



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

EGERTON ROTHESAY SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Egerton Rothesay School

Full Name of School	Egerton Rothesay School
DfE Number	919/6062
Registered Charity Number	1091089
Address	Egerton Rothesay School Durrants Lane Berkhamsted Hertfordshire HP4 3UJ
Telephone Number	01442 865275
Fax Number	01442 864977
Email Address	admin.dl@eger-roth.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr Colin Parker
Chairman of Governors	Mr David Vesey
Age Range	6 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	140
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (100 boys; 40 girls)
Numbers by Age	6-11: 39 11-19: 101
Inspection dates	19 Nov 2013 to 22 Nov 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 2010.

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.

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 chairman of governors and other 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

Mrs Danice Iles	Reporting Inspector
Mr Jonathan Meadmore	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Helen Wainwright	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, Society of Heads school)
Mr John Wood	Team Inspector (Headmaster, ISA school)

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Egerton Rothesay is a co-educational day school for pupils from five to nineteen years of age, situated on the outskirts of Berkhamsted. The school developed from two preparatory schools, later adding secondary provision. It has spacious grounds and modern buildings with dedicated areas for the junior school, specialist support and one-to-one teaching. The school has recently added a building for older pupils, with seven classrooms and a small hall. The current headteacher was appointed in September 2013.
- 1.2 The governing body of the school is the board of directors of Egerton Rothesay School Limited, which owns the school and is responsible for its operation. Egerton Rothesay School Limited is wholly owned by a registered charity, Egerton Rothesay School. The charity has three trustees, one of whom is on the board of the limited company whose profits, after investment in development and future growth, are paid to the charitable trust.
- 1.3 The school specialises in providing for pupils with a variety of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), requiring individual support. It has re-focused its aims and objectives, and its mission is to transform the lives of children who have struggled to develop and grow within a mainstream school setting because of an obstacle to their learning or development. It aims to provide for each pupil's needs and learning style, so that all pupils can progress according to their own abilities and develop their own strategies to learn effectively, and are enabled to value themselves and to understand the wider world in which they live. The school has a Christian foundation and welcomes pupils of any or of no faith.
- 1.4 Poplar, the junior school, comprises Years 2 to 6; and pupils are registered and taught for the most part in mixed-age groups. The senior school is divided into three sections: Oak (Years 7 to 9), Beech (Years 10 to 13) and Rowan (Years 7 to 11, for pupils with more complex needs). Sixth-form provision was established in 2012.
- 1.5 There are 140 pupils on roll: 39 in Years 2 to 6, 94 in Years 7 to 11 and 7 in the sixth form. All pupils require some support for SEND, which include difficulties with speech, language and communication, dyslexia, dyspraxia, and autistic spectrum disorders, including Asperger syndrome. There are 78 pupils with a statement of special educational needs; 67 are funded to some degree by local authorities. One pupil has English as an additional language and receives specialist help as required.
- 1.6 The ability profile of the school is below the national average. A fairly wide spread of abilities is represented; most pupils are of below average ability, and a few are above average.
- 1.7 Almost all pupils are of white British or European heritage, with a few from other ethnic groups. Their family backgrounds are mostly business or professional, and they live within a radius of 35 miles from the school.
- 1.8 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 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good. Throughout the school, pupils encompassing a wide variety of SEND and individual requirements are successfully educated. The school amply fulfils its mission to transform the lives of young people who have struggled in a mainstream school. The small class sizes, effective teaching and highly trained specialist and support staff create a very positive atmosphere that is effective in supporting learning and enables pupils to achieve highly in relation to their wide range of abilities and SEND. They make good progress. Curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent and is carefully planned to encourage and motivate pupils. Pupils work well independently and also in pairs and larger groups, where they show awareness of the needs and feelings of others. This ability to work with and assist their peers is a strength of the pupils. The quality of links between specialist and mainstream provision is variable, as is the quality of marking. However, where teaching is at its best, pupils' learning benefits greatly from close collaboration between subject and specialist staff, and from consistent good practice in marking and the provision of helpful comments on pupils' work.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is of a high standard. The Christian foundation guides the day-to-day life of the school. Pastoral care is excellent and pupils respond to the calm, encouraging approach of their teachers and of others with whom they come in contact during the day. The pupils have great respect for the staff, and especially those whom they approach should a concern arise. Through the example set by the dedicated staff, pupils learn to respect and care about each other and to think about the wider world. Older pupils are confident, friendly and articulate, and ready to begin the next phase of their education. Meticulous arrangements are made for pupils' welfare, including their safeguarding, health and safety.
- 2.3 The governance of the school is excellent. It has been highly successful in responding to the recommendations of the previous inspection and in facilitating continued improvement. Governors demonstrate strong commitment to the best interests of the school. They are highly effective in the discharge of their duties, and work closely with administrative and senior academic staff. Senior leadership of the school is strong and committed to providing the highest standards of education, specialist support and pastoral care for the pupils in order to give them the best possible opportunities to achieve success and fulfilment in their lives. Outstanding links are maintained with parents, who indicate their appreciation for the work of the school, and the difference its expertise and understanding approach have made to the lives of their children.

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

1. Further strengthen and develop the liaison between specialist and mainstream teaching to enhance the present good provision and focus more on specific needs in the classroom.
2. Ensure consistency in marking procedures throughout the curriculum by continuing the development of the programme of monitoring written work.

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' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims. The school successfully achieves its principal purposes: to provide for each pupil's needs and learning style, so that all pupils can progress according to their own abilities, and to enable them to develop their own strategies to learn effectively.
- 3.3 The levels of pupils' achievement are good in relation to their abilities and needs, especially with reference to their oral contributions in lessons. In a junior school lesson, pupils spoke in Spanish with very good accents and pronunciation. The emphasis on literacy in the junior school results in continual improvement in reading and writing skills, which supports pupils' work in the senior school. Throughout the school, pupils apply their knowledge well in mathematics. In GCSE science, pupils have a good understanding of theories for the creation of the universe. Creative, artistic and sporting activities are areas of strength for many pupils. Outstanding levels of performance were seen in senior school drama and the pupils showed great sensitivity when commenting on the work of others.
- 3.4 The high standard of oral work does not always transfer to written work, as many of the pupils have difficulties putting their thoughts into writing. Considerable successful use of information and communication technology (ICT) is made to enable some of these pupils to produce writing of a high standard. In GCSE English, assignments on *Of Mice and Men* were perceptive, showing a good level of understanding.
- 3.5 In public examinations, pupils entered for GCSE achieve more highly than the levels predicted for them by nationally standardised tests taken in Year 9. Results at GCSE have been similar to the national average for maintained schools. Pupils studying Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) or similar vocational courses also meet with success. The level of attainment at GCSE indicates that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability.
- 3.6 Pupils also achieve well in wider activities. A number of pupils performed on stage to a high level at a performing arts evening. Performance in physical education (PE) and drama is strong, and high quality work is also produced in design and technology and in art; excellent examples of imaginative and well-executed GCSE art are on display. The school won a technology competition for the local area in 2011 and was runner-up in 2013. There has also been success in external speech and drama examinations, and Year 9 pupils participate effectively in a junior sports leadership award, helping to organise sports clubs for younger pupils.
- 3.7 Pupils progress well. On arrival at the school, they often have come from a previous unsuccessful learning experience. For many their attitude to learning has been transformed since joining the school; pupils who had been previously disengaged from education are eagerly participating and working hard independently. Pupils themselves recognise that they have made good progress since they joined, and that their teachers and other staff provide great assistance to them.

3.8 Attitudes to learning are generally good and sometimes excellent. Pupils exhibit enthusiasm in their lessons. They show effective engagement, enjoying what they do. They have confidence to ask questions and are keen to succeed, working well with their teachers and support staff. Speech and language therapists, occupational therapists and specialists in communication give valuable help with the acquisition of strategies and skills for learning, which encourages perseverance and reasoning, and facilitates understanding and good levels of achievement.

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

3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

3.10 This strongly promotes the pupils' academic achievement and their social and personal development. The curriculum provides exceptionally well for all ages, needs and abilities, and contributes to the fulfilment of the school's aims.

3.11 Excellent provision is available to those pupils who have specific needs and much support is provided in all classroom lessons and activities. The curriculum includes all the required areas of learning, and significantly more, in order to meet successfully the variety of individual needs of pupils of all ages. In the junior school, careful curriculum coverage includes morning focus on the main areas of literacy and numeracy, which gives pupils greater independence in learning across the curriculum. Pupils work in small mixed-age groups, well suited to their individual needs. The remainder of the day is spent in group activities following a wide range of topics and subjects.

3.12 The scope of the senior school curriculum is extensive and is designed specifically for senior pupils. There have been recent additions of a variety of BTEC courses for Years 10 to 13, and different levels of ICT courses, all of which provide content and assessment well suited to the pupils' needs and learning styles. These options help to develop independent learning and the acquisition of life skills in preparation for the next stages of education. The introduction of a certificated home cookery course has been enthusiastically received. Further examples of the continual modification of the curriculum to suit the changing school population have been the introduction of art at AS level and triple science GCSE for more able pupils. Geography GCSE is also being taught in Year 10 on an individual basis. Pupils in the sixth form have their own individualised timetables.

3.13 Music, art and drama support the pupils' aesthetic and creative development, while PE encourages a healthy lifestyle and helps to create a sense of well-being. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme has been developed since the previous inspection and includes many features to enhance learning, personal development and self-awareness.

3.14 An integral part of the education provided for all the pupils is a varied programme of trips, visits and activities. Sporting competitions are undertaken and success is celebrated. In addition to sport, music and drama, activities as diverse as puppetry, taekwondo and skiing are available twice weekly and allow pupils to develop interests, expand their experiences and build self-esteem and confidence in different environments. In their pre-inspection questionnaire replies, pupils indicated their appreciation and enjoyment of all these activities.

3.15 Further enrichment is provided by well-planned trips to places such as Whipsnade Zoo, the National Theatre and the Imperial War Museum, as well as overnight

outdoor camps. Recently, junior pupils and sixth-form land studies pupils visited a local woodland trust to plant trees.

- 3.16 The school has long-standing links with the local community and there is a strong culture of support and giving. Much fund raising for charity is undertaken; non-uniform days and cake sales are held to encourage pupils to think about those less fortunate than themselves. Recent donations to a local hospice and a children's charity have been substantial.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.17 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.18 Throughout, teaching is effective in promoting pupils' progress and successfully supports the aims of the school to enable individual pupils to understand their own personal learning styles and to develop their own strategies to learn effectively.
- 3.19 Relationships between teachers and pupils are excellent, and teachers have high expectations of pupils, showing a strong commitment to improving their learning skills. Teachers show pupils great respect and encourage them to make the best possible progress in all aspects of their learning.
- 3.20 Lessons are carefully planned and teachers have a thorough understanding of their pupils' needs. Their knowledge of their pupils generally, and especially in relation to individual SEND, is excellent, and is a particularly strong feature of the school. Teachers work well with the head of special educational needs, and are thorough in implementing individual education plans for pupils with statements of special educational needs.
- 3.21 In the best lessons, all pupils are challenged to attain the highest standards of which they are capable, with the use of materials appropriate for each level of ability and understanding, to support some pupils and extend others. In the junior school, much teaching is targeted to the needs of individual pupils. However, throughout the school, not all lessons include an appropriate degree of variation. The most effective teaching makes use of specialist advice, for example from speech and language therapists and social communication specialists, to assist with strategies to enable pupils to progress as well as possible. For instance, sign language was seen to aid communication and understanding. The school recognises such co-operation with specialists as a significant area for continued development. Teachers receive appropriate training in relation to catering for the needs of pupils with specific SEND. Their subject knowledge is good and they make efficient use of an extensive range of resources of high quality.
- 3.22 Marking of work is generally good. In some cases, helpful, detailed comments are given to enable pupils to reflect on what they have done and improve further. Good examples of such positive feedback were seen in some areas of the junior school, and in subjects in the senior school. However, this is not consistent. Marking has improved in response to the previous inspection but inconsistencies remain. The overall quality of assessment is good, and an excellent system of assessment and tracking has now been put into operation. The results from this are communicated clearly to staff and parents, and used effectively by teachers. Since the previous inspection, the school has fully implemented the scheme for evaluating pupils' performance in Years 1 to 6. A staff intranet has also been established to disseminate assessment and much other information to staff.

- 3.23 In their pre-inspection questionnaire replies, pupils indicated their appreciation of their teachers. The volume of work produced is high and pupils demonstrate progression over time. In interviews, pupils said that they are well supported by their teachers and that they receive suitable feedback on their work. Inspectors found that written feedback is not consistent, but in some groups feedback is oral.
- 3.24 Teaching encourages interest and independence, as well as high standards of behaviour, both in lessons and around the school; pupils were seen to be polite and thoughtful to the needs of others.

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 good.
- 4.2 The spiritual development of the pupils is good. Although some find the concept of spirituality difficult to grasp because it is non-tangible to them or they have difficulty in expressing non-material aspects of life, such as appreciation of the seasons, the quality of detail in their artwork emphasises that pupils value such beauty. By the time they leave the school, the majority are confident and self-aware, and are caring and appreciative of all that is and has been done for them, as they indicated in their questionnaire replies.
- 4.3 The moral awareness of the pupils is good and is carefully nurtured. Pupils successfully develop a strong moral code through the PSHE syllabus, religious education (RE) lessons, the school's behaviour policy and the example set by the adults around them. In line with their teachers' encouragement, pupils respect each other, and listen to others without interrupting. Pupils develop moral values and a sense of right and wrong through the significant influence of assemblies, which are calm and positive occasions.
- 4.4 The social values exhibited by the pupils are high. Pupils develop a strong sense of responsibility towards each other and staff, and in consequence, older pupils in particular contribute effectively to the school community, although some find it difficult to grasp the concept of the wider world. They move around the school unobtrusively, and are courteous, helpful and polite. They learn from the example of the staff, who ensure that social values remain as high as possible by dealing with any difficult situations calmly and positively. The pupils accept responsibility for their school community by volunteering to be members of the school council and are proud of the success of their helpful suggestions. In the house system, pupils benefit from opportunities for further responsibility and the development of a sense of loyalty. They cope well with the concept of competition and are extremely positive about the opportunities provided to take on responsibility. In PSHE lessons, pupils are introduced to world, national and local news and then discuss with interest various aspects, which include parliamentary and local government and the services they provide. In a mathematics lesson, pupils showed excellent knowledge and understanding of salary cuts in wider society, and the effect upon the economy. All pupils take part in providing a Christmas box of gifts for children overseas.
- 4.5 Pupils steadily develop a good awareness of the cultural differences in various parts of the world, particularly through art, music and drama lessons. The recommendation of the previous inspection to assist pupils to acquire an appreciation of their own and other cultures has been successfully implemented. In an assembly pupils thoughtfully considered different values and expectations in other countries. Through RE lessons, pupils learn about Christianity and about other world religions. Pupils are often searching in their questions and comparisons are made between different cultures. Relationships in school between pupils of different cultural backgrounds are harmonious.

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

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 Excellent support from staff ensures that pupils feel safe and secure within the school. Daily staff briefings ensure that a united front of care, understanding and high expectations of behaviour is presented to the pupils. The use of cross-curricular individual educational plans highlights possible difficulties and ensures that all staff are fully aware of these. A support team headed by the school chaplain and including a female member of staff as well as a youth worker is on hand to support pupils at short notice. As older pupils leave the school, a programme of support is provided to assist them to cope in their new environment.
- 4.8 Relationships between the pupils and staff are excellent, and pupils are also caring and patient towards each other. When stresses for pupils occur, systems are in place to provide support from staff and space for calm, for example to spend some time in the tranquillity of the multi-sensory room.
- 4.9 The importance of taking regular exercise and of a healthy diet is frequently promoted in school assemblies. Pupils have an excellent choice of nutritious and appetising lunches, and praise the efforts of the catering staff. A full programme of sporting activities involves all members of the school.
- 4.10 Bullying is extremely rare because of the excellent communication amongst the staff; the daily morning briefing and the effective staff intranet ensure that all are continually alert and aware of issues that may arise. Quiet intervention from staff often resolves a situation. The importance of avoiding bullying is continually emphasised.
- 4.11 The school works hard to ensure that pupils follow as closely as possible a mainstream school curriculum and are well prepared for the future. A rich diversity of activities is open to all pupils, who are encouraged to take advantage of every opportunity presented to them.
- 4.12 The school listens carefully to the views of pupils by taking note of individual comments and through the school council, which has grown in influence.

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

- 4.13 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 Measures to ensure pupils' welfare and their health and safety are strong throughout the school. All necessary safeguarding measures are securely in place and all staff receive appropriate and well-recorded training in child protection. The school has clear policies on bullying in all its forms and pupils know that they may approach any member of staff. The staff are kept fully informed about possible concerns and if any occur they are dealt with quickly and effectively.
- 4.15 Health and safety, including medical arrangements, are the responsibility of the bursar and school nurse as part of the health and safety committee. The medical room and first-aid provision comply with the necessary requirements. First-aid box contents are continually replaced as they are used. A high number of staff have a first-aid qualification. There are suitable arrangements for pupils with particular medical needs. Careful management plans apply to all pupils with conditions such as asthma, epilepsy and allergies. All necessary measures are in operation

throughout the school to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Fire drills are held regularly and equipment is checked frequently; thorough records are kept. Risk assessment around the site is comprehensive. Access around the school site is monitored carefully.

- 4.16 Admission and attendance registers are appropriately maintained and correctly stored.
- 4.17 Since the previous inspection, excellent attention has been given to the areas of regulatory non-compliance identified at that time. Full, effective safeguarding and safer recruitment procedures are now in place for the welfare and safety of pupils.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The board of governors provides highly effective oversight of each section of the school to ensure the achievement of its aims. The governors are extremely successful in ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to grow in self-confidence and to value their personal achievements. They fulfil their responsibilities for educational standards, and their skilled financial planning enables them to invest as necessary in a generous number of academic and specialist support staff. Governors are successful in the provision they have made for senior leadership and for staff of high quality, together with accommodation of a high standard and the level of resources for academic and specialist departments.
- 5.3 The governing body has an excellent insight into the working of the school and is highly effective in exercising its monitoring role, achieved through efficient monthly board meetings, when it is well briefed by reports from senior staff. Staff confirm that the governors provide them with interested and well-informed support and also have high expectations with reference to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.
- 5.4 A recommendation from the previous inspection was that the scope of governance should be broadened and rigorous processes established to ensure compliance with all statutory requirements, particularly for those for safeguarding and safer recruitment. Individual governors now have specific areas of responsibility, related to their own expertise in aspects such as finance, statutory compliance, safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. Minutes of committee meetings are thorough and comprehensive, giving a picture of a much improved approach to and understanding of governors' responsibilities; a programme of curriculum visits has also been initiated. As in its response to the action points from the previous inspection, the governing body is fully committed to the further improvements undertaken by the relatively new senior leadership.
- 5.5 The governing body is highly effective in discharging its responsibilities for statutory requirements, including the annual review of the carefully considered safeguarding and child protection arrangements throughout the school. Two governors undertake school-related work for a significant time each week and regular checks on records are included, particularly on the central register of appointments.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.7 Senior leadership is excellent. Responsibilities, particularly those for policy implementation, such as curricular and extra-curricular provision and the safeguarding of pupils, are fulfilled effectively by the leadership, with the support of management.
- 5.8 Senior leadership has a clear vision and a motivational approach to the educational direction to take in order to give the pupils the best opportunities to overcome their difficulties. The excellent commitment of leadership and management to succeed is reflected in the high standard of the pupils' personal development and of their pastoral care, within the framework of an excellent curriculum. Teaching and pupils' progress are good. Classes are small, and the high level of specialised help for a variety of individual needs leads to significant success. However, links between specialist and academic staff are not extensive and improved systems of liaison have not yet been facilitated.
- 5.9 Leadership and management are effective in self-evaluation, in which they involve departments across the school. They are also experienced in setting clear priorities and ensuring that they are achieved. An increased number of staff are now involved in meetings and discussions, and this has enhanced the quality of development planning and of the provision for the pupils.
- 5.10 The recent introduction of a powerful data management system, still in development, has facilitated communication and the flow of information amongst staff. An immediate benefit has been the tracking of the progress of pupils to inform both staff and parents.
- 5.11 The successful education of Years 7 to 11 is demonstrated in the number of pupils who have transferred to the sixth forms of mainstream non-specialist schools or to sixth-form colleges or colleges of further education. The school is now extending further its own sixth-form provision; it is developing relevant courses in addition to A-level courses and re-takes of GCSE subjects.
- 5.12 There is a biennial formal staff appraisal process, and a pattern of lesson observations by members of the senior management team has been introduced in the current term to monitor progress in lessons, and their findings are then referred to pupil progress meetings. This exercise has also identified a need for greater consistency in marking and for further liaison between specialist and academic staff, in order to facilitate improvement in teaching. Section leaders have the responsibility to check written work, and to monitor assessment and progress against targets. The quality of care and welfare is evaluated regularly and improved through pastoral, pupil progress and safeguarding meetings.
- 5.13 Management is successful in appointing and supporting, and also in developing and motivating, sufficient staff of high quality. All the required procedures are followed in the appointment of staff and in ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of pupils with a variety of SEND, and in the safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety of the pupils.
- 5.14 The quality of links with parents is outstanding. Relationships with parents are constructive and supportive. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire,

parents were fully supportive of the school, the education and care it provides and the progress that their children make. Inspection evidence supports these judgements. Some concern was expressed about marking and feedback to pupils about their work. Inspectors found evidence to support this view, in the inconsistency of the approach to marking, and the school is making arrangements to remedy this. Parents are especially pleased with the many activities and trips the school provides to support and develop their children.

- 5.15 Parents are notably happy with the individual care their children receive and the ease with which they can contact staff with any concerns. They feel that the staff know their children well and praise the school for the emotional security it provides and the subsequent social and academic progress that follows. Inspection evidence supports this view. Homework diaries are a well-used aid to home-school communication. When a pupil has difficulties these are discussed with parents, who support the actions of the school.
- 5.16 Parents of prospective pupils are provided with all necessary information prior to their children joining the school. Parents of current pupils appreciate the weekly newsletter and the availability of information on the school website. They receive full and informative reports twice a year and have opportunities to meet teachers to discuss progress. In addition, many parents are able to meet the specialist teachers and therapists, and to attend annual review meetings.
- 5.17 There are many opportunities for parents to be involved in school events and occasions. The recent performing arts evening was highly successful and well supported. Parents organise many fund-raising and social events both for themselves and for pupils, such as a disco for the junior school and a Christmas Fayre. The parents' association is extremely supportive of the school and in recent years it has purchased interactive whiteboards, audio-visual equipment and a bandstand.
- 5.18 The school has a well-structured formal complaints procedure, and concerns that have been raised have been dealt with in a sympathetic and thorough manner.

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