



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BETHANY SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Bethany School

Full Name of School	Bethany School		
DCSF Number	886/6036		
Registered Charity Number	307937		
Address	Bethany School Curtisden Green Goudhurst Kent TN17 1LB		
Telephone Number	01580 211 273		
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Email Address	head@bethanyschool.org.uk		
Head	Mr N Dorey		
Chair of Governors	Mr A Pengelly		
Age Range	11 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	424		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (285 boys; 139 girls)		
Number of Day Pupils	301	Capacity for flexi-boarding:	7
Number of Boarders	Total: 123	Full: 73	Weekly: 50
Inspection date	09 Feb 2010 to 10 Feb 2010		
Final (team) visit	08 Mar 2010 to 10 Mar 2010		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2003.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard is as follows.

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

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

Under the Care Standards Act 2000, an inspection of boarding was carried out at the same time by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted). The report of this inspection is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

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. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bethany School was founded in 1866 by a Baptist minister from Bethnal Green in London, who intended the school to be a community where boys from the East End would be treated as individuals. The school is set on a 60-acre campus, amidst rolling countryside near the small town of Goudhurst in Kent. Recent development has created a purpose-built sixth-form boarding house, science block and dining room complex, and a new all-weather pitch, as well as significant refurbishment and improvement of facilities for languages, technology, geography and business studies. The school's proprietors are its board of governors, who are also trustees of the charity.
- 1.2 Since the last inspection, the school has grown in size with a significant increase in the proportion of girls. The school week and the pattern of the daily timetable have been completely restructured, and Saturday morning lessons have been abolished.
- 1.3 The school is committed to giving young people an education which will equip them for life in a changing world, set within the firm foundations of a Christian community. Within this context, the school aims to provide individual attention for its pupils, to enable them to fulfil their academic potential, to develop their self-confidence and independence, and to give them an understanding of spirituality and an awareness of the modern world.
- 1.4 The school educates 424 pupils (285 boys and 139 girls) between the ages of eleven and eighteen. Of these, 123 are full or weekly boarders, and 117 are in the sixth form. The school has been co-educational since 1991. Approximately 40 boarders are from overseas, most notably from Hong Kong and continental Europe, and of these 26 receive support for English language. Four pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN). The school has identified a further 215 pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and provides learning support for 159 pupils.
- 1.5 Most pupils live in Kent and nearby counties, and are admitted at age eleven into Year 7 on the basis of the school's own entrance tests. Other significant entry points are at ages thirteen and sixteen, the latter entry being based mainly on predicted GCSE results. Pupils take a range of standardised aptitude and ability tests shortly after arrival in the school. These indicate that their ability is slightly above the national average at Year 7, and below the national average in the sixth form.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school is highly successful in meeting its stated aims and mission. Pupils of all ages are well educated and achieve considerable success in many areas, in relation to their abilities. They demonstrate and apply good levels of subject knowledge and skills, and make good long-term progress. Their success is considerably helped by the excellent curriculum and the comprehensive extra-curricular programme, which enable pupils to develop their talents well. Their progress is greatly promoted by the good standard of teaching.
- 2.2 Pupils show excellent personal development. This aspect of their education is enhanced by the strong and very effective pastoral support they receive from tutors and house staff. Relationships throughout the school community are very supportive and friendly, and are backed up by clear expectations of behaviour. Effective policies for countering bullying and safeguarding pupils' welfare are well established and understood by staff and pupils. However, the safeguarding policy has not been fully implemented in the recent past, but has since been rectified. The arrangements for supporting and promoting the well-being of pupils receiving learning support are exceptionally good. The boarding experience brings many educational and social benefits to those pupils living in school.
- 2.3 Governors take a close interest in the progress of the school, and provide good support for those with management and leadership responsibilities. The day-to-day leadership and management within the school are good, and a strong sense of purpose and clear educational direction are evident. The school is well aware of its strengths and weaknesses and has thorough and imaginative strategic plans to help it to develop further. Some of the required staff recruitment checks have not been carried out promptly enough in the past, nor recorded efficiently. However, the school has responded swiftly to remedy most of these failures, and has now created more effective and robust recruitment procedures, built on the monitoring systems already put in place by governors. The school has responded well to the recommendations made at the previous inspection. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire gave very positive opinions. They were particularly appreciative of the effective teaching, the range of subjects, activities and other educational opportunities offered, and the provision of worthwhile attitudes and values by the school. A small minority felt that they were not encouraged to be involved in the school's life and work, although inspection findings do not support this view.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended, and therefore it was required to:
- ensure that all necessary checks of identity, medical fitness, previous employment history and character/professional references are carried out promptly for new staff, and recorded in the centralised register of staff appointments [Regulations 4.(2)(a), 4C.(2)(a), 4C.(3) and previous legislation, under Suitability of Staff and Proprietors];
 - ensure that checks through List 99 are carried out and recorded for new staff who require them, and continue to ensure that checks through the Criminal Records Bureau are carried out and recorded before or as soon as practicable after new staff are appointed [Regulations 4.(2)(b), 4C.(2)(b), 4C.(2)(d) and 4C.(3), under Suitability of Staff and Proprietors];
 - as a consequence of the above, implement all parts of the safeguarding policy effectively [Regulation 3.(2)(b), under Welfare, Health and Safety].
- 2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had made swift progress in producing a more thorough and effective recruitment procedure, and had improved the recording process to produce all the required elements of the single centralised register of appointments. Before the initial visit, governors had already introduced a comprehensive review system to monitor and maintain compliance with regulations, and to achieve henceforth effective implementation of the safeguarding policy.

(ii) Recommended action

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. In order to enhance and develop the leadership role of housemasters and housemistresses, the school should create a stronger culture of self-evaluation within the houses, and thus achieve a clearer identification of priorities for further pastoral improvement.
 2. In order to improve the pastoral support still further, the school should review and evaluate the way that tutors are deployed and managed, in order to achieve greater consistency and better sharing of good practice.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Results at GCSE over the last three years for which comparative data is available have been high when compared with the national average for all maintained schools. Results at A level have been similar when compared with the same national average. In 2009, nearly one-quarter of GCSE grades achieved were at A* or A while, at A-level, the top A and B grades accounted for over one-half of the grades achieved. Pupils at all stages make good progress over time for their capabilities and ability.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aim to give young people an education to equip them for life in a changing world, set within the firm foundations of a Christian community. Pupils are very competent and willing learners in the classroom where they are able to work both independently and collaboratively. Since the last inspection, academic performance has improved, and pupils' participation and success in music has increased.
- 3.3 Pupils demonstrate good levels of understanding and knowledge in the subjects they study. They are articulate, speaking and reading aloud with confidence. They show effective literacy and numeracy skills, appropriate to their abilities. Their good information and communication technology (ICT) skills owe much to the highly effective use of their own laptop computers in lessons. Many pupils demonstrate well-developed critical thinking and reasoning ability, for example when debating abstract ideas in a philosophy lesson, or interpreting the reasons for the rise of East German communism. Pupils appreciate the links between cause and consequence, demonstrated in their study of the Black Death, in relating heart rate to exercise, and in the impact of industrialisation on global resources. Good independent planning and evaluative skills were seen in the research for and refinement of project work in food technology and design. Especially good progress is made by pupils with LDD and English as an additional language (EAL), who respond very positively and with increasing self-confidence to the high quality support they receive across all aspects of school life.
- 3.4 Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning, and they work enthusiastically and with effort on their own and in groups. They frequently test out their thinking with others and, in this way, are helped to learn and make progress. Learning is enhanced by the positive way in which pupils use the library for private study and independent research. Pupils are unfailingly proud of their achievements and they also take pleasure in the success of others. Nowhere is this seen better than in the achievements of pupils in their extra-curricular activities and other endeavours beyond the classroom. Considerable success has been achieved at all three levels of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DoE), in Master Chef and Maths Challenge competitions, and in instrumental music examinations. Pupils have represented the county in a variety of sports and in public speaking. Success of a different kind is represented by the number of pupils who have tackled arduous expeditions in the Himalayas.

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

- 3.5 The curriculum and the educational opportunities provided within it make an excellent contribution to the pupils' achievements and success. It fully supports the school's aim to provide an education which will equip pupils for life in a changing world, and enable them to achieve appropriate qualifications and skills in line with their potential. The scope of the curriculum is extensive and caters extremely well for the abilities and different learning needs of the pupils. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been further enriched by a comprehensive range of activities and other learning experiences of high quality.
- 3.6 The taught curriculum covers successfully all the requisite areas of learning, and gives pupils ample choice to concentrate on their strengths at various stages. Pupils of high ability take GCSE mathematics early and follow an examined course in statistics thereafter. Sixth-form subject choices include textiles, food technology, photography and applied business studies, as well as a course in sport awarded by the Business Technical Education Council. The curriculum meets pupils' needs very well, and provides appropriate challenge and stimulus to develop their knowledge and learning. It enables them to become well-informed, confident and articulate young people. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme has developed further since the last inspection and contains many good features to enhance pupils' learning, personal development and awareness of the world around them. The curriculum provides particularly good support for pupils with LDD and EAL.
- 3.7 An integral part of the education provided to pupils is the wide and varied programme of trips and visits, clubs and learned and creative societies. The curriculum is enriched by the programme of over 50 activity options in the current term alone. As well as a comprehensive programme of sport, music and drama, activities as diverse as beekeeping, calligraphy and wildlife documentaries are available and supported enthusiastically by pupils. Over 100 pupils are normally involved in the DoE programme at any one time. Many activities are specifically aimed at challenging the more able pupils, with scholars' presentation evenings, high-flyers' clubs and the Pengelly Society lecture programme. Innovative activities to prepare the sixth form for adult life include the Apprentice Challenge competition, Young Enterprise and the Body for Life and UniGourmet courses. Many trips and outings enhance pupils' learning, such as language trips abroad, the historians' visit to Ypres and the Somme, the geographers' study of the Sussex coast, and the chemists' first-hand experience of a university's spectroscopy department. Valuable links with the community, such as work in local primary schools, community service and charity fundraising, enhance pupils' broader education.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.8 The good quality of teaching contributes much to the success achieved by the pupils, and a significant proportion of it is excellent. Teaching supports the school's mission strongly, and enables pupils to achieve appropriate success for their abilities. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in developing better use of ICT, and in enabling teachers to respond more effectively to pupils' academic needs. Both parents and pupils remarked in their questionnaires on how helpful and effective teaching was.
- 3.9 Central to the school's successful teaching is the extent to which teachers know their pupils well, and understand the different academic needs and preferred ways of learning that they have. Teachers adapt subject content and teaching methods effectively to ensure that tasks and expectations are well matched to pupils' abilities. Teaching strategies generate interest and enthusiasm in the pupils and foster independence and initiative appropriately. Pupils are given sensitive and highly effective support when this is required: others are encouraged to take more responsibility for their own progress. As one pupil remarked: "Teachers know just how hard to push us and when to let go".
- 3.10 Teaching makes good use of the fifty-minute lessons, and incorporates effective planning to include a wide variety and range of different tasks to maintain pace and momentum. Lively debates and animated discussions are often employed very skilfully, and pupils are frequently encouraged to present their findings and opinions orally to the rest of the class. Teachers make particularly good use of the laptop computers that all pupils from Year 8 bring to lessons. Resources are tailored for specific subject use, and are available to pupils, often through the school-wide wireless network. Teachers make good use of such electronic resources, for example, with presentations that pupils can use or create during the lessons, animated diagrams of coastal erosion in geography, interactive learning applications in mathematics, and speaking and listening exercises in modern languages. Teaching is also enhanced by the effective use of the excellent display material in many classrooms. Teachers use their subject knowledge well, to plan suitable tasks, to explain key ideas and to ask well-focused questions designed to assess pupils' understanding and knowledge.
- 3.11 In a very small number of lessons, less successful teaching lacked a sense of urgency, employed undemanding tasks that did not allow pupils to proceed at their own pace, and prevented them from being fully engaged in their learning. As a result, pupils' progress was slower.
- 3.12 The marking and assessment of pupils' written work is generally effective, although some variation in correction techniques and annotation was seen. However, pupils report that feedback is readily given to them on an individual basis. Particularly helpful diagnostic comments and annotations were seen in English, religious studies, history and geography. In a few lessons, pupils engaged in self- and peer-assessment of their own and each other's work. A very good centralised tracking system is now in use within the school and supports assessment of pupils over time very well.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 Pupils' personal development is excellent, and they demonstrate strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, which underpins the whole of their experience of life at Bethany School. The importance of personal development is integral to the fulfilment of the school's mission statement, and the high standards seen in this area enable the school's heart and soul to be revealed.
- 4.2 Pupils have a strong sense of spiritual awareness which is nurtured through the work of the chaplaincy, the involvement of two Christian youth workers, and the way pupils respond to discussions on faith, beliefs and values within many subjects, including philosophy and ethics, religious studies, English and history. Pupils play an active part in the spiritual life of the school through their planning of and willing participation in chapel services, both as individuals and in house groups. Anglican pupils are prepared for confirmation, and pupils respond sensitively to the annual Remembrance Day and carol services. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to develop their spiritual understanding, and some said that it was the reason why they had come to the school.
- 4.3 A good moral tone is evident throughout the school in the way that pupils respond to the standards and principles promoted by houses and tutors, and it is enhanced by a thorough and well-planned PSHE programme. Pupils clearly know right from wrong, and are tolerant and supportive of each other because they know that it is the right thing to do. Pupils describe the school as very inclusive; one said it was very much a place where people looked out for each other and spotted those having difficulties. Pupils know the code of conduct and try hard to adhere to it. Behaviour in lessons is good and pupils are polite and courteous. Moral and ethical issues are discussed responsibly in subjects such as science, geography and food technology.
- 4.4 The pupils' excellent social development is a considerable strength throughout the school and owes much to the way in which members of the community work and play co-operatively and supportively. It is fostered strongly through the house communities, most of whom have mixed year groups. In addition, the co-educational sixth-form house provides a valuable experience in independent living. Monitors and prefects are well respected by younger pupils. The PSHE programme encourages pupils to be responsible citizens, and pupils value the wide range of inter-house competitions and activities which promote self-confidence and a pride in their achievements. Many pupils regard participation in the DoE Award scheme as a major part of their life in school.
- 4.5 Pupils are strongly aware of their own rich cultural heritage and that of others. Since the last inspection, music has played an increasingly greater part in school life and, through art, drama and literature as well, pupils are strongly aware of the creative, artistic and aesthetic qualities that surround their lives. Pupils have responded enthusiastically to many opportunities to experience cultures overseas, with such diverse trips as home stays in Spain, work in schools in Taiwan, and challenging expeditions in Nepal. Pupils also understand the richness of other cultures through the creation of ethnic dishes and exotic costumes in lessons, as well as through the presence of boarders from overseas within the school.

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

- 4.6 Arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good overall and contribute significantly to their care and sense of well-being. The excellent pastoral care provided by staff helps greatly to fulfil the school's aim to provide individual attention within a caring community. The pastoral teams are strongly committed and they are dedicated to ensuring pupils' happiness and well-being. At the time of the initial visit, some past failures to implement fully aspects of the safeguarding policy were identified, but these had already been robustly addressed.
- 4.7 Pupils feel that there is always someone to whom they can turn for support, and very much appreciate the academic help that teachers give willingly out of lesson time. They are confident that all staff have their welfare and best interests at heart. Tutors meet with their house-based tutor groups on a daily basis and are crucial to the provision of support and guidance. Further improvement in the consistency and management of the tutor system is made difficult by the lack of a school-wide evaluation of tutors' work.
- 4.8 Strong relationships, based on mutual respect, both between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves, create an excellent atmosphere. Raised voices are rarely heard. The school has very effective procedures for promoting good behaviour, guarding against harassment and dealing constructively with any unacceptable behaviour. Pupils understand the school's expectations for good behaviour. They feel that bullying is not a cause of concern, and say that it is dealt with effectively on the rare occasions when it arises. Pupils understand the different levels of the discipline system clearly, and regard the rewards and merits system as providing a positive reinforcement of achievement or significant contribution to school life. The safeguarding policy document is fully compliant with requirements but in the recent past had not been fully implemented in terms of staff recruitment. This has now been rectified. In other respects, such as the training of staff and senior pupils in child protection, the policy is implemented well.
- 4.9 Effective measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards and to ensure health and safety procedures are in place, monitored by the health and safety committee and fully documented. Medical and first-aid provision are good. The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with disabilities, and this is particularly effective in the case of pupils with LDD and EAL. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and stored in accordance with regulations.
- 4.10 Pupils report that food has generally improved recently in quality, although the menu sometimes lacks variety, particularly in the evenings; and pupils still have a few concerns over portion sizes and access to fruit. Appropriate opportunities for sport and exercise are given to all pupils. Sixth-form pupils follow a two-term 'body for life' programme giving them opportunities to use the fitness suite. Pupils receive guidance on nutrition and other aspects of the promotion of a healthy lifestyle through the PSHE programme.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.11 A boarding inspection was conducted by Ofsted, and the school has not had a specific ISI boarding inspection; the ISI inspection has considered boarding in the whole-school context.
- 4.12 The good boarding experience makes a valuable contribution to pupils' education and development, and contributes effectively to the school's aims to promote well-being and healthy living, and to develop self-confidence and independence.
- 4.13 Boarders value the strong sense of community within the houses, with opportunities to take on responsibility for themselves and other pupils. Strong and supportive relationships between boarders and staff are evident. Boarders appreciate the involvement of the significant numbers of staff who are actively involved in the houses, and feel that house staff are both very approachable and willing to provide help or guidance as needed.
- 4.14 Boarders are accommodated in buildings of different ages and styles, and this gives a distinct character to each house. Accommodation is generally comfortable and provides boarders with appropriate sleeping, working and recreational space. Orchard House provides an outstanding opportunity for boys and girls to bridge the gap between school and adult life, within a co-educational upper-sixth house with high quality en-suite facilities.
- 4.15 A good range of boarders' activities is provided on Saturday mornings, and these provide a balance of educational and recreational pursuits. Trips and activities out of school are arranged during the weekend, for example, to Brighton and Canterbury, and for skating and bowling. Activities are also arranged in school, involving school facilities, as well as pursuits including origami, a health and safety course, and a cake-modelling competition. The boarders appreciate a less structured day on Sundays, and have access to sporting and other facilities within school, as well as the opportunity to relax and catch up with work.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good, and has recently been improved further. Governors fully support the school's mission and purpose, and are committed to providing a high standard of education that is well suited to pupils' needs. Past failures to achieve full compliance with regulations had already been robustly addressed before the inspection visit, and comprehensive systems for monitoring and reviewing compliance are already in place.
- 5.2 Governors have a clear knowledge of the workings of the school and of the educational and pastoral needs of its pupils. They anticipate future challenges effectively and identify clear priorities for achieving further improvements in the school. These improvements are supported by prudent and efficient financial planning and management, and by a development plan that is both strategic and aspirational. With the help of several sets of key performance indicators, governors monitor trends in recruitment, staffing and costs efficiently. By these means they are able to channel resources effectively into raising standards of educational provision and improving facilities.
- 5.3 In addition to its sub-committee structure, individual governors have been allocated links with subject departments, and each has responsibility for reviewing and monitoring policies and practices within the school, linked to specific regulatory and inspection criteria.
- 5.4 Governors take their responsibilities for welfare and health and safety seriously, and reacted swiftly and decisively to a number of past failures to implement fully the safeguarding policy, caused by omissions in the staff recruitment process. Procedures and monitoring processes and reporting requirements have been strengthened and enhanced as a result.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.5 Leadership and management throughout the school are good, and are instrumental in achieving a conspicuously good quality of education for the pupils. Many excellent initiatives, supported by highly effective systems and procedures, have enabled the school to enhance standards further and equipped the school to meet future challenges effectively. The leadership enables the school to fulfil its mission successfully, and its management provides the support and impetus to achieve its academic and pastoral aims. The school has made good progress in addressing the recommendations from the previous inspection, and in improving the curriculum, resources and facilities. At the initial visit, past failures to carry out and record all the required staff recruitment checks were identified, with some consequent failures to implement fully the safeguarding policy. Swift remedial action, building on the good monitoring and review processes already put in place by governors, has already achieved a robust system to achieve full compliance in the future. The school now recognises the need to strengthen the leadership role of pastoral staff and improve the effectiveness of the work of the tutor teams.
- 5.6 The small senior management team provides inspirational and supportive leadership that enables a strong sense of purpose and commitment to be evident throughout the school. Staff demonstrate a clear self-belief that they are all providing an education of quality and value to a wide range of pupils. A strong and growing culture of self-evaluation is sharpening the focus on school improvement. The academic committee encourages curriculum planning and forward thinking on academic matters. Heads of department, in particular, generally exhibit a highly reflective leadership style and identify clear goals to enhance pupils' progress and learning. An excellent programme of comprehensive departmental reviews involves detailed monitoring and lesson observations, enabling subject leaders to produce regularly updated action plans to drive further improvements to raise the academic pulse of the school. The teaching and learning committee meets regularly to share ideas about innovative practice to promote pupils' learning. No similar system yet exists for housemasters and housemistresses to evaluate the work of their tutor teams and produce their own targets for enhancing the educational and pastoral experience for their day and boarding pupils. While the tutors provide good support for pupils, no whole-school monitoring of their work takes place to assist their deployment and create better opportunities for them to share good practice.
- 5.7 The comprehensive strategic plan underpins the school's future development, and progress towards meeting identified targets is audited and analysed during each year. The hard-working and highly committed staff make a major contribution to the success of the school and the realisation of its aims and mission, which they fully support. An ambitious annual appraisal system ensures that their professional and training needs are identified, and individual and whole-staff training is effectively linked to the educational needs of the school. Appropriate child protection training and an awareness of health and safety matters has been achieved. Induction of new members of staff is efficiently planned and carried out.

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

- 5.8 The school has forged a good relationship and a constructive partnership with its parents. This helps to cement the school's commitment to work with parents to achieve the school's aims. Since the last inspection, a website of high quality has greatly improved communication with parents.
- 5.9 Of the 120 parents' questionnaire responses received, the overwhelming majority were positive. Parents were particularly appreciative of the effective teaching, the range of subjects and opportunities offered, the pastoral support and help provided, the provision of worthwhile attitudes and values and the range of activities. A few parents felt that they were not encouraged to be involved in the school's life and work, although inspection findings do not support this view. The school recognises that work commitments and distance from the school prevents some parents from being more fully involved. The timing and frequency of parents' meetings were cited as barriers to better involvement by a few parents.
- 5.10 The school has a thriving sports fixture list and parents are always welcome at matches and the many plays, concerts and other events taking place. Contact with boarding staff and tutors occurs regularly and efficiently. Parents of children who receive learning support have frequent updates from staff about their children's progress and achievements. The annual 'meet the tutor' event, the carol service and Speech Day are highly successful occasions for parents to be involved with school. The Friends of Bethany School provide opportunities for parents to become involved in the social side of the school, organising various events throughout the year.
- 5.11 Parents receive regular, informative reports on their children's work and progress. These are of a high quality and provide a full overview of the performance, strengths and weaknesses of pupils. Parents also receive interim grade reports summarising pupils' effort and achievement. Regular newsletters are sent to families and a bulletin issued twice a year. The school's website is excellent and provides parents with all the required information and policy documents. It is updated very regularly to provide information on daily events in school. During recent poor weather it was updated each day before dawn in order to report road and transport conditions affecting the normal running of the school. The website will shortly be enhanced to incorporate on-line academic resources for all parents and pupils.
- 5.12 The school's complaints policy is available on the website, although most concerns are resolved by personal contact with staff. The great majority of parents' responses to the questionnaire revealed that any concerns raised had been handled well by the school.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chairman and another governor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, chapel services and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and 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.

The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools were inspected by a team of 2 Ofsted inspectors over 2 days.

Inspectors

Mr Timothy Holgate	Reporting inspector
Ms Polly Dangerfield	Senior Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA)
Mrs Jenny Dwyer	Senior Team Inspector (Head, GSA)
Mrs Pamela Evans	Senior Team Inspector (Head of Learning, GSA)
Mr David Johnson	Senior Team Inspector (Head, HMC/COBIS)