

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL  
(ISC)**

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**INSPECTION OF**

**STANBRIDGE EARLS SCHOOL**

**By the**

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE  
(ISI)**

**On**

**30<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Stanbridge Earls School

Full Name of the School	<b>Stanbridge Earls School</b>
DfES Number	<b>850/6065</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>307342</b>
Address	<b>Stanbridge Lane, Romsey, Hampshire SO51 0ZS</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01794 529400</b>
Fax Number	<b>01794 511201</b>
Email Address	<b>admin@stanbridgeearls.co.uk</b>
Headteacher	<b>Mr G P Link</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr D J Beeby</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18 years</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>30<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2006</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002, as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

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

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Stanbridge Earls School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils of 11 to 18 years. It was founded in 1952 on its present 52-acre woodland site on the edge of the New Forest, northwest of Romsey. It occupies an adapted and much extended former manor house dating back to the sixteenth century together with purpose-built accommodation.
- 1.2 The school specialises in teaching pupils with special educational needs (SEN). These range from pupils diagnosed as having dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, speech and language impairment, and mild Asperger's syndrome, as well as pupils who for some reason need a small school environment. This may include pupils who have been badly bullied, had serious illness or become school phobics. Almost one-third of pupils have statements of special educational need. A feature of the provision is the two specialist units working alongside mainstream classes, providing one-to-one tuition for pupils with specific learning needs.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the number of pupils on roll was 166, of whom 26 are girls and 131 are boarders. Thirty-four pupils are in the junior school (Years 7 and 8), and 46 are in the sixth form. Twenty-eight pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). Overseas pupils come from over 20 different countries, with the largest group coming from Europe. Entry to the school is by interview and report. Standardised tests taken after entry confirm pupils' average ability is below that of the national average, although a number of pupils are well above the national average but with severe learning difficulties. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, results in public examinations can be expected to be below the national average for all maintained schools. Pupils leaving at the age of 16 go on to vocational courses in colleges of further education. At 18, almost all students secure places at universities, or on higher education courses, in this country or overseas. A small number take a gap year.
- 1.4 The school aims to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem, develop their intellectual awareness and talents, enabling each to reach their academic and practical potential in a caring family community. The school's strong ethos of praise reinforces the school motto, *building confidence: achieving success*. The school is broadly Christian, but welcomes pupils of all faiths and of no faith.
- 1.5 Since the last inspection, in March 2000, both the headmaster and the chairman of governors have changed twice. The school has undergone a programme of refurbishment and a sixth form centre, computer suite, new classrooms for English and modern foreign languages and a design and technology (DT) centre have been added.
- 1.6 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 education for pupils with special educational needs, which is fully consistent with its aims and philosophy. Since the last inspection, the provision for learning support has been extended to match more closely pupils' learning needs, and the curriculum has been broadened to improve pupils' preparation for the adult world. Through a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities pupils' confidence and self-esteem are raised. Their intellectual awareness and talents are developed, giving them every opportunity to reach their academic and practical potential. A happy friendly atmosphere is fostered in which pupils flourish because they feel secure.
- 2.2 The curriculum successfully promotes linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and physical development. It is broadly based on the National Curriculum, but extends it to include subjects to match the needs of pupils with one or more learning difficulties. Aesthetic and creative skills are strongly encouraged through good provision for art, DT, drama, home economics, motor mechanics, music and physical education (PE). The curriculum is enriched by the work of the Accelerated Learning Centre (ALC) and the Mathematics Learning Centre (MLC), through which speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy skills are very effectively developed by individual and some small group tuition.
- 2.3 The curriculum is broad and balanced, and provides good continuity between year groups. In Years 7 and 8, it concentrates on providing secure foundations in English, mathematics and science and achieves a good balance between form teacher and specialist tuition. It prepares pupils well for more independence in Year 9 and the subsequent choices which have to be made. In Years 10 and 11, pupils are skilfully guided in their choice of option subjects to build on their strengths. A feature of the curriculum is the large number of courses offered in the sixth form and the matching of these courses to the needs of the pupils. Courses leading to A level, GNVQ, GCSE in English and mathematics and ICT qualifications are available. Some students stay for one year and others for two, with a few completing courses in three years. In most subjects, Years 12 and 13 are taught together since numbers are small and there is much individual teaching. This does not compromise the quality of the provision. Since the last inspection, a life skills course has been introduced for pupils in Years 9 to 13 who find everyday situations challenging and also a citizenship course (embracing personal, social and health education) for all pupils in Years 7 to 11, as well as a general enrichment course for sixth form students. All of these make a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development. Additionally, because health and fitness are important for all pupils, physical education has been given designated time in the curriculum in Years 9 to 13. The great majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire spoke favourably about the appropriateness of the curriculum.
- 2.4 Pupils' experiences are enriched through the activities programme in which all pupils have to participate at lunchtime and in the early evening. It contributes strongly to their educational experience and achievement. Team games, drama and music play a significant part in this programme, through which pupils learn the importance of working with and for one another. Some departments organise expeditions, outings and visits, for example to art galleries, the theatre and exhibitions to enhance pupils' educational experience. Numerous links are made with the community, and those engaged on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award have opportunities, through the service section, for voluntary work.
- 2.5 Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education, training, and employment, for adult life and they are provided with a firm basis for future choices. The recently introduced

work experience programme in Year 10 is an example of the way the school is helping pupils to think about the future. Careers education and guidance are appropriate in Years 10 to 13. Many of the vocational courses offered in the sixth form successfully equip students for a trade in a service industry. Strong support is provided for those applying for university and higher education courses, and great care is taken to identify courses that are appropriate for individual students. Students spoke positively about the help they received and they said they knew who to turn to for help with their decision making. Through the sixth form general enrichment course students have opportunities to, for example, learn to drive, learn about first aid and how to manage money.

- 2.6 The school has no whole school approach to curriculum planning. Each department has documentation outlining curricular provision but not all are effective planning documents. The absence of a whole school development plan leads to inconsistencies of approach and the good practice in some departments is not routinely shared.
- 2.7 The curriculum is tailored to the specific learning needs of all pupils, including those pupils not fluent in English. The head of the ALC is the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) with responsibility for co-ordinating the excellent provision to meet the learning needs of pupils. Since the last inspection, specialists have been appointed in occupational and speech and language therapy. The school is a member of the Council for the registration of Schools Teaching Dyslexia Pupils (CreSTed), for teaching pupils individually or occasionally in small groups, according to need. All teachers in the ALC and MLC have qualifications in teaching pupils with special educational needs, and mainstream teachers are being encouraged to gain such qualifications. Closer links between the specialist centres and mainstream classes are being developed and teachers receive some guidance on how to support pupils in their lessons. This opening up of channels of communication with departments enhances understanding and is being encouraged across the whole school. Specialist centre teachers regularly join mainstream lessons to support individual pupils. Almost all pupils have specialist support for up to five lessons a week and the arrangements work well with a good balance existing between withdrawal and in-class support. Once pupils have had their particular learning need identified and assessed, individual education plans (IEPs) are drawn up by teachers in the ALC and the MLC. These clearly identify work to be covered and they are monitored termly.
- 2.8 Through the individual support given and the work of ALC and MLC the school provides open access to all its activities and pupils participate in a wide range of opportunities appropriate to both boys and girls. The school has not, as yet, looked at options for improving accessibility to the whole site.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.10 The school is successful in meeting its aim to develop the intellectual awareness, abilities and talents of all pupils so that they have every opportunity to reach their academic potential. Since the last inspection, there are clear improvements in pupils' learning and achievements. Pupils are well educated in relation to their age and abilities. Given the learning difficulties under which pupils work, their achievement is good and they develop the essential skills and attitudes for work and study.
- 2.11 Overall, pupils have a secure grounding in the knowledge, skills and understanding of the subjects they study and they are able to use this to apply their learning productively, especially in practical and creative subjects. When they arrive at school many pupils are underachieving as a result of a poor experience of education, coping with a variety of special

needs, or a feeling of failure or rejection. The nurturing environment fostered in Years 7 and 8 and with the support of the ALC and MLC pupils' self-esteem is gradually built up. By Year 9, pupils have grown in confidence and are beginning to experience results in line with their abilities. In Years 10 to 11, pupils' capacity to assimilate knowledge, skills and understanding gradually improves and by the sixth form most pupils can act and think critically and creatively.

- 2.12 Pupils' attainment in practical and creative curriculum areas is almost always better than in English and subjects with a great deal of writing. When pupils join the school their literacy and numeracy skills are generally related to their ability and learning difficulty, but are mostly below average. As they progress through the school they become more articulate, fluent and able to respond to questions, which increases their knowledge and understanding. In Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, pupils can use subject specific vocabulary in, for example science and geography. Strengths in aesthetic and practical subjects noted in the last inspection have been maintained and built upon, notably in art, drama, DT, motor mechanics and PE. In GCSE, the overall attainment of boys during the last three years is better than that of girls.
- 2.13 Pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities and specific learning difficulty. Pupils are entered for national tests at aged 14 in mathematics and science. The results have improved steadily over the last three years and are broadly in line with national averages for all maintained schools. GCSE performance has also been broadly in line with the national average for such schools and represents an improvement over the last three years, especially in the number of A\* to C grades. This improvement is indicative of closer tracking of pupils' progress notably in Years 10 and 11. In examinations taken by Year 13, attainment is at least in line with students' abilities and frequently better than might be expected. The number of entries for each subject is too small for reliable comparisons to be made with national averages. With structured teaching and close monitoring of their progress, students obtain results which enable them to obtain places on courses at colleges and universities of their choice.
- 2.14 In small classes and with individual support pupils' self-esteem and confidence are nurtured and they make steady progress throughout their time at school. Nationally standardised measures of progress from Year 7 to GCSE in 2004, show good progress was recorded in art, DT, history, mathematics and single award science.
- 2.15 Pupils gain notable achievements across a wide range of activities. These include successful performances in team sports at local and county level in rugby, football and netball. A significant number of pupils are successful in examinations of the Associated Board of the Royal School of Music and the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). The school recently performed Tom Stoppard's version of *The Merchant of Venice* at the Royal Theatre in Winchester. Each year the school stages a major production, and rehearsals have just commenced for *Les Misérables* to be performed in November. Pupils are successful at bronze, silver and gold levels of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and in the United Kingdom Mathematics Challenge. The school attaches much importance to its pupils' successes and their achievement is acknowledged in assembly, the newsletter and the school magazine, *The Voice*. Their achievements play an important part in building up confidence.
- 2.16 Over their time at Stanbridge Earls, pupils develop effectively the skills and attitudes for work and study. Speaking and listening skills are developed well in the ALC, and by the sixth form pupils are articulate and they can communicate confidently with adults and their peers. Reading gradually improves although some pupils at every level are reluctant to read

aloud. Neat writing was observed in Years 7 and 8 and pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.

- 2.17 For a number of pupils mathematical and numerical concepts pose many difficulties. With the considerable contribution of the MLC's highly skilled and experienced staff in identifying pupils' needs and supporting their progress, pupils gradually acquire the concepts that they need to be able to cope with the demands of the subjects they study. The application of these concepts can be seen in many subjects including chemistry, DT, motor mechanics, physics and sports studies.
- 2.18 Pupils are skilful users of ICT and its use was evident in some subjects, for example media studies, and in display work around the school. However, the use of ICT is not systematically planned in the work of most subjects.
- 2.19 The skills for finding out and using information are encouraged at every stage. Some pupils are happier following instructions and prefer to be told what to do, but the many opportunities and skilful teaching ensure that pupils who struggle are given every chance to make headway. By the sixth form, most pupils can discuss cogently for their age and think for themselves.
- 2.20 Although some pupils have difficulties taking notes, organising their work and studying independently, the school provides good guidance to support them. In Years 10 and 11 and the sixth form, pupils acquire a range of examination techniques and make use of the support offered by the ALC and MLC in organising course work.
- 2.21 Pupils have good attitudes to learning and they make the most of the opportunities that the school provides. They can work effectively on their own and co-operatively in small groups to complete tasks and support one another's efforts. Bigger projects include pupils working co-operatively on *The Voice*, building a canoe in DT, then racing it in a local competition and winning.
- 2.22 Pupils mostly settle quickly and have positive attitudes to learning in the great majority of lessons. They demonstrate commendable perseverance, especially those with short concentration spans. Pupils have excellent relationships with their teachers and in interviews with the inspectors said how much they enjoyed school.

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

- 2.23 Throughout the school pupils achieve appropriate levels of awareness that contribute to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development. The ethos of the school, evident in all its activities and in the boarding houses, together with carefully nurtured positive relationships, make an important contribution to pupils' personal development. Pupils grow up to be confident young adults who have a respect for others, and a concern for people and the environment, as well as the wider community.
- 2.24 Some aspects of pupils' spiritual awareness are developing well. The recently introduced citizenship programme provides opportunities for pupils to reflect and develop a measure of self-awareness and self-esteem. Teachers build pupils' confidence and knowledge of their personal worth by respecting them as individuals and through the support they provide. Religious education (RE) teaching in Years 7 and 8, encourages questioning and curiosity, and demonstrates the school's aim to open pupils' minds and eyes to experience what is in the world around them. However, the religious dimension of spiritual development is not a prominent feature in Years 9 to 13, and the absence of RE gives an imbalance to the curriculum with no formal opportunity to explore, for example, different faiths and beliefs.

Similarly, opportunities for reflection were missed in the chapel assemblies observed. A Christian Fellowship meets once a week and this potentially provides a good context for the exploration of faith for those who attend. A music recital in the chapel by three pupils fostered spiritual awareness, but apart from this no other opportunities were observed during the inspection. Additionally, departmental documentation gives no indication of how subjects are planned to make a contribution to pupils' spiritual awareness and growth.

- 2.25 Pupils have a strong moral sense and distinguish clearly between right and wrong, owing in part to the value the school places on its community life and charitable giving. The school raises considerable sums of money for such charities as *Wizz Kids* and the tsunami appeal, linking this to discussions on a range of subjects related to caring for others and moral responsibility. The school rules serve as a constant reminder of the high standards of behaviour that are expected. Pupils' appreciation of the school rules is good and they think the sanctions for misbehaviour are appropriate. Pupils are loyal to their school and demonstrate a caring, courteous, kind and respectful attitude to one another, visitors and their teachers. Inter-house activities, competitions and team games encourage fair play.
- 2.26 Pupils have good social awareness and this is the result of a corporate approach by the whole school. It encourages pupils of all ages to work and play together, notably in inter-house competitions, raising money for charity and team sports. Teachers and house parents provide positive role models of behaviour in tune with the school's ethos. As pupils move through the school they become increasingly confident and able to interact with one another and the staff. A strong feature of the school is the mature way sixth form students conduct themselves. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and for others, in the boarding houses and within the school. Opportunities to undertake duties as prefects, monitors, team captains in sport, house captains and other activities offer pupils of all ages chances to gain valuable leadership skills, grow in confidence and develop a sense of self-worth. Pupils respond well to these opportunities to undertake responsibilities. The citizenship and life skills programmes include units on public institutions, democracy and promoting understanding of issues beyond the school community, including interpersonal relationships and drugs. Pupils said they welcomed these additions to the curriculum.
- 2.27 Pupils are aware of the need for tolerance, understanding and fairness. They relate well with one another regardless of the cultural differences of the 20 countries represented in the school. Cultural diversity is embraced through art, home economics, music and overseas visits. For example, the forthcoming visits to New York and the rugby and netball tour of South Africa, foster an appreciation of cultural traditions of other countries. Visits to the theatre and museums enrich understanding of other cultures, and other times and other places. Subjects such as geography and history bring pupils into contact with different cultures and environments distant in place and time. Despite a growing awareness, opportunities are missed to find out more about the range of cultural heritages that comprise the school community.
- 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 has many good features and is consistently of a high quality. Several examples of outstanding teaching were observed. Since the last inspection, more variety of approach has been introduced, including the use of ICT in some subjects. Teaching supports the aims of the school and is well adapted to the special educational needs of pupils at every stage. It sets high expectations and builds on pupils' strengths, giving them confidence, and either skillfully overcoming any weaknesses or finding strategies around them.

- 2.30 Teaching reveals a deep and sensitive understanding of the learning needs of pupils. It enables all pupils to acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding, develop skills and make progress at their own best pace. A Year 8 pupil for example, who found concentration difficult, was achieving success and gaining confidence as his listening and memory skills were being stretched to the full in an English lesson. The specialist tuition, not only in literacy and numeracy but also occupational and speech and language therapy in the ALC and MLC, plays a central role in pupils' progress and achievement.
- 2.31 Pupils are well motivated by the teaching they receive at every level and they are encouraged to work hard. By the sixth form, most students are competent learners who demonstrate their capacity to persevere until they have achieved what they want. Pupils are helped to discover the ways of study best suited to them as individuals, including, for example, the use of background music to block out distractions or how best to remember things. Good use is made of rewards and in many cases, the setting of short short-term goals and targets. The PE department, for example, sets short-term targets through its planned lesson-by-lesson objectives based on individual pupil need.
- 2.32 Lessons are mostly well planned. Without a whole school approach, lesson planning is left to individual teachers. While good practice exists in several departments, in others the general scheme of work is all that guides what is to be taught. Lesson aims are not always thought through and made clear to pupils at the beginning of lessons. A wide variety of teaching methods is used and suitable multi-sensory methods are employed, for example in a Year 8 English lesson, body movement reinforced the rhythm of a poem. Throughout the school classes are small and lessons are planned to meet the differing needs of pupils, rather than driven by the urge to cover a certain amount of subject material in a lesson. Extensive use is made of worksheets which do not depend on extensive reading and writing, to encourage understanding. Some of these, but not all, offer scope for the more able pupils to be extended. The best planned lessons manage time effectively, match tasks to individual needs and encourage pupils to think for themselves.
- 2.33 Teachers have a good knowledge of pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainments. They are helped in this by the SENCO who provides information from the pupils' assessment tests taken shortly after entry to the school, including how to help pupils whose first language is not English. Because teachers know pupils so well, they very effectively adapt schemes of work to the strengths of pupils and thereby encourage a culture of success and achievement. Pupils commented on the enormous relief they feel coming to Stanbridge Earls after their previous schools where teachers thought they were lazy, needlessly aggressive or disruptive.
- 2.34 Teachers have secure knowledge and understanding of the subjects they teach and bring to the school a mix of age and experience. They keep up-to-date with recent developments and attend professional development courses. Teachers have a thorough understanding of examination requirements and make appropriate decisions about early entry for some pupils.
- 2.35 Resources to support pupils' learning are sufficient and are mostly of good quality. They are very good in the specialist centres. Departmental budgeting arrangements work well and the finance director monitors spending monthly. The school library is a popular resource and is used not only for reading for pleasure but also to seek out information. It is well stocked and managed effectively by the librarian. Class libraries and books in the specialist centres offer a wide range of material to support individual subjects. Since the last inspection, the ICT suite has been built and equipped. It provides very good facilities for teaching ICT and is in constant use. Access to the network can only be obtained in a small number of departments. The completion of the extension to the network throughout the campus in the next few months, including to the boarding houses, is planned to enable ICT to be used to support

teaching and learning in all subjects and to transform information dissemination throughout the school.

- 2.36 Teaching includes regular assessment of pupils' work. The ALC and MLC carry out a range of assessments immediately following entry to diagnose pupils' learning difficulties and to establish the nature of support required. The information is shared with parents, who work closely with the school to support their children. Assessment information is well used to plan the development of pupils' learning in the ALC, MLC and Years 7 and 8. Its use is variable elsewhere in the school. Individual education plans are circulated to teachers, some of whom integrate the targets into their own lesson plans. Plans are being made to develop subject-specific IEPs to further encourage appropriate teaching methods and target setting in lessons. Pupils with statements of educational need, funded by the local authority, have these reviewed annually. Some pupils are engaged in self-assessment, which encourages them to take some responsibility for their own progress. A strength of the assessment system is the quarter-term internal assessment reviews involving house parents, the house mistress, house masters and house tutors. Progress is closely monitored and any pupil falling behind is quickly identified and additional support provided. At all stages generous use is made of rewards to encourage good effort and achievement.
- 2.37 Marking of pupils' work is regular but the range of marking styles shows little standardisation of practice and mostly consists of ticks and brief remarks of praise. A sensible balance is achieved between correcting errors and leaving others unchecked. In the sixth form, comments are sometimes added to show how a piece of work may be further improved, for example in sports studies and mathematics.
- 2.38 Teachers encourage pupils to behave responsibly, not to call out and to listen carefully. Frequent changes of task help pupils to remain focused, and instructions are repeated as many times as is necessary. Generally, classes are well managed and the excellent relationships between pupils and teachers further encourage responsible behaviour.
- 2.39 The ALC, MLC, housemasters and the housemistress of the girls' house monitor pupils' learning and achievement closely. The headmaster has the overview of pupils' successes both in the subjects they are studying and other activities that are central to life at Stanbridge Earls.
- 2.40 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of care provided by staff for boarding and day pupils is a strong feature of the school, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The arrangements are supported by an effective structure and sound policies. The attention given to welfare, health and safety has improved since the last inspection. Parents expressed their satisfaction with the level of pastoral care provided.
- 3.2 The support and guidance provided both by teaching staff and house parents promote pupils' well-being effectively, in accordance with the school's aims. All staff go to great lengths to understand pupils' needs and build up respect that could be seen in the warm and friendly relationships that exist between pupils and teachers. Staff have a deep concern for pupils and demonstrate a high level of commitment, which inspires trust and confidence. Pupils respond well to the encouragement they receive.
- 3.3 At the heart of the pastoral arrangements is the communication that exists between the deputy head responsible for care, house parents, housemasters and the housemistress, tutors, and the medical team. Formal and informal communications are good between pastoral and academic staff who are kept informed on a daily basis about the needs of individual pupils. Pastoral care is closely linked to systematic tracking of pupils' academic and personal development to ensure that the performance of each pupil is monitored and the information used to provide relevant support when it is needed. Pupils said the staff were approachable and there was always someone on hand with whom they could speak. Throughout the day a senior member of staff is available if a pupil has to be temporarily withdrawn from a lesson. Mostly a friendly chat is all that is required to ensure the pupil does not continue to prevent other pupils from working and to go back to their own work with renewed vigour. Senior pupils keep a watching brief on the welfare of younger pupils giving important support and acting as role models for junior forms.
- 3.4 Pupils support one another, and the sixth form set a good example to younger pupils by their behaviour and attitudes, communicating the shared values of the school from one year to the next. Pastoral care is much more than a job for many staff, and the pride they take in the massive achievements of most pupils, is an indication of their level of commitment. For example, the headmaster and his wife entertained the 1<sup>st</sup> XV rugby team in their home after reaching the final of the Hampshire Schools' Plate competition.
- 3.5 Since the last inspection, measures to promote good discipline and behaviour have been strengthened. A clearly defined list of sanctions is set out in the pupils' handbook and regularly reinforced by house parents and most teachers. Pupils know the limits of tolerable behaviour beyond which the system of sanctions is applied. A carefully created ethos of mutual respect and trust between pupils is a large part of behaviour management. Pupils are open and honest about themselves. They mix freely, showing acceptance of each other's needs and difficulties, patient when that is the appropriate response and yet challenging each other's behaviour when the need arises. Rewards for good behaviour are given generously as a way of reinforcing good behaviour. The regular presence of the headmaster in different parts of the school, and his open door policy, encourages good behaviour effectively.
- 3.6 The school's policy to counteract bullying and harassment is well considered, and procedures are communicated to all teaching and non-teaching staff, house parents, pupils and parents. The pupils' handbook sets out clearly what to do if a pupil is bullied or thinks someone else

is being bullied. Units in the citizenship programme provide opportunities for discussion of attitudes to those bullied and the bullies themselves. Pupils say there is less bullying than there used to be, and when it does occur it is dealt with promptly and effectively. Staff devote considerable time to creating an environment where bullying is not tolerated and they are winning this battle.

- 3.7 Child protection procedures are securely in place. The deputy head with responsibility for such matters has undertaken relevant training in association with local agencies. Clear policies are known to staff who have had appropriate training. The governing body has nominated one of its members to oversee all child protection matters and she visits the school, reporting half termly to governors' meetings. The school complies with the requirements for maintaining its admission and attendance registers.
- 3.8 All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. The most significant recommendation of a specialist company's audit six months ago has been acted upon and an action plan has been prepared to deal with the other recommendations. Some of these have already been implemented, but the staff have not yet had training in fire prevention and practical fire fighting.
- 3.9 Arrangements to ensure health and safety, in the main, are effective and the school has due regard for health and safety regulations. Procedures are documented in a detailed health and safety policy in the staff handbook. A health and safety committee has recently been formed; its membership is appropriate and it is chaired by the facilities director. The governors, as yet, have not nominated a governor to have particular responsibility for health and safety. Off-site risk assessments are completed for some but not all activities and risk assessments have not been undertaken in some areas of risk, for example DT, motor mechanics and PE. The school is well aware of this and is making it a priority for the new health and safety committee. The medical centre plays a central role in supporting pupils' welfare and there is a satisfactory number of staff with up-to-date first aid qualifications. Appropriate accident records are kept. The school does not have a written first aid policy. The caterers provide good, balanced and nourishing meals, with ample choice. Provision is made for special diets.
- 3.10 The school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) prepare risk assessments where they do not exist already for high risk and off-site activities; [Regulations 3.(2)(c). and 3.(4)]
  - (b) arrange training in fire prevention and practical fire fighting for staff; [Regulations 3.(5)and 3.(5) parts (a) and (b)]
  - (c) prepare and implement a written policy on first aid. [Regulation 3.(6)]

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.11 Almost all parents who responded to the questionnaire said they were very satisfied with the education offered and the progress their children made. They singled out the quality of teaching, the range of extra-curricular activities and provision for special educational needs for particular mention. They continue to be pleased with their children's progress and achievement, mentioned in the last inspection report, but also said communications between home and school had improved.
- 3.12 The school places a high priority on maintaining links with parents and keeping them fully informed. Parents have many opportunities to be involved with the life of the school and the work and progress of their children. The headmaster, staff and house parents are approachable and accessible, and always pleased to speak with parents, including overseas

parents by email. The school calendar, half termly newsletters, *The Voice*, all provide good insights into the work of the school, the activities taking place and pupils' achievements. The pupils' handbook, given to all pupils on entry, provides important information about school life and expectations that are equally necessary for parents to know about. Written communications with parents are of high quality. The website is well developed and provides up-to-date information. Since the last inspection, a Parents' Association has been formed through which those parents who live sufficiently close can be involved with activities, some of which raise money for the school, for example providing a sports day picnic and managing a clothing shop. Parents regularly attend sports matches, concerts and drama productions to encourage their children.

- 3.13 Parents are provided with detailed and helpful information about their child's progress through regular reports and meetings for parents with staff. Since the last inspection, a review has been made of written reports resulting in high quality reports that are clear, coherent and detailed. Most include suggestions that make clear how a pupil can be helped to improve. A reply slip has been added for parents to make comments. Parents' meetings are held twice a year, conveniently on Saturday mornings when parents are at school to collect children for weekend leave.
- 3.14 The school's complaints procedure is available should any parent require it. It complies with regulatory requirements but it has not been invoked. Concerns raised by parents are handled promptly and with typical sensitivity either by the headmaster or the head of care as appropriate. Proper records of concerns are kept.
- 3.15 The school has strong links with the wider community and is actively seeking ways to develop these still further. For example, the school's swimming pool is used by a primary school, the laboratories by a Fly Fishing club, and sixth form students arranged a course last year at a care home for the elderly showing them how to use computer. Fund raising for a local children's hospice and assisting with parking at the Romsey Show both reflect the school's desire to establish links with the community. Valuable links are also forged through work experience, curriculum related visits and Duke of Edinburgh's Award service projects.
- 3.16 The school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) provide to parents of pupils and prospective pupils the name and address of the chair of governors; [Regulation 6.(2)(c)]
  - (b) provide to parents of pupils and prospective pupils particulars of the school's policy on the arrangements for discipline and exclusions. [Regulation 6.(2)(e)]

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.17 In the eight boarding houses relationships are positive, a good standard of care and high quality support are provided. Although each boarding house has its own ethos, appropriate for pupils grouped into houses by age and sex, a common sense of purpose and direction is evident in line with the school's aims. Some pupils arrive at Stanbridge Earls with relationship problems as a result of their learning difficulty, others have experienced bullying at a previous school and some lack confidence. In a calm, friendly and open atmosphere pupils begin to feel relaxed and able to build up trusting relationships with house parents and tutors, as well as with other pupils. Pupils said they are helped to settle in quickly and gradually their confidence begins to grow. In the questionnaire, parents spoke of happy children who became more settled after joining the school. They also mentioned that they noticed an improvement in attitudes to work and better progress. Dedicated house parents

lead by example and are effectively supported by the care and medical teams. Almost all pupils said, in the questionnaire, that teachers show concern and that they are given help when they have problems with their work. At present, the medical centre does not have an isolation room and this puts pressure on the boarding houses when a pupil needs to be isolated for health reasons. Governors are already addressing this issue, as more space has recently become available adjacent to the medical centre following the relocation of the Years 7 and 8 boys boarding house.

- 3.18 A wide range of activities is offered in the evenings and at weekends. It is the school's policy to keep all pupils fully occupied, but they do have enough social time when they can decide for themselves what to do. The activities programme, set out in the school calendar, is appropriate for the ages, interests, abilities and levels of skill of pupils and makes a valuable contribution to their personal development. These include cinema and theatre visits, swimming, shopping, football matches, bowling, rugby 7's, visits to exhibitions, for example *The Boat Show*, and activities in connection with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. The provision for the smaller number of girls is satisfactory.
- 3.19 The quality of boarding accommodation is satisfactory and often good. In their respective questionnaires both pupils and parents said the accommodation did not offer 'home from home comforts'. Governors know this and have an on-going programme of refurbishment in hand to upgrade the quality of the accommodation in the boarding houses to bring it up to the level of the best. The accommodation provides a safe and secure environment in which to live and work. The campus is well lit at night enabling pupils to move between buildings confidently. The resources in the boarding houses are suitable and the extension of the computer network to the boarding houses is eagerly awaited.
- 3.20 The good level of care and very dedicated house staff mentioned in the last report has been maintained. It was noted that they work long hours and a review of the team structure for supervision has been made. As a result house parents now have more free time.
- 3.21 The report of the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in November 2005, arrived in school shortly before this inspection. It made five recommendations. Three have already been implemented and the school is drawing up an action plan for the other two, both of which are associated with risk assessments.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 Effective governance enables pupils to benefit from a good quality of education. The structure and management arrangements relating to the governing body are well defined within the terms of the recently revised charitable deed and they provide effective support and appropriate oversight of the school.
- 4.2 Through the sub-committee structure governors contribute to financial planning and educational development. A strong feature of the arrangements is the half-termly meeting of the senior management team (SMT), chairman of the governing body, together with the chairmen of the sub-committees. These meetings provide an insight into the day-to-day and longer-term issues affecting the school. The governors understand their strategic role and monitor the quality of the school's provision, including how well it meets its aims, regulatory and legal requirements. They have a good grasp of the school's strengths and areas for development and have a clear focus on improving provision. The headmaster provides good quality educational, pastoral, and management information at the termly meetings of the full governing body.
- 4.3 The chairman has a thorough knowledge of the school through his association with it as a governor over several years. Four new governors have recently been appointed; two with financial experience and two with an educational background. These appointments have strengthened the expertise available to the school, but the governing body still lacks on legal expertise. None of the governors has had training for their role.
- 4.4 Governors provide strong support for the headmaster and have an effective relationship with staff. They attend major school events, as well as making themselves available to meet teachers informally in the staff common room before their committee meetings.

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

- 4.5 Those with senior management responsibilities give clear educational direction and leadership. A caring family atmosphere is set and maintained, a good quality of education is provided and the welfare of pupils is given the highest priority in line with the school's aims. The headmaster was formerly head of care, and has long experience of the school. His energetic leadership is renewing the school's sense of direction and providing a secure foundation for development. Changes in the composition of the SMT have begun to allow for greater delegation enabling post holders to take more responsibility. Two deputy heads have been appointed; one to be responsible for care and the other for the curriculum. Additionally, the work of the bursary is shared between a finance director and a facilities director. The structure of the management arrangements for boarding is very good. The housemaster/housemistress and house tutor teams work very effectively alongside the house parent teams.
- 4.6 The quality of management of departments is uneven. Some heads of department have a clear understanding of their role and some monitor teaching and learning. In most matters however, departments operate independently. The SMT is aware of this. The strengths of the most successful departments are not shared with others to promote best practice throughout the school. Only recently appointed heads of department have job descriptions. Those appointed earlier lack this guidance to the school's expectations.

- 4.7 No whole school development plan exists to guide the academic and pastoral development of the school systematically. Some departments have prepared their own development plans and they are of varying quality. No procedures exist for monitoring the implementation of revised and new policies and procedures, based on clearly defined objectives for whole school improvement. In the last twelve months the SMT has reviewed the work of the school and established a priority list to deal with needs. Much has been achieved, including rewriting a comprehensive and helpful staff handbook. The self-evaluation prepared in advance of the inspection indicates that the school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses.
- 4.8 The school benefits from the effective deployment of experienced staff of high calibre who understand and care deeply about pupils with specific learning needs. The level of staffing is appropriately generous and includes a sufficient number of support staff who work in classes, boarding houses and with individual pupils. They add considerably to the quality of work achieved. A performance review scheme has been in place for care staff for some time, but a scheme for teaching staff is in its infancy. Not all teachers have job descriptions and without such guidance the review scheme is not fully effective. The required checks are made on all staff before an appointment is made and appropriate records are kept. A good system of induction operates for new members of staff.
- 4.9 Financial arrangements ensure a good range of resources, suitable premises and accommodation to support the school's aims and meet the needs of its pupils. Procedures for departmental budgeting operate effectively and the finance director monitors spending closely. Teachers said they had enough resources to support teaching and learning and the ALC and MLC are very well provided for. Resources are accessible and appropriately located.
- 4.10 The administration of the school is efficient. A small team in the office provide a good service for pupils, staff and parents. Admissions and the introduction of new parents to the school are well handled. Day-to-day routines are well established and efficient. Daily staff briefings at break time provide an effective means of communication.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school is very successful in achieving its aims and aspirations. In a caring, ordered and secure environment, where every pupil is known and respected, they succeed in a wide range of academic and practical ways. Fundamental to this achievement is the school's strong ethos of praise which reinforces the school motto *building confidence: achieving success*. In relation to their special educational need, pupils are grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding and are well educated in ways that prepare them to be responsible members of society. Pupils are very well cared for in the boarding houses and good provision is made for their personal development. Governors and senior managers work together to ensure pupils receive a high quality education. Parents are very satisfied with the education offered and pupils appreciate the opportunities they are given.
- 5.2 As the school is already aware, it has not prepared a whole school development plan to provide a coherent approach to development. Neither does it have systems for monitoring the quality of its provision and implementation of recently introduced policies and procedures.
- 5.3 Despite two changes in each position of headmaster and chairman of the governing body, the school has maintained, and in some areas improved, the good standards reported in the last inspection. It has responded well to the recommendations. The provision of learning support has been extended and more attention is being given to preparing pupils for post-18 education, training and employment and for equipping them for life in the adult world. Closer attention is given to recruiting only pupils who will benefit from the education offered by the school.
- 5.4 The school complies with almost all of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standards 3 (Welfare, Health and Safety) and Standard 6 (The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community).

## Next Steps

- 5.5 In order for the school to improve still further, the school should:
1. In consultation with governors, senior managers and teachers, construct a whole school development plan which identifies priorities for action for the next three to five years.
  2. Improve the monitoring of the school's provision by:
    - sharing existing good practice;
    - ensuring the recently revised and new policies are implemented consistently.
- 5.6 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) prepare risk assessments where they do not exist already for high risk and off-site activities; [Regulations 3.(2)(c) and 3.(4)]
  - (2) arrange training in fire prevention and practical fire fighting for staff; [Regulations 3.(5)and 3.(5) parts (a) and (b)]
  - (3) prepare and implement a written policy on first aid; [Regulation 3.(6)]
  - (4) provide to parents of pupils and prospective pupils the name and address of the chair of governors; [Regulation 6.(2)(c)]
  - (5) provide to parents of pupils and prospective pupils particulars of the school's policy on the arrangements for discipline and exclusions. [Regulation 6.(2)(e)]

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

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 30<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2006. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the medical centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### **List of Inspectors**

Mrs Margaret Banks	Reporting Inspector
Mr David Beck	Retired HMC deputy head
The Revd James Broughton	Chaplain SHMIS School
Mrs Margi Lamey	Head of sixth form HMC school
Mrs Glynis Yates	Local Authority education consultant