

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

HIGHFIELD SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

22nd to 25th January, 2007

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Highfield School

Full Name of the School	Highfield School
DfES Number	938/6252
Registered Charity Number	N/A
Address	Highfield Lane, Liphook, Hampshire GU30 7LQ
Telephone Number	01428 728000
Fax Number	01428 728001
E-mail Address	office@highfieldschool.org.uk
Headmaster	Phillip Evitt
Proprietor and Chairman of Board of Directors	William Mills
Age Range	8 – 13
Gender	Co-educational
Inspection Dates	22nd – 25th January, 2007

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.

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.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	2
The Educational Experience Provided	2
Pupils' Learning and Achievements	3
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	4
The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)	5
3 THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	7
The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils	7
The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	8
The Quality of Boarding Education	9
4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	10
The Quality of Governance	10
The Quality of Leadership and Management	10
5 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	12
Overall Conclusions	12
Next Steps	12
6 INSPECTION EVIDENCE	13

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Highfield School caters for boys and girls aged from 8 to 13. It is set in 175 acres of grounds outside Liphook in Hampshire and was founded by Mr. William Mills as a boarding school in 1907. It has continued to be owned by the Mills family since that date. His grandson is the present Chairman of the Board of Directors. Highfield became co-educational in 1978 and the present headmaster has been in post since September, 1999.
- 1.2 The school provides a flexible boarding and day co-education, serving predominantly professional families living within an hour's travel and a few who live and work abroad. With the further development of Brookham Pre-preparatory School, built within Highfield's grounds in 1992, more pupils come from the immediate area and from parents new to the independent sector. Highfield and Brookham Schools were merged in September 2006 as one company but remain two separate schools. Brookham has had sole responsibility for Year 3 from September 2005, previously there having been a Year 3 class at Highfield as well as at Brookham.
- 1.3 Highfield School states in its prospectus that it is committed to high academic standards and the individual academic and social achievement of each child, within a caring community with Christian values. It has grown from 167 pupils in 1999 to the current total of 217; of these 79 pupils are boarders. Just under a half of pupils are girls.
- 1.4 Highfield is broadly non-selective in its entry requirements. There is a wide range of ability on entry, ranging from just below average to well above average in a national comparison of ability. Generally, pupils are above average on entry. Most enter Year 4 from Brookham, although about a quarter of the pupils join at other times and from other schools.
- 1.5 No pupils have a statement of special educational needs (SEN) but 55 pupils have been identified by the school as having learning difficulties, of which approximately 14 have been diagnosed as requiring additional support. The school gives extra support to 49 pupils, either one-to-one or in mainstream lessons. One pupil does not use English as a first language but does not require or receive extra support in learning English.
- 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 Highfield School provides a good all round education that is consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy. The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which contributes to all aspects of pupils' development, as well as to their standards in key skills such as in literacy.
- 2.2 The curriculum, while based on the National Curriculum, is much enhanced in many ways. It underpins the school's aim to produce pupils who are good all-rounders, academically, artistically and physically. It also reflects the need to prepare pupils for examinations to senior schools. The allocation of time to subjects is generally well distributed. In addition, physical education and games have a generous allocation of time, which teachers use well to provide pupils with an outstanding experience of physical education and competitive games.
- 2.3 The curriculum caters well for pupils' different needs and all have equal access to it. It is planned effectively and most subjects have effective policies and schemes of work. Since the last inspection the school has introduced drama for all pupils and extended the provision for design and technology to include pupils in Years 7 and 8. Information and communications technology (ICT) provision is increasing and there is a growing use of ICT in individual subject areas, for example, to compose *rap* songs in music, to conjugate verbs in Latin, or to record the results of scientific experiments.
- 2.4 Occasionally, when lessons are organised in single periods of 35 minutes, this is sometimes insufficient for some practical activities, such as in science. Pupils in Year 4 are taught in mixed ability form groups, largely by their form tutor. Pupils in Years 5 to 8 are taught by subject specialists for all subjects. The school uses setting arrangements appropriately to group pupils according to ability, particularly for English and mathematics.
- 2.5 The quality of personal, social and health education (PSHE) has improved since the last inspection and teachers deal with issues that arise sympathetically, both informally and in timetabled lessons. In Years 4 and 5, teachers implement a very good scheme of work with success, but in Years 6 to 8 the scheme of work is still evolving.
- 2.6 The school offers a very broad programme of interesting extra-curricular activities. This includes music, sport, art, dance, drama, chess, ICT, mountain biking and outdoor adventure activities. The programme offers many opportunities to develop pupils' potential, both creatively and physically. Many pupils take part in an extended programme of competitive sports such as rugby, football, hockey, netball, gymnastics, cricket and swimming.
- 2.7 Pupils' experiences are extended and enriched further by a variety of educational visits, both near and far. Some have visited the World War II graves in Normandy and Year 8 pupils enjoy an annual adventure week in Pembrokeshire.
- 2.8 Fundraising for charities, often initiated and organised by pupils, establishes links with both the local community and the wider world, including a project which raised over £200 by selling olive oil and herbs locally to pay for piped water and taps in an underdeveloped part of the world.
- 2.9 Highfield works closely with its main feeder school, to ensure that the transition between Years 3 and 4 is smooth and happy. Teachers prepare pupils well for Common Entrance examinations for entry into senior independent schools. Success in these examinations is

achieved through the careful guidance and support of the headmaster and staff. Pupils get many opportunities to take responsibility in preparation for transition to senior schools.

- 2.10 The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) has produced a clear policy to identify pupils requiring support. All pupils identified as having learning difficulties are given individual education plans (IEPs). Targets are set, strategies developed and regular reviews undertaken. Learning support often occurs individually, in small groups or with the support teacher working alongside the class teacher.
- 2.11 A policy is in place to support pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) but the school does not currently have any pupils requiring these lessons. The school identifies older pupils who are gifted or talented and they are given additional lessons. In future the school intends to offer younger pupils similar opportunities.
- 2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.13 Pupils are well educated and achieve good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in their subjects and activities. They learn to apply them effectively and creatively. They also develop the skills and attitudes essential for learning. The school meets its aims well in helping pupils to achieve well.
- 2.14 The school does not enter its pupils for the nationally standardised tests at the end of Year 6. However the levels of attainment throughout the school are at least good and are occasionally outstanding. In particular, pupils achieved outstandingly in drama, music and physical education. Achievement in numeracy is sound. Academic scholars achieve highly. Over the last two years, 16 pupils have gained academic and other scholarships to leading senior schools. The school carries out a range of testing which gives a broad picture of attainment. There are few discernible differences in the achievements of boys and girls; boarders or day pupils.
- 2.15 Recent results in Common Entrance examinations taken at the end of Year 8 suggest that the levels of attainment have improved considerably since the last inspection. They fully meet the standard required by the senior schools concerned. The school has a good record of helping pupils, whether academic, artistic or sporting, to gain scholarships to top senior schools. In all the lessons observed, levels of attainment were usually above those expected for their age. In music, for example, Year 5 pupils showed a good knowledge of musical vocabulary and attainment in art is also often good.
- 2.16 The extensive programme of extra-curricular activities and the Directed Activities programme not only help pupils to develop skills in a broad range of physical and recreational pursuits but also enable them to have fun. School sports teams do exceptionally well against local and national competitors in many sports. These include cross country running and gymnastics.
- 2.17 Pupils were highly articulate when speaking to inspectors. They read intelligently and with obvious enjoyment. Many write fluently and effectively. They listen attentively to their teachers and each other. They discuss issues and build on each others' suggestions creatively. Through discussion in geography, pupils improve their understanding of issues such as the distribution of water on the Earth.
- 2.18 In drama, many pupils achieve well and a few were outstanding in their rehearsals of a scene from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In this they showed a good awareness of audience, very good

enunciation, and an outstanding sense of the timing and delivery of lines. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on others' achievements in a positive way.

- 2.19 Pupils are less confident in using their skills in numeracy. They continue to develop their considerable ICT skills to enhance the presentation of their work and further understand concepts in many subjects.
- 2.20 Pupils learn to reason and argue cogently from a young age. Pupils in Year 4 developed convincing arguments against expanding tourism in St. Lucia. The library is often the first port of call when pupils carry out research. However, pupils do not undertake independent research enough.
- 2.21 Pupils are thirsty for knowledge. They work effectively both on their own and with others, in groups and in teams. In physical education, groups of pupils work together to fine tune their ball skills in football. Year 7 pupils use computers to redraft their personal descriptive writing effectively.
- 2.22 Most settle quickly to their lessons and apply themselves willingly to the work in hand. They persevere with tasks they find more difficult or that lack intrinsic interest. They naturally look forward to the delights in store for them at school and even waited patiently for break time to play in the newly fallen snow.

The Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.23 The school's provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. As a result, pupils develop well spiritually, morally, socially and culturally. The school has maintained its good provision since the last inspection and this helps it to fulfil its aims.
- 2.24 Pupils' good spiritual development is shown primarily in the sensitivity, confidence and self-esteem they develop. This is in large part due to the school's strong Christian ethos. It is promoted in popular and thought-provoking chapel assemblies. Pupils get appropriate opportunities for reflection. They commented that chapel "helps you figure things out" and that "chapel is a place you can think things through".
- 2.25 Pupils also get opportunities to value the wonder of the world in music lessons, such as when a teacher demonstrated singing to a class, or in science classes with the study of live translucent blue tree frogs, cockroaches and dogfish. The most outstanding element of the school's provision for spiritual development lies, of course, in its beautiful and generous setting in the Hampshire countryside. This alone makes a most significant contribution to pupils' awareness of the outdoor classroom which lies beyond the school's walls.
- 2.26 Pupils' growing moral awareness helps them distinguish right from wrong both in their behaviour around school and in their understanding of the needs of others. A strong moral code is reinforced in pastoral tutor sessions, PSHE lessons and school assemblies. Pupils think members of staff are fair to them and they usually deal fairly with each other as a consequence.
- 2.27 Their awareness of citizenship, both locally and globally, is fostered well in assemblies, charity fund raising and studies in geography, history, music and art.
- 2.28 Pupils' social development is excellent. It fulfils the school's aim to develop self-confidence, good moral judgement and respect for others.

- 2.29 The school promotes social development through class duties, the House and Monitor systems and the school council. Monitors show visitors round the school and give other pupils marks for good behaviour. The school council meets regularly and has had a beneficial effect upon school life by raising a range of suggestions for improvement for the consideration of staff.
- 2.30 Pupils' natural care for their peers was observed at lunchtimes and in the spontaneous applause given to pupils who read aloud a good piece of work. Pupils are unfailingly friendly, courteous and well mannered. They take their lead from staff.
- 2.31 The school develops pupils' cultural awareness and ensures that they appreciate their own culture in literature and music. Pupils have studied the Old Masters in art lessons and listened to inspiring flute music. They also learn of other cultures and beliefs in geography, music and religious studies and produce good work on West Indian tourism, the Islamic faith and the Gamelan music of Indonesia. The pupils' understanding of racial and cultural harmony is developed well.
- 2.32 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.33 The overall quality of teaching is good. Some examples of excellent teaching were observed in English, mathematics, science, music and drama. Teaching was at least good in just over three quarters of lessons observed. Within this proportion, almost one fifth was outstanding. No teaching was unsatisfactory. The strength of the teaching supports the overall aims of the school well. This is a considerable improvement from the last inspection when teaching was generally satisfactory.
- 2.34 There are particular strengths in the way that teachers and teaching assistants work with pupils to create an atmosphere of interest and industry, which leads in turn to good learning. The best teaching happens when teachers are creative and enthusiastic with a variety of activities to stimulate pupils. In a Year 6 music lesson, pupils wrote their own *raps* using computers to compose music. In a Year 6 science lesson pupils confidently investigated heat expansion and were fully aware of the safety risks involved. This demonstrates how the confidence of teachers, their assured manner and enthusiastic styles of delivery are beneficial to learning. Management of pupils' behaviour is good, especially because it is often unobtrusive.
- 2.35 Teaching is generally planned well to meet the needs of all ages and abilities. It enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, make good progress according to their ability and increase their life skills.
- 2.36 Where teaching is at least good, additional work is planned to challenge very able pupils and incorporate the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. However, this is not a consistent feature throughout the school. Excellent lesson planning and teaching in a Year 4 English lesson enabled pupils of different abilities to become fully engrossed in the characters in the *Snow Queen*. They then excitedly followed a snowy trail through the school's woods to find the Snow Queen's Palace.
- 2.37 Teachers usually choose activities well to realise their lesson objectives and manage time effectively. In a Year 5 pottery lesson, the teacher's well judged use of time and resources enabled pupils to think creatively, produce a clay coil pot of good quality, develop skills in working with clay and complete the lesson objectives. It left them with a great sense of

- achievement and they enjoyed themselves. Teachers pace games lessons carefully to extract the maximum amount of effort and achievement in the time allowed.
- 2.38 Pupils with learning difficulties are withdrawn from lessons for literacy or receive in-class support. They follow carefully structured programmes which enable all to make good and sometimes rapid progress. Consequently, pupils of all abilities increase their understanding and skills and do so in an environment which they find stimulating and enjoyable. Where teaching is good, the pace and variety enthused pupils and enabled them to make rapid progress. Where teaching is less successful, learning takes place, but the atmosphere is routine, rather than exciting. The volume and quantity of work in pupils' workbooks is appropriate in most subjects.
- 2.39 Since the last inspection, the school has appointed more subject specialist teachers and teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge. Teaching is supported by a very good quality, quantity and range of resources. Teachers' use of interactive whiteboards in lessons stimulates the learning process. This was seen in a mathematics lesson on compass points and bearings. Specialist staff deploy physical education and games equipment fully to provide pupils with much stimulus and enjoyment.
- 2.40 The recently opened and well-resourced music school enables pupils to produce an outstanding programme of music. This ranges from individual performances on a wide range of instruments to rock groups playing at local venues. Consequently, pupils sing and play well in unison and harmony and do so with great enthusiasm. Teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly, showing respect for one another and for resources. In a design and technology lesson, after carefully listening to instructions concerning the risks involved, Year 4 pupils used small saws responsibly to cut wood for their three-dimensional pictures.
- 2.41 Teachers make many assessments and use them conscientiously to report back to parents on their children's progress. Results from standardised tests, end of topic tests, and yearly examinations for example are collated and provide an invaluable source of data about pupils. This data is used to assist in identifying pupils with learning difficulties or who are gifted or talented, as well as for setting purposes. However, the school does not yet fully analyse data to track individual pupils' progress, or monitor standards generally in subjects. As a result, assessment has only a limited impact on teachers' planning.
- 2.42 Pupils' work is regularly and helpfully marked. Most teachers add praise and encouragement but do not always set targets for improvement. That said, most pupils interviewed stated that their teachers go over class and homework verbally to indicate mistakes and strategies for improvement.
- 2.43 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 pastoral care is outstanding. There is a strong Christian ethos within the school community where pupils feel happy and secure both with their peers and with the adults who support them. As a result, pupils are enthusiastic, confident and articulate. They are polite, considerate and pleased to greet visitors and help whenever they can. Older pupils have good opportunities to take responsibility for others, for example, as servers at lunchtime meals.
- 3.2 The school successfully ensures the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. It achieves its aim to develop the whole child within a caring boarding community. All staff know their pupils well and provide outstanding care for pupils of all ages. Teachers and other staff pay close attention to pupils' welfare, health, and safety. This is an even stronger feature of the school than it was at the time of the last inspection.
- 3.3 Members of staff provide excellent and constant encouragement to their pupils. Consequently, pupils feel known and emotionally secure, and confidently turn to teachers, boarding staff and GAP Year students for advice and guidance should the need arise. They also feel that the monitors are very helpful and approachable. There is mutual respect between them. The school's focus upon the social graces is constantly borne out in its life. A monitor, at lunch, gently reminded a younger boy to use his knife and fork properly and the boy calmly responded positively. Teachers promote pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem in a wide range of activities. They do this through support and encouragement, and also through a developed system of positive rewards, plusses, good marks and headmaster's commendations.
- 3.4 High standards of behaviour are expected at all times and pupils respond well to this. Pupils are very well behaved in lessons and on more formal occasions. Their movement around the school and at lunch is also purposeful and calm. Pupils know and respect codes of discipline, including an effective anti-bullying policy. Pupils and parents say that bullying is rare, but in the event, they feel that staff deal with it fairly and promptly.
- 3.5 The school council has representatives from each year group and this enables pupils to feel appropriately involved in the running of their school. Any occasional instances of poor behaviour are dealt with effectively and without fuss. Sanctions are applied justly, when necessary. Staff record pastoral and disciplinary incidents on the school's computer system. This is an excellent tool to ensure that all are aware of the needs of pupils and can monitor their progress. The school's strong Christian ethos, its regular assemblies, and the developing PSHE programme all strengthen and reinforce the effective pastoral system. Very good procedures are in place for the transfer of Year 3 pupils into Highfield and as a result pupils confirm that they settle quickly and happily in Year 4.
- 3.6 The school's system of rewards and house points actively contribute to pupils' sense of achievement, self-esteem and well-being. Teachers regularly celebrate these achievements in assemblies and they serve to enhance pupils' confidence and the school's ethos. The result of these measures is that pupils are self-disciplined and supportive of each other. There are many chances to have fun and learn from one another around the school grounds. These are appropriately supervised without being excessively so.
- 3.7 The measures to ensure the health, safety and well-being of both day and boarding pupils are very effective. This results in an environment that allows pupils to be safe and secure. Child protection measures are fully in place and all staff are checked with the Criminal Records

- Bureau. All measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are in position. Fire practices are held regularly and recorded. Teachers alert pupils to risk in subjects such as science and design and technology and guide them in dealing with it.
- 3.8 Staff get clear guidance from a full range of policies and the staff handbook. All departments carry out risk assessments for lessons and activities away from school. Health and safety policies are comprehensive and regular meetings with the bursar, headmaster and deputy headmaster are recorded. The school has a well-qualified nurse and a large number of staff are qualified in first-aid techniques and the use of first-aid equipment. Medical arrangements for dealing with accidents and illness are very good. Good provision is made for the care of boarders. Meals are of a high standard but the choice at lunch is a little limited. Special dietary requirements are met.
- 3.9 The school provides an excellent caring ethos and as a result, pupils are safe, happy and confident and they achieve well. Attendance levels are very good. Pupils are valued and teachers enable them to develop in accordance with the school's aims. Pupils realise they have an individual part to play in a busy, happy and confident community.
- 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.11 Links with parents and the community are good and have been maintained at that level since the last inspection. The school fulfils its aim to encourage positive relationships between pupils, parents and teachers.
- 3.12 A good proportion of parents responded to a questionnaire distributed before the inspection. Their responses showed that they are overwhelmingly positive about the school. In particular they appreciate the headmaster's approachability and the comprehensive information provided through newsletters.
- 3.13 Parents feel that communication channels are good between themselves and members of staff. They feel able to speak to teachers whenever necessary. The school deals with any concerns about pupils promptly and effectively. Parents receive regular information through newsletters, calendars and handbooks. Very good, thrice-yearly reports are sent home and regular parents' evenings are held.
- 3.14 Parents have been involved in school trips, an enterprise and business scheme and sports coaching. Some have helped with drugs education, drama, cookery and in the library. There is a thriving parents' association which meets regularly. It holds social functions to welcome new parents and provides relaxed opportunities for parents and staff to meet.
- 3.15 The school has appropriate procedures in place to handle formal complaints. These have not been invoked for two years. Everyday concerns are handled promptly and effectively.
- 3.16 Links with the wider community are good. The school contributes harvest goods to a nearby day centre and the local vicar runs Confirmation classes at Highfield. The school promotes charitable fundraising and sponsorship. The school encourages its pupils to think of others and money is raised for a wide range of charities both at home and abroad. Children in Bolivia and Africa are sponsored and pupils raise funds in a wide variety of innovative ways.

- 3.17 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.18 The good quality of provision for boarding supports the boarders' education and development well.
- 3.19 The boarding community forms a significant group within the school. The junior boarding house caters for 16 pupils in Years 3 and 4 and is situated in a comfortable detached house just far enough away from the main areas of the school to make it feel like a real home. The older boarders in Years 5 to 8 are accommodated in the main boarding house attached to the school, which allows them easy access to facilities such as the ICT rooms and the library.
- 3.20 The atmosphere in both boarding houses is welcoming. Relationships within boarding are positive and supportive. The house parents and boarding staff know the boarders very well and enjoy an excellent rapport with them. Potential problems are identified early due to the excellent communications system in place between the teaching and boarding staff. GAP Year students provide a vital link in this area.
- 3.21 The school offers boarders a broad range of activities out of school time and at weekends, including swimming in the recently constructed indoor pool, choirs, design and technology and art clubs, drama, dance and fencing, as well as the many and varied sporting fixtures. The many photographs of different activities bear testimony to the fun enjoyed by the boarders. A number of pupils choose to stay at school over weekends because there is so much for them to do and enjoy.
- 3.22 The quality of accommodation and resources is adequate and suitable. Improvements and refurbishments have continued since the last inspection. In the main boarding house there is now a large common room to accommodate boys and girls as well as separate, smaller common rooms. A kitchen is currently being created so that further culinary activities can take place. There have also been some modifications to the shower areas to improve privacy since the last inspection, though they do not yet meet current recommendations.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The school is responsibly governed by the proprietor, the third generation of his family to act in this position, who is assisted by a small, loyal and committed Board of Directors. Members of the board have appropriate personal and professional experience. Some are involved as parents and offer insights from that position. Others, such as the proprietor, the headmaster of Highfield, the headmistress of Brookham and the bursar are closely involved in the life of the two schools. Standards have been maintained and developed since the last inspection and Highfield School fulfils its aims fully.
- 4.2 The proprietor meets the headmaster frequently to discuss aspects of school life. He teaches a few mathematics lessons to scholars. A good relationship exists between the headmaster and the proprietor and the headmaster has full responsibility for the daily running of the school. Regular meetings with the bursar ensure proper financial oversight of human and material resources.
- 4.3 Financial rigour is applied to all aspects of school life and funds are appropriately allocated to ensure sufficient quality and quantity of resources for all subjects. The school, however, lacks a strategic development plan to formalise and share its vision for future development, although this is currently being formalised.
- 4.4 The headmaster ensures that the Board of Directors understand and meet legal and statutory obligations.
- 4.5 The Board of Directors has invested heavily in the upgrading and refurbishing of Highfield School, while also formally merging it with its 'sister' pre-preparatory school.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The overall quality of leadership and management is good with some outstanding features. The headmaster provides strong leadership which is much respected by staff, parents and pupils alike. His leadership is characterised by industry, great enthusiasm, care and resourcefulness. He works closely and well with the school's proprietor on the one hand and the deputy head and senior management team on the other. The close-knit nature of the leadership group fully includes leaders and managers of the boarding houses, who often teach on a daily basis. The school has a very clear sense of its unique identity as a mixed boarding and day establishment set in the country and meets its aims well.
- 4.7 Its leaders are refining its educational direction in the shape of a proposed strategic development plan but this has not yet been implemented. Managers liaise often to ensure that school improvement is a continuous and corporate process. They show great care and commitment for pupils and staff.
- 4.8 The school operates in a warm, friendly and purposeful ethos and teachers ensure that pupils work and play in a calm and orderly community. The personal involvement of the headmaster, proprietor and deputy head in teaching and learning is strongly evident, as is their dedication to the best interests of pupils. A strong team of loyal, dedicated and knowledgeable managers and teachers is in place. The morale of staff and pupils is high.

- 4.9 Since the last inspection much has been achieved. The school has grown from 167 to 217. New heads of department have been appointed for English and mathematics, the curriculum has been much enhanced, curricular and pastoral links with the main feeder school have been improved, and the roles of middle managers have been developed more.
- 4.10 The school's objectives for improvement are derived from widespread and perceptive self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process includes many of the school's stakeholders and ensures that many have a voice in its development. The school at all levels constantly analyses its strengths and needs for future improvement and development.
- 4.11 Subject co-ordinators have done well in developing their subjects further. They ensure that many good policies and schemes of work are in place to guide teachers and learners. Much has been done in subject development since the last inspection. The leadership of many subjects is very good, for example in English, science, art, music, history, physical education and ICT. Leadership of the provision for pupils who have learning difficulties or disabilities ensures that their standards are appropriate for their abilities and that they make good progress.
- 4.12 The school has a well-qualified and loyal staff, both teaching and non-teaching. The arrangements for recruiting any adult who might have contact with pupils are rigorous and have due regard for government safety guidelines. These arrangements include appropriate checks with the Criminal Records Bureau for all staff, both teaching and non-teaching. The school supports the professional development of staff well through in-house and external training. The training related to the use of ICT in all classrooms is increasingly effective. The appraisal system is appropriate and senior managers know their staff well.
- 4.13 At every level, members of staff are supported by clear and helpful policy documentation and guidelines. The administration of the school is orderly and very efficient. It is smoothly run. Financial management is of high quality, being closely linked to school priorities. It is effective and involves staff at all levels in a rigorous process, so that the school has good and modern resources. The accommodation for day and boarding pupils is suitable and the grounds are beautiful as well as being well maintained. The external areas for games and other forms of physical education are very well appointed. The new swimming pool and refurbished sports hall are a significant enhancement to the education and extra-curricular activities of day and boarding pupils.
- 4.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.15 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Highfield School meets its aims and aspirations well. It effectively prepares its pupils well for the next stage in their lives and their achievements are invariably at least good. It provides a broad, varied and very interesting educational experience and pupils enjoy a very caring and happy ethos. They like their school and parents are pleased with the educational experiences their pupils receive.
- 5.2 The headmaster, senior managers and staff have maintained standards and broadened the curriculum since the last inspection. The overall quality of leadership has outstanding features as has the quality of teaching. The provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is also strong.
- 5.3 The school's pupils acquire well-rounded knowledge, understanding and skills in many subjects and develop humility as well as confidence in their personal and social lives. These improvements are the result of the commitment of all staff working together in harmony.
- 5.4 Through perceptive self-evaluation, the school has identified the need to ensure its most able learners and those with learning difficulties do as well as they might. It is setting in train planning to improve and share its strategic development and to raise standards in numeracy. It also plans to improve its systems for assessing pupils' progress.
- 5.5 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.6 In order to continue to build on the improvements made since the last inspection the following recommendations are suggested for the school's consideration:
1. develop further systems to assess the achievements and monitor the progress of all pupils;
 2. further improve strategic planning to include all aspects of school life and the input of all those involved in school life;
 3. increase the opportunities for pupils to learn independently and build their research skills;
 4. further improve shower facilities.
- 5.7 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 22nd to 25th January, 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed many lessons and conducted formal and informal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with the Board of Directors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a wide range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr. Robert Isaac	Reporting Inspector
Mrs. Elizabeth Brown	Former Headmistress of IAPS school
Miss Rosalind Cunnah	Former Head of IAPS school
Mrs. Valerie Harper	Former Senior Teacher of IAPS school
Mrs. Susan Platt	Former Deputy Head of IAPS school