and the young writer awards. They value excellence and encourage it in others. Pupils have recently enjoyed success in netball, athletics, trampolining, orienteering, public speaking, and the European youth parliament. In addition, many achieve well in music from a very young age and including up to diploma level. A significant number of those who embark on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) achieve at the gold level and large numbers achieve highly in speech and drama awards. Pupils are proactive and effective in charity work, raising significant sums. They successfully support a school in Bangladesh and another in Zimbabwe as well as local charities with imaginative fundraising and supportive visits. Pupils relish the many opportunities to lead and to serve others.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. The school entered pupils for national tests at age eleven up to 2010. Results in these national tests, together with evidence from the pupils' performance observed in lessons and workbooks indicate that pupils achieve good standards in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools and age-related expectations. This attainment, as judged, shows that pupils sustain a good rate of progress when compared to those of similar ability. Results in GCSE have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained schools. In 2012, this level of attainment was maintained; 78% of grades were awarded at A*/A and 99% at A*-C. This level of attainment together with the work seen in lessons and the pupils' books

indicates that pupils make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. A-level results have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained schools. In 2012, 49% of all grades were at A*/A with 71% graded A* in the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and 67% distinctions achieved in the AQA Baccalaureate qualification. This level of attainment alongside work seen in lessons and books indicates that pupils make excellent progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils are very successful at procuring places at UK universities where they study a broad variety of disciplines. The most able pupils as well as those with SEND and EAL achieve at the same high level as other pupils.

- 3.6 Pupils throughout the school exhibit outstanding attitudes to learning and show palpable enjoyment and satisfaction in all that they do. The pupils' behaviour is excellent. They are highly motivated and share an evident desire to succeed. They often take the initiative and play an active part in their learning such as when skilfully assessing each other's work using the two stars and a wish approach in the junior school. They have high aspirations both in and out of the classroom and an excellent work ethic with exemplary perseverance.
- 3.7 The consistency of the quality of the educational experience of pupils throughout the school has been greatly improved since the previous inspection. A very high proportion of pupils feel that they are making good progress and find the work interesting and challenging. However, some pupils in the lower parts of the senior school are insufficiently stretched.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The curriculum is highly effective in its coverage of different areas of learning. It is well planned, suitable for all ages, abilities and needs including for those with SEND and EAL, and fully supports the aims of the school. The excellent programmes in the EYFS provide rich and varied experiences for all children and, in the junior and senior schools, a broad and deep curriculum provides a wide range of stimulating opportunities. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire demonstrate an extremely high level of satisfaction with the curricular and extra-curricular provision.
- 3.10 Since the previous inspection the school has significantly increased the range of opportunities available and ensured that the educational experience is consistent for all pupils. All pupils in Year 7 now study two modern foreign languages and Latin is taught to all. The highly successful 'learning to learn' programme encourages pupils to participate in activities and complete tasks which help them to develop independent learning skills. All pupils study separate sciences to GCSE and the most able have opportunity to explore subjects to significant depths and are provided with a highly flexible curriculum. The EPQ and AQA Baccalaureate certificate options extend the learning of the most able in the sixth form. Many subject clinics are well attended by pupils wishing to consolidate their knowledge or skills. Great emphasis is placed on ensuring that pupils are able to choose courses or activities according to their needs and interests. The views of pupils in the senior school who are on the teaching and learning council are valued when decisions are made regarding adjustments to the curriculum, and this is a strong feature of its flexibility.

- 3.11 In the junior school, specialist teaching has enabled a good range of languages to be taught from an early age, namely French, German and Spanish, which helps pupils make informed choices when they enter the senior school. The curriculum exploits links between subjects to further enhance understanding.
- 3.12 There is an extensive range of extra-curricular activities that are attended by large numbers of pupils. The pupils' physical development is strongly supported by the many opportunities they have to participate in sport. These range from yoga in Year 2 to trampolining in the senior school. Pupils in the junior school are given the opportunity to play in competitive matches. There is a wide range of opportunities for drama and music; a significant number of pupils play musical instruments. Pupils from the senior school have excellent opportunities to organise their own activities and exercise leadership appropriate to their age by assisting and running clubs for younger pupils.
- 3.13 Senior school pupils take part in the DofE scheme, Young Enterprise, debating and conservation projects, both at home and abroad. In the junior and senior schools pupils have the benefit of residential experiences away from school including focussed tours to places such as China. There are myriad strong links with the local community and charities which the pupils utilise and support such as the SHINE project where sixth formers mentor and teach primary age children from the locality. The annual careers fair provides an insight into choices after the sixth form and involves pupils from other schools. The school welcomes many visitors to engage with the pupils on a wide range of issues, such as being visually impaired and the nature of national government.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.15 Teaching is highly effective in helping pupils to secure an understanding of individual subjects and it successfully promotes their progress. It is lively, develops the pupils' intellectual talents, fosters independent learning skills and creates an environment in which pupils enjoy learning, in line with the school's aims to stretch and challenge. Teaching is focussed on national benchmarks for progress and sets high targets. Excellent time management facilitates rapid learning. Parents and pupils are highly satisfied with the teaching. Since the previous inspection, the school has successfully encouraged the sharing of good practice in teaching.
- 3.16 Much teaching demonstrates the highest expectations of pupils and uses knowledge of their needs and abilities in planning. It provides opportunities for pupils, including those with SEND or EAL, to develop their skills and to consolidate their knowledge without constraint. It encourages them to ask challenging questions, think independently and to succeed. The teaching of pupils with EAL and SEND is excellent and is based on a careful assessment of needs and targeted support with a key worker. Pupils with EAL are given effective help in acquiring the skills needed for writing and pupils with SEND successfully acquire skills and strategies to support their learning. Additional support is readily available to all pupils when needed and subject clinics in the senior school are open to everyone.
- 3.17 The most effective teaching has clear objectives, employs a range of resources well and uses open-ended and focused questions to assess the pupils' progress. It encourages thought and clear explanation. In the EYFS, teaching exhibits high expectations and a clear understanding of how children learn, and appropriate

individual challenges are provided in many areas. Teaching in Reception includes limited opportunities for outdoor learning which results in the pupils' experiences being incomplete.

- 3.18 The best teaching takes advantage of the exemplary behaviour of pupils, leading to rapid progress in learning. However, some is less effective when an undue focus on examination criteria constrains the pupils' independent thinking, which hinders progress, particularly that of the most able.
- 3.19 Teaching shows excellent subject knowledge and uses a variety of highly successful approaches; it is well structured to promote progress and ensures that appropriate resources are readily available to support the pupils' learning and initiative. In many lessons, the teaching skilfully demonstrates techniques and provides an excellent model for pupils, for example in physical education.
- 3.20 Most work is marked regularly. Constructive written guidance to help pupils improve their work is sometimes given but some comment is restricted to simple congratulation. By contrast, verbal feedback is often closely focused on individual needs, allowing pupils to understand how to make progress in their work.

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.
- 4.2 In accordance with the school's aims, pupils are enabled to become socially responsible and morally aware. By the time they leave the school they are confident young women with a strong sense of self-worth and great respect for others.
- 4.3 The pupils' spiritual development is good. Through lessons, assemblies, PSHE, extra-curricular activities and a variety of school visits, pupils are able to experience awe and wonder in areas as diverse as a Year 1 trip to 'Swan Lake', a Year 13 physics lesson on nuclear decay, and the highly accomplished playing of movements from a Bach violin sonata. Year 8 pupils are taught meditation. As a result, pupils are self-aware, have a good understanding of the place faith plays in their lives and are emotionally mature. They grow and flourish as self-assured young women.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is outstanding. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and are keen to help each other. All pupils are clear that bullying is unacceptable and they show an excellent understanding of the need to treat all with courtesy and respect. Their understanding is enhanced through discussions on moral and ethical issues such as those relating to the environment or to social disadvantage. Community service is important to all pupils and they generously support an extensive range of charitable endeavours such as a primary school in Bangladesh.
- 4.5 The social development of pupils is excellent. Throughout the school they are active members of the community and willingly assume roles of responsibility and service of a wide-ranging nature, for example, as form leaders, eco-warriors, representatives on the school council or the teaching and learning council, or running charitable campaigns. All these experiences allow pupils to exercise leadership effectively for the good of the overall community. In the EYFS, children care for and respect each other, take turns and share willingly. Throughout the school, pupils are sensitive to the feelings of others. This is illustrated in their thoughtfulness and empathy in PSHE lessons which they see as very worthwhile.
- 4.6 The pupils' awareness of other cultures is very strong and is significantly enhanced by the openness with which they happily discuss their own varied backgrounds. In the languages and other subjects they study from the junior school upwards, cultural awareness is a key focus and as a result the pupils welcome others from different cultures and are well-informed in this regard. Visits locally and abroad, such as the recent art trip to Florence, visits to Peru and India, and the chamber choir visit to Cologne, enhance their cultural experience and allow the pupils' understanding to be extended.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The staff is highly effective in providing support and guidance to pupils of all ages and is fully committed to helping them make the most of opportunities, develop respect for themselves and others and overcome any problems, in line with the school's aims. Pastoral teams work closely together in both junior and senior

schools and carefully coordinated provision ensures that pupils feel known as individuals and well supported at all stages of their school life. In the EYFS, strong relationships are formed between staff and children who readily share their thoughts and feelings with adults who work closely with them. Throughout the school, staff act as excellent role models giving clear guidance on behaviour and placing a high priority on the safety and well-being of the pupils.

- 4.9 Pupils at all levels of the school are encouraged to eat healthily and physical exercise is keenly promoted. In the EYFS, pupils are helped to understand that healthy eating and exercise are important and are given careful instruction on how to keep themselves safe. Indoor space for pupils to socialise or eat at break and lunch times is limited. This was commented on by both pupils and parents in the pre-inspection questionnaires and inspection evidence supports these views.
- 4.10 The school is highly successful in promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying. The code of behaviour successfully promotes a positive approach amongst the pupils and initiatives such as the values project in the senior school and the 'TAG' system of dealing with unkindness in the junior school make expectations clear. Some pupils expressed a view that rewards and sanctions were unfairly or unevenly given but inspection evidence does not substantiate this view. Pupils state that bullying occurs infrequently and when it does is always dealt with fairly and constructively.
- 4.11 In the pupil questionnaire and in interviews, a small number of pupils in the lower years of the senior school expressed the view that the school did not listen to their opinions. Inspection evidence shows that a wide range of highly effective methods is used to seek the pupils' views and this is a particular strength of the school. School councils at junior and senior levels, the teaching and learning council in the senior school and pupil surveys all give pupils the opportunity to make their contribution to the development of the school. Overall, this is highly valued by pupils and is a significant factor in helping the school to meet its aim of developing strong, open-minded, confident young women.
- 4.12 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- 4.13 The school has excellent arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- 4.14 The school is most thorough in its attention to issues of safeguarding and provides suitable training for all those working in the school. The school has effective child protection measures which have regard to official guidance. Medical arrangements, including those in the junior school, are appropriate. A trained nurse and appropriate numbers of staff suitably qualified in first aid provide effective support for pupils who become unwell. The school is assiduous in recording and investigating accidents and in contacting parents. In general, health and safety arrangements are thorough and clearly specified.
- 4.15 Measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are comprehensive. The necessary risk assessments, including those for extra-curricular activities are extensive in their prudent consideration of pupil safety. Pupils are well supervised during activities, the arrangements being appropriate to the age of those involved.

- 4.16 The attendance registration system is conducted correctly and works extremely efficiently. Similarly the admissions procedures are suitably maintained and stored. Within the EYFS, all necessary welfare and safeguarding provision is made to ensure the safety of the children and all related policies and procedures are implemented rigorously.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governance successfully and fully supports the aims of the school in developing the personal and intellectual talents of the pupils to the full so that they leave as strong, open-minded women. The Council of the GDST, together with and through its executive officers, provides effective and highly efficient oversight of the school and demonstrates a clear understanding of its workings. Timely and carefully implemented procedures and thorough, regular reports allow the Council to monitor and evaluate the standards achieved and make appropriate plans to invest in staff and provide learning resources. There is an excellent balance of challenge and confirmation provided by the executive officers, who are regular visitors to the school.
- 5.3 The local School Governing Board adds an important dimension to the oversight of the school by successfully providing critical support to the Headmistress and knowledge of the local context in which the school operates. The Board members are highly active, positive advocates for the school and contribute significantly to its success.
- 5.4 Through a combination of the GDST Council and support from an experienced member of the School Governing Board, the EYFS is effectively monitored and helped to develop.
- 5.5 Governance is effective in discharging responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety. An annual review of the school's arrangements for safeguarding is conducted.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent.
- 5.7 The highly active leadership at all levels throughout the school is effective in enabling its aims to be fully met, as confirmed by high levels of pupil and parental satisfaction. The school has responded well to the recommendations made in the previous inspection by improving the links between the junior and senior schools resulting in much improved experiences for pupils. A number of initiatives have been successfully implemented placing an emphasis on the value and importance of the sharing of good practice in teaching. For example, peer observation of teaching, focused reviews of practice and robust staff self-evaluation and appraisal have improved the quality of teaching and assessment. The emerging leaders programme reinforces consistent quality of teaching and learning across subjects, and successfully develops aspirational staff. The leadership has also been largely effective in addressing the other recommendation from the previous inspection by extending the general provision for the most able and is aware of the need to regularly evaluate the experience of these pupils to ensure it is not unduly focussed on examination criteria.

- 5.8 The Headmistress has a strong vision for the school which is clearly and energetically imparted to the whole school community and is actively supported. This is a significant factor in the success of the school, as seen in the excellent achievements and personal development of the pupils at all stages. Leadership is proactive and offers a clear sense of purpose. Staff are well supported and listened to by curriculum and pastoral leaders. There is a systematic and effective approach to planning, review and evaluation which leads to improvement.
- 5.9 Leadership of the academic life of the school is robust and in the pastoral area there is an acute focus on the pupils' welfare and personal development. Structures and roles are well defined and understood. There are effective mechanisms for consultation and development with all staff, parents and pupils such as in the re-design of the curriculum and the establishment of a focus on teaching and learning within departmental meetings. The pastoral and academic boards provide clear and effective lines of communication between the junior and senior schools.
- 5.10 The children in the EYFS are extremely well cared for in a safe environment. Managers appraise and supervise staff well and there is ready access to resources for professional development. All staff are involved in identifying clear, ambitious priorities for the future following effective self-evaluation, and the whole-school development plan includes the EYFS.
- 5.11 The school secures well-qualified and dedicated staff who contribute much to the community. This is a strong factor in enabling the welfare needs of the pupils to be well met. School organisation and administration is effective and efficient. Arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are strong, and a central register is maintained effectively. Staff, including in the EYFS, are appropriately trained for and sensitively aware of their roles in safeguarding, welfare and health and safety.
- 5.12 The quality of links between the school and parents is excellent, and strongly supports the school's aims. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the breadth and quality of the school's provision, the energetic leadership and the personal development of the pupils. The school has a clear and appropriate complaints procedure which is effectively implemented. At every level, parents are encouraged to make immediate contact if concerns arise. They feel that these concerns are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- 5.13 Parents are kept well informed of their child's academic and social progress. Reports are detailed and informative and often make clear suggestions for improvement. They form an effective dialogue between home and school, fostering the pupils' academic and personal development well. In the EYFS, partnerships with parents are outstanding. Parents are actively welcomed into the EYFS setting to be involved in their children's learning and have daily opportunities to discuss progress with class teachers.
- 5.14 Information provided to parents of pupils and prospective pupils about the school is extensive and available through the prospectus and website, as well as other regular publications, such as the well-produced magazine and newsletters. The well-used parents' portal also gives access to a wide range of information that helps foster the collaborative approach that characterises the relationship between parents and the school. The school encourages and supports the parents' association, and values their hard work and dedication in organising major social events. The parents'

forum, which meets twice a year to discuss parental suggestions and issues arising from all phases of the school, exemplifies the open communication encouraged and has recently resulted in some adjustments to the format of reports and to parents' evenings.

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