

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

**INSPECTION
OF**

CLAREMONT FAN COURT SCHOOL

by the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

on 29th January - 1st February 2007

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Claremont Fan Court School

Full Name of the School	Claremont Fan Court School
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Age Range	3-18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	29th January - 1st February 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 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	3
The Educational Experience Provided	3
Pupils' Learning and Achievements	4
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	6
The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)	7
3 THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	10
The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils	10
The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	11
4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	13
The Quality of Governance	13
The Quality of Leadership and Management	13
5 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	16
Overall Conclusions	16
Next Steps	17
6 INSPECTION EVIDENCE	18

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Claremont Fan Court is a co-educational day school founded by Christian Scientists. Its aims are to provide an environment where the God-given potential of every individual is recognised, where the curriculum is designed to encourage pupils to think independently in a rapidly changing world, where they are helped on their spiritual journey of self discovery and where they are equipped with a strong set of values for future decision making. The school seeks to augment these aims through developing a strong interaction with the home.
- 1.2 At the time of the last inspection the school was a boarding school. It is now a day school serving boys and girls from the age of 3 to 18. The school has 644 pupils on roll; 288 are girls and 356 are boys. Forty-five pupils are in the sixth form. The school's nursery has 20 pupils, five of which are full-time and the others are a mixture of half-day and full-day attendees; it benefits from the government-funded nursery scheme. Reception has 32 full-time pupils. The school provides financial support for 51 pupils.
- 1.3 The school is situated on Claremont Estate, which has a distinguished history, having been the home of Clive of India and a holiday retreat for Queen Victoria. It consists of a junior school and a senior school. The junior school is situated at two locations on the school estate. The lower juniors, pupils from three to seven years of age, are taught in a purpose-built, single-storey building opening onto an extensive play area. The upper juniors, pupils aged seven to eleven years of age, occupy the historic Stable Block from the original Claremont estate. The senior department for pupils 11-18 is situated in and around the Mansion. It has a range of general and specialist classrooms. The latter include three buildings with wireless communication and the Joyce Grenfell Centre for the Performing Arts. The whole site is networked for the use of laptops.
- 1.4 During the last four years, the school has been developing an e-learning programme, which requires all pupils from Year 4 through to Year 9 to have their own personalised laptop. The e-learning classrooms have been re-designed to accommodate the new approaches to teaching and learning. Most classrooms are fitted with interactive white boards or projectors. Three ICT suites are maintained for specialist use. All staff are issued with their own laptop, which is renewed every three years.
- 1.5 Pupils come mainly from middle class families. Some travel to the school from the Outer London boroughs. About one in twenty are Christian Scientists. The range of ability among pupils on entry is wide and includes very able pupils as well as those with learning difficulties. The overall average ability of pupils entering the junior school is similar to the average for all maintained primary schools and if pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results will be broadly in line with the average for those schools; the senior school is more selective and standards on entry are above average, indicating that if pupils perform in line with their abilities they will reach standards above the average for all maintained secondary schools. The school has 85 pupils who have English as a second language (EAL), most of whom have a sound grasp of English; 12 receive extra support because of their language difficulties. Six pupils have a statement of special educational need and 35 are identified as having learning difficulties within the national Code of Practice.
- 1.6 The number of pupils who continue into the sixth form varies from year to year, sometimes being a majority and sometimes a minority of Year 11 pupils, but most of those who stay go

on to higher education. The school takes a few pupils from other schools into the sixth form.

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school works with a large measure of success to provide for the pupils in line with its aim of preparing highly educated people for the twenty-first century. As was reported at the last inspection, it provides a good, broad and balanced curriculum, which is well supported, as the school rightly maintains, by an extensive range of extra curricular activities.
- 2.2 In the junior school subjects such as English and modern foreign languages provide well for linguistic development. Pupils develop an understanding of number, of issues surrounding problem solving and of the value of investigating theories in science and mathematics. Both provision for art, technology and physical education, and provision for music, drama and games, encourage the development of the aesthetic, creative and physical characteristics of pupils' lives, and help them understand social responsibilities. A significant contribution to independent learning is made by e-learning from Year 4 upward, which also supports pupils' reasoning and problem solving skills. Pupils also benefit from specialist teaching in some subjects.
- 2.3 Pupils' experience is enriched through a very broad programme of extra curricular activities, which is well integrated into a coherent programme of educational provision. The programme also familiarises pupils with the community, local and distant, through enabling them to perform in public, compete in sport and do charitable work. This is in line with the school's intention to help pupils develop leadership qualities through their willingness to take on responsibility.
- 2.4 Good schemes of work support teaching and provide for the needs of all pupils, including first-rate provision for those who have learning difficulties and disabilities, and have English as an additional language (EAL). All pupils are able to enjoy equally what the school has to offer.
- 2.5 Pastoral links between junior and senior school are good and better than curricular links, which are limited to informal discussion between heads of department and curriculum coordinators, and the transition between the two schools for pupils is well organised. About 50 per cent of pupils who join the senior school in Year 7 come from other schools. Open days and meetings for parents of all pupils seeking to enter senior school contribute well to the easy transfer of pupils.
- 2.6 Pupils' experiences in senior school are also consistent with the school's aims. Pupils have a broad range of subjects based on the National Curriculum up to Year 9, which provide well for pupils' academic and personal development. Pupils enjoy good linguistic provision through English, French and German. These and the subjects of the National Curriculum are enhanced with religious education, which contributes to the school's aim to help pupils understand Christianity and other world faiths, drama, and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The latter is timetabled in Year 7, but thereafter is taught in half-hour tutor periods up to the sixth form. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study English, mathematics, science, games and religious education and then choose the other subjects they wish to follow from a good range of options. The sixth form is small, which affects the size of groups and the subjects that can be offered. Nevertheless, the school responds generously to pupils' requests and offers up to 20 Advanced Supplementary (AS) and Advanced-level (A-level) subjects, as well as careers. This broad senior school curriculum, which is generally well balanced, provides well for pupils' academic, physical, emotional, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- 2.7 Curriculum planning in the senior school is secure, with subject schemes and handbooks providing detailed guidance for teaching. The school's aim of encouraging independent learning supported by good and frequent use of information and communication technology (ICT) enables pupils and staff to keep abreast of updates and to make effective use of cross-curricular work. The school's approach to character and values education, which underpins much of pupils experience throughout both junior and senior school, has a significant impact on planning.
- 2.8 Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well cared for, with individual tuition where the school feels it most appropriate and some in-class support in Year 7. Provision is made for pupils of different abilities through setting classes by ability in subjects such as English and mathematics. In mainstream classes, teachers are made aware of those with learning difficulties or/and disabilities by the special educational needs coordinator, who also advises on how to deal with such pupils. Consequently teachers provide good support. The majority of pupils with EAL cope adequately with English, while the very few who are new to the country and have particular difficulty are, in the first instance, sensibly advised to obtain external support.
- 2.9 The good provision for careers advice includes guidance on appropriate courses to study in Years 10 and 11, and best options for pupils at the end of Year 11. Good class teaching in the sixth form helps prepare pupils well for the next stage of their education or for life at work. Pupils also have the opportunity for work experience in Year 12. The school has helpful outside links with the local careers service.
- 2.10 Pupils enjoy an outstanding range of extra curricular activities, which includes sport, music, drama, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award, and charitable activities. In addition, the good take-up of voluntary 'booster' sessions in subjects as diverse as English and design technology further demonstrates the willingness of pupils to make the most of what the school offers. Many pupils have the opportunity for residential trips away from the school, such as that of the netball team's recent visit to Malta, the proposed geography field visit to Norfolk, and a combined geography, art and business studies venture to New York. Pupils also benefit from a variety of experiences such as the 'Make Your Mark With A Tenner' scheme, highlighted on BBC's Newsnight during the week of the inspection.
- 2.11 Throughout the school all pupils have equal opportunity to participate in what the school offers.
- 2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.13 Inspectors support the school's judgement that pupils achieve good standards and make good progress in their learning. In the junior school achievement and learning were judged to be outstanding in almost one-fifth of the lessons observed and in the senior school in one-third. Pupils achieve well above the average for all maintained schools nationally in public examinations up to and including GCSE and satisfactory results at A level. As the school's self-evaluation states, standards are better than reported at the last inspection when results were judged to be above, rather than well above, the national average.
- 2.14 Pupils perform well in the national tests at age 11, with girls achieving overall better results than boys. Inspectors found that in lessons, in small group interviews with pupils and in the work observed in pupils' books, boys and girls are performing equally well. They make good progress, as do those identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and EAL.

- 2.15 In the junior school pupils have good literacy and number skills. They are expert in the use of ICT. They read well, are articulate, have a good vocabulary, and write effectively. In numeracy they handle number well, tackle problems successfully and cope well with number bonds and graphs. They have good investigative skills, as observed in science, and the good quality of their art work is amply demonstrated by the impressive display of art around the school.
- 2.16 In GCSE the average results are well above the average for all maintained schools; pupils achieve well in most subjects. The results in ICT have shown a marked improvement since the last inspection, rising from below average to well above average, a vindication of the emphasis given by the school to its e-learning programme. This is the outcome, in part, of the emphasis that the school has been placing on the use of computers across the curriculum in recent years. At A level, results are satisfactory but the small numbers involved make it difficult to compare the results with national averages.
- 2.17 In the senior school, pupils have a good understanding of the issues raised in the subjects they study and achieve good and sometimes outstanding standards. Inspectors noted no obvious differences in the achievements of boys and girls in the work observed but girls tend to perform better than boys in public examinations. Pupils achieve well across the curriculum as a whole.
- 2.18 Pupils of all ages are highly articulate, have good facility with number, and when given the opportunity show a good ability to apply their understanding in problem solving. Children are very confident in using their laptops to support the work in which they are engaged and make good progress in their learning as a result, especially in the junior school and the early years of the senior school. The school has successfully encouraged pupils to develop the skill of independent learning, whether it is through the use of hard copy resources or computers. The regular use of ICT in lessons across the curriculum has been successful in helping pupils to research effectively, improve the presentation of their work and maintain a brisk pace of learning.
- 2.19 Pupils can argue a point effectively, for example when going through the process of peer-assessment, as observed in a junior school English lesson; they reason out cause and effect for themselves, as observed in a Year 10 geography lesson during discussion and research on the problems of erosion. They take care to present their work in exercise books well and when using folders organise them effectively, improving their learning as a result. Pupils, from the very youngest, have the ability to take responsibility for their own work, persevering and applying themselves to their tasks independently. They enjoy their work and co-operate well with both peers and staff, which benefits their learning. They are committed to doing well.
- 2.20 Individual pupils perform well in activities outside the normal taught curriculum in areas such as public speaking and sport. Many pupils pass the Associated Board of Music examinations, and the LAMDA examinations in drama. Pupils also perform well in the mathematics Olympiads. Sports teams achieve some good results, especially in light of the relatively small numbers of pupils available, and some individuals gain representative honours.
- 2.21 The broad range of teaching styles used by teachers, referred to in more detail later in the report, contributes significantly to raising standards of achievement, both inside and outside the classroom.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.22 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and one of the several strengths of the school. The school's strong Christian ethos, also referred to at the time of the previous report, is promoted through the educational programme related to developing pupils' character and values; it encourages pupils to have respect for each other and for the beliefs, practices and opinions of others. Pupils respond well to what the school offers and demonstrate positive personal development. They have high self-esteem and self-confidence.
- 2.23 Pupils' good spiritual development is encouraged through a range of activities and subjects. Assemblies provide a time of quiet reflection and an opportunity to explore moral and social issues, such as those associated with the slave trade, as well as celebrating pupils' achievements. The theme of the week during the inspection, creativity, led to flower arranging and singing in the lower junior school assembly, and challenges to current attitudes towards the environment in the senior school. In religious education, pupils discuss world faiths and their impact on the way different groups view spiritual life while reflecting on their implications for themselves. Parents come into school from time-to-time to talk about their faiths and the pupils in this multi-faith school also share their own experiences and beliefs. In subjects such as PSHE and English, pupils consider the relative merits of the material and the non-material aspects of life and how they can influence human ambitions and aspirations.
- 2.24 Pupils' relationships with staff and other pupils are excellent and they willingly recognise the talents and personal attributes of others, as in their response to how other pupils present their views, organise assemblies or represent the school in sport and other activities. Their attitudes to one another in lessons, where they listen, suggest and participate actively are excellent and reflect their recognition of the school's desire to help all make the best use of their God-given gifts.
- 2.25 The school's approach to moral development helps pupils to have an understanding of right and wrong, which they respond to in an exceptional way, knowing when someone is being unfair and how to value others. The desire to do right is evident among even the youngest pupils, as expressed by a Year 6 pupil who said in a values education lesson: 'it takes courage to stand up to a friend when you think they are doing wrong'. The thrust of character and values education is to help pupils understand the importance of relationships and the contribution they can make through moral living not only to their own lives but also to the lives of others. In subjects such as history and geography, pupils explore moral values and are helped to develop a moral value system for themselves. They contribute generously to those less well off than themselves through the school organised charities, which are often identified by the school council. In addition, the older pupils recognise a moral responsibility to support younger pupils, for example Year 2 pupils looking after those in Reception and Year 1 at lunchtime and the mentor system in senior school.
- 2.26 Pupils have an outstanding sense of social responsibility. Pupils willingly take on a range of responsibilities that support the smooth running of the school. Pupils elected to the junior school, senior school and whole-school school councils take their responsibilities very seriously. Older pupils take responsibility for younger ones, advising and supporting them, thereby helping the school reach its aim of preparing its pupils to contribute to the betterment of society. They also take on responsibilities as house and team captains as well as prefects. Responsibilities are carried out conscientiously.

- 2.27 Pupils' behaviour is exemplary. They recognise that social groups are more likely to function smoothly if they work within a respected code of discipline and rewards, and they have a good understanding of how public institutions and services can contribute to this. The development of social responsibility is a very positive feature of the school, though some sixth formers expressed the view that sometimes procedures were not flexible enough to allow them to act as the young adults they are.
- 2.28 Pupils' cultural development is outstanding. They study different world faiths in religious education, how different people in the world live today in geography, and how people in different times lived by different values than many do today in history. In history, they also discuss the reasons why and how attitudes from the past influence attitudes today. Such experiences are making an important contribution to their understanding of other beliefs and cultures. Similarly, their contact with friends from different countries is providing them with important experience of how people from different races and cultures can live together. As expressed by one pupil, 'lots of us look different but it is what we are inside that counts'.
- 2.29 Pupils' understanding of their own culture is encouraged through a range of visits and links that raise cultural awareness, such as festivals, visits to different European countries and to theatres, art galleries and concerts. They also benefit greatly through their own involvement in school productions such as the acclaimed 'Princess, the Palace and the Ice Cold Bath', and opportunities for good quality music making in the school orchestra and choir.
- 2.30 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.31 The overall quality of teaching throughout the school is good and often outstanding. It is slightly stronger in senior school than in junior school overall. This represents a significant improvement on the quality of teaching at the time of the previous inspection, where it was judged to be satisfactory overall, and supports the school's view of how well its staff are performing. The quality of teaching reflects well on the school's aim to encourage pupils to think independently and rationally in a rapidly changing world.
- 2.32 Teaching is secure in knowledge and is supported by detailed and effective planning. It provides a learning environment that supports the school's aims, especially in relation to the encouragement of the cross-curricular use of ICT and the promotion of independent learning. Class management is good and in the main lessons are taught at a brisk pace. The quality of teaching is enhanced by the wide range of approaches used, particularly in relation to the school's aims of providing more than the normal opportunities for research, problem solving and the application of skills through practical activities. These methods are complemented by the time given to whole-class teaching, which makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning, and provides an admirable balance between teacher-led lessons and independent learning.
- 2.33 Teachers are highly committed, foster outstanding relationships with the pupils and they create a good learning environment. This promotes remarkably good behaviour in lessons and a desire to learn among the pupils, which is demonstrated by their excellent application and perseverance. Teachers have access to a good range of on-line resources through the laptops that pupils in Years 4 to 9 take with them from lesson to lesson. Their use of interactive white boards aids learning. The school's aim of encouraging the wide use of ICT is achieved in many lessons and contributes well to pupils' learning. The teacher as facilitator, a goal of the school, is well demonstrated in much of the teaching. For example,

in a Year 10 biology lesson on viruses, pupils responded remarkably well to the freedom they were given to experiment, producing thought-provoking three-dimensional models to exemplify virus structure. Library services at both junior and secondary level support teaching well, though they are yet to be fully integrated with the school's ICT and media resources.

- 2.34 At junior level and in Year 7, learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' progress. Throughout, those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those who are identified as gifted are well supported. Some of the former are withdrawn for individual tuition and all teachers have lists of those pupils in their classes who have particular difficulties or strengths. Consequently, most attend at some time during lessons to the needs of different pupils or use the sessions given to independent learning to enable them to progress at a suitable pace. Some of the gifted and talented in senior school are placed on the national register for gifted and talented pupils and benefit from their contact with others of similar ability.
- 2.35 Teachers help and support pupils informally within lessons and are prepared to offer support outside the normal curriculum time, which contributes well to standards. This is particularly so in the senior school, where teachers offer clinics at lunchtimes and after school to those they have identified as needing extra support or to any pupil who feels the need for further guidance. Pupils appreciate these and value the interest that teachers take in them.
- 2.36 Much informal sharing of good practice and in-service training across the school has a positive impact on the quality of teaching, though curricular liaison between junior and senior schools is not yet fully developed.
- 2.37 The quality of assessment and marking is good. In the Nursery, assessment is used effectively to help teaching, though the school does not do any baseline assessment either here or in Reception. The school relies on teachers' experience to judge the quality of entry year-by-year and rightly assesses overall standards to be about average, with some very able and some weaker pupils. On entry into Reception, the individual learning-needs teacher assesses all the pupils to see where individual support is required, and once pupils have settled into Reception, teachers begin to assess and record their progress. They screen reading and writing termly, and complete the national Foundation Stage profile. Marking and assessment in the junior school is extremely thorough and teachers use their findings to aid their planning and provide support for pupils. Standardised tests are carefully analysed and used effectively at various times to check on how well pupils are doing and to predict how well they are likely to do in the future.
- 2.38 The marking and assessment policy in the senior school is clearly expressed and provides the means by which teachers can measure the standards that pupils reach and the progress they make. They have ready access to information about pupils through the school's electronic system, and the good analyses done by the director of studies of the year-on-year examination results. Most teachers make good use of this information. They do not, as part of school policy to allow all pupils to have a 'fair' start, have access to the results of the standardised tests taken by Year 7 pupils, though they are used to aid the arrangements for setting pupils by ability. Departments vary to some extent in the way they apply the school policy on assessment and marking, with the grading of pupils' work not being done consistently and marking not always providing the guidance that pupils need to help them improve their work. Requests to develop work further, for example, were rarely followed up by teachers in the pupils' books scrutinised by inspectors. In the main, however, pupils understand the different practices among departments and have a good idea as to how well they are doing.

2.39 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 and continues to be a strength of the school as reported at the time of the last inspection. The structure for ensuring that pupils feel well cared for and safe is well organised and supported by detailed handbooks and procedures to guide teachers' work. As a result, all staff carry out their responsibilities to the pupils with notable care and concern.
- 3.2 In both junior and senior schools form tutors take the lead in caring for the pupils, although pupils say that they can approach any member of staff if they have any problems. In the senior school, heads of year support the tutors in their work, dealing with any academic or pastoral issues raised. The school has clear disciplinary procedures that are understood by the pupils. Most regard them as fair, though some in the sixth form feel them to be a little restrictive for pupils of their age and maturity; they feel, for example, that the rules governing what they wear are often too petty. The rewards and sanctions help pupils to see the framework of care that exists. Most respect the rules that are laid down for their benefit and their demeanour around the school and in classes is exemplary. Policies exist regarding bullying and unacceptable behaviour, incidents of which are rare. Pupils interviewed spoke highly of the care they receive and the confidence they have in the staff who seek out those who do not abide by the rules; difficulties are quickly resolved, especially during discussion in circle time in junior school.
- 3.3 In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, pupils strongly supported the way they were helped to settle into the school and the provision of activities that supported their personal development. Most felt that staff showed an interest in them as a person. Inspection findings support what the pupils say and indicate clearly that staff are concerned about the pupils and keen to help them progress in their education. The quality of relationships between pupils and staff is excellent, and pupils spoken with openly professed a love for the school and what it offered them.
- 3.4 The school councils provide pupils with a formal structure through which they can influence the school's provision. Pupils were keen to give examples of how the councils worked and the success they had achieved. The provision of more drinking fountains, for example, came as a direct recommendation from the council.
- 3.5 Good procedures exist for child protection; the school rightly regards the safety of its children as a serious responsibility. Named officers with oversight of child protection are present in both the junior and senior schools and every member of staff has received training in child protection and is aware of the referral procedures. All teaching and non-teaching staff and governors have had Criminal Record Bureau and other checks.
- 3.6 The health and safety committee, led by the bursar, have worked very hard to ensure that appropriate procedures are in place. Risk assessments for off-site visits are detailed and followed, as are those for departments. All the necessary measures to reduce the risks from fire and electrical hazards have been taken, as evidenced by a recent survey by the local fire service and regular electrical checks by outside experts.
- 3.7 Staff have been trained in first aid and several in advanced skills. The school has a suitable care centre, which is based in junior school, though there is not a permanent trained nurse on site. Children are well looked after, however, with either the teaching or non-teaching staff

take responsibility for ensuring that those who are sick or suffering from an accident are cared for. Records of accidents and sickness are up-to-date.

- 3.8 Pupils are aware of the need for healthy eating and provision is made for this in the school lunches. The food is nutritious and, in the main, varied enough for young people, though the arrangements for entering the senior dining hall lead to some long queues. The pressure of attending activities or classes at lunchtime for some pupils also impacts on the time they have to eat and relax at this important time of the day. This is an issue raised by some parents in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and expressed by pupils interviewed by inspectors.
- 3.9 The upper junior school presents difficulties for the disabled because of the number of areas that can only be reached by climbing steps. The situation is rather better in lower juniors and also in the senior school where the central lift can be used to gain access to all floors. The school is well aware of the problems and is prepared to adjust its arrangements to cope with the requirements of any disabled pupils. It also has appropriate plans to improve access over time.
- 3.10 The school's admission register is in order and the electronic daily registering system works well at the start of morning and afternoon school. Good systems are in place for checking on pupils who are absent, and all staff have ready access to the registers if they wish to find a pupil. An interesting experiment carried out by inspectors on Wednesday afternoon, when Years 11, 12 and 13 were timetabled for games, led to all the pupils being traced to their particular activity through the electronic system. This system has yet to be extended fully to after-school activities, where the informal voluntary participation is not tracked in such detail.
- 3.11 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

- 3.12 Links with parents and the community are good. Many parents responded positively to the pre-inspection questionnaire, commenting on the good communication they had with school, the care shown for their children, the high expectations of behaviour and the good quality teaching. Parents in the junior and senior school believe the school helps their child make progress, that it promotes worthwhile values and achieves high standards. The school has made good progress towards achieving its aim of developing a strong interaction with the home and has continued the positive links with parents recorded at the time of the last inspection.
- 3.13 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a minority of parents in both the junior and senior school expressed reservations about the homework policy, the encouragement parents are given to be involved in the life of the school and the way the school handles complaints. A few felt that the emphasis on what they regard as computer-based learning was not in the best interests of their child's learning. The inspectors agree with parents in that there is inconsistency in when, and how much, homework is set. They observed, however, parents being involved in school on the invitation of the school, as was the case with those helping readers in the junior school, those involved in supporting school productions and the careers department in the senior school, and the references in school documentation to parents of different faiths talking to pupils in assemblies. Inspectors looked at the school's well-constructed complaints policy, which is in line with regulatory requirements, and at how the school dealt with complaints; they were satisfied with the

- procedures. Those reading the report will also recognise that inspectors were impressed with the way teachers and pupils use computers to improve pupils' learning.
- 3.14 Some junior school parents expressed the views that the provision of extra curricular activities is limited, but inspectors found that there was good provision for clubs, societies and some sports, particularly at lunchtime. A few senior school parents expressed concern over the information they receive, provision for the special needs pupils, and opportunities to discuss their children's progress. Inspectors found that the senior school had well-organised special needs provision and that the frequency of parents' meetings and reports was in line with that for similar schools.
- 3.15 The school provides parents with a good range of information through a weekly bulletin on the school's web site, also obtainable in hard copy, the two school magazines each year and other pieces of information such as the parents' handbook. The school's parents' association is active and has its own report to parents about its activities. It raises substantial amounts of money as well as organising social activities.
- 3.16 The school has suitable arrangements for keeping parents informed of the progress their children are making. Upper junior school parents receive two annual written reports, regular grade cards and have a parents' consultation evening annually, while lower junior school parents receive an annual report and also have an annual parents' consultation evening. Parents have ready access to staff at the beginning and end of the school day and can arrange an appointment if they feel the need. In the senior school parents receive a half-term grade card, which shows how well their child has performed in recent weeks and which enables them to track progress. They receive a full report annually, to which they and their child can respond. The reports in both schools are detailed and provide guidance on what pupils need to do to improve.
- 3.17 The school has good links with the community. It is involved in charitable projects and a range of other activities. At a local level, the Elmbridge project is an outstanding example of community activity. Other links have been fostered through Year 6 pupils performing a play in local primary schools, the involvement of pupils in creating the Peace Garden, and the use of the school and its site for those interested in its history. Sixth form work experience also contributes to community activity. Links with the National Trust are strong and the Royal Statistical Society has been working with the school trying out new mathematics materials for Years 7 to 9. The school also has good competitive links with schools through athletics and sports such as rugby and netball. It also competes in the mathematics Olympiad and enables pupils to be involved in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The school also has overseas links with other Christian Science organisations and schools, such as that in Australia, which impacts on its vision and its educational provision.
- 3.18 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].

4, THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Governors make a positive contribution to the school's success in moving towards the fulfilment of its aims. They support the principal and staff well and provide a body of expertise and experience that the school is keen to use. Their influence on the school's development is greater than at the time of the last inspection and in line with the sort of governance the school has been seeking to establish. Governors oversee financial matters and have a deep interest in the school's development as a Christian Science school. Governors have also overseen sensible investment in the provision of teaching resources for staff. This has been the case especially in technology; governors have supported the school in providing all staff with laptops while seeking to ensure that pupils are also appropriately equipped with computers. As a result, the use of computers across the curriculum has become a reality for most pupils.
- 4.2 The structures of governance have been revised recently so that governors, who are also trustees, can have a more direct influence on the school without constant referral to the Council. They work through a committee structure, which includes a pay and salaries committee and a strategic development committee, although meetings can be irregular, as in the case of the curriculum committee, which has not met recently. Full governing body meetings are generally well attended and fully documented.
- 4.3 Governors are fully aware of their responsibilities in relation to child protection and health and safety and support the school well in these areas. They are also conscious of the need to have a well-qualified staff, capable of managing the school's educational provision. To this end they have taken care to appoint teachers willing to see their role as facilitating learning, keen to develop new teaching approaches and confident in the use of computers. Their success can be measured by the good quality of teaching and learning observed by inspectors. Governors have ensured that there is appropriate ancillary support for those with learning difficulties and for science and technology.
- 4.4 The governors have a strong commitment to developing the teaching staff as managers in their own right and have supported the introduction of an appraisal system that is loosely linked to the award of performance points. However, the criteria used for awarding performance points are not always fully understood by staff.
- 4.5 Governors rely on reports of the principal and other senior staff for much of the information they receive about the school. Most governors, including the chair of governors, also rely for information on informal visits to school to attend functions and meet with staff, which enables them to know something of their views. The governing body works well with senior management, using their meetings to discuss, challenge, devise and agree policies and procedures. Links with other staff are more tenuous and a number of middle managers expressed disappointment at the limited contact they have with governors.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The good quality of leadership and management, a characteristic of the school reported at the time of the last inspection, is helping the school to progress towards fulfilling its aims as a Christian Science school. The principal provides a confident, knowledgeable, thoughtful and determined style of leadership that is respected by colleagues. She distributes appropriate responsibilities effectively throughout senior and middle management, ensuring

- effective leadership at all levels. All those with responsibility carry out their duties effectively and relate well to the principal, which supports the school's aim to provide well for its pupils through making the best use of the talents of its staff.
- 4.7 The two heads of schools are in day-to-day control of their respective schools. At junior level excellent and sustained leadership and management have ensured effective innovation, high standards and successful transmission of the school's ethos. Dynamic and committed leadership at secondary level has secured effective continuation of the innovation and the values espoused in the junior school. As a result, academic standards have continued to be high and learning positive.
- 4.8 Management of the school's academic and pastoral work is invested in a number of groups. The principal's committee sets the tone and vision of the school, reflecting on good practice and seeking to sustain the school's innovative ethos. The senior management team works effectively to ensure that plans, procedures, policies and organisation provide the means by which the vision can be implemented. Pastoral and academic committees at middle management level oversee the day-to-day implementation of the school's policies and procedures. Subject coordinators in junior school and heads of department in senior school oversee academic provision and in senior school year heads play a key role in the pastoral care. The system works well.
- 4.9 The school has an appraisal policy that can be linked to performance pay, depending on other evidence used by line managers when making their recommendations. The policy, much influenced in its conception by governors, is designed to encourage teachers to see themselves as managers and facilitators. The head of junior school appraises her deputy and designated line managers, who go on to appraise other staff for whom they are accountable. In the senior school the head of senior school and the director of studies appraise heads of department and pastoral care, who carry out similar responsibilities with staff accountable to them. The system works smoothly. This formal appraisal is supported by a peer review system, which includes peer observation of teaching. Staff welcome this, as it is seen as a means of sharing good practice and improving the overall quality of teaching and learning. Induction of new staff is well organised, as are the arrangements for newly qualified teachers. All appropriate checks are carried out on staff and others who come into contact with the pupils.
- 4.10 Classrooms are of appropriate size, well kept and light although the design technology workshop for senior pupils is an exception, in that it is limited in size and the facilities it offers. Rooms are suitably furnished and many have interactive whiteboards. Display in classrooms and about the school is impressive, and some of the photography of high quality. Inside sports facilities are of good quality, and outside facilities suitably provide for the full range of activities required by pupils of this age. The theatre and provision for music are also of good quality.
- 4.11 The school runs smoothly. The ancillary staff, especially in the school offices, provide efficient and effective support. The bursar and his staff have an appropriate range of responsibilities and work hard to ensure that health and safety, financial and administrative issues are organised to provide well for pupils' education. A significant focus of administration is to maintain and continue to raise the quality of the buildings, grounds and their educational purpose. Inspectors noted the commitment to this ideal, and, as part of this, the remarkable engagement with the borough of Elmbridge.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

- 4.13 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 The school has made good progress since the last inspection. It has become a leader in combining independent learning and technology to provide a stimulating learning environment from which staff and pupils gain impressive benefits. As a result, it is well placed to fulfil its aim of preparing pupils for the demands of the twenty-first century.
- 5.2 Pupils' standards of achievement have risen throughout the school since the previous inspection. Pupils achieve well above the average for all maintained schools nationally in national tests in the junior school and in GCSE examinations. They have good literacy, numeracy and scientific skills and are confident users of ICT. Many pupils perform to good standards in a range of extra-curricular activities.
- 5.3 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding. The school has successfully integrated its approach to developing the God-given potential of each child into its daily life, and, as at the time of the last inspection, ensured that Christian values underpin pupils' educational experiences.
- 5.4 The quality of teaching is consistently good and in just under one-third of lessons observed outstanding. It is supported by good assessment procedures, which have yet to be fully adopted by all departments in senior school.
- 5.5 Pastoral care is a strength of the school, based as it is on the excellent relationships that exist between the members of the school community. The welfare, health and safety of the pupils are given high priority. The school recognises that some of its disciplinary procedures have yet to be fully adapted to the needs of the more senior pupils. A variety of methods exist to enable communication between school and parents and most parents are pleased with the educational experience their children are enjoying.
- 5.6 The governors provide helpful support and are likely to be able to develop their work further as a result of recent changes in the constitution of the governing body. The school's leadership is innovative and has successfully fostered an ethos of innovation throughout the school. The staff have responded and developed a confidence in teaching approaches that are encouraging pupils to take responsibility for much of their learning. In doing so they are being well prepared to not only cope with their immediate circumstances, but also for life as adults prepared to make a contribution to the well-being of others.
- 5.7 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.8 The school has made major strides since the last inspection under the present leadership and management. There are no major issues but the school will be helped to progress if it does the following:
1. introduces a base line assessment in the junior school to measure the abilities of pupils on entry and achieves a common approach to assessment in the senior school, thus providing information to help teachers to respond to pupils' strengths and weaknesses and assess the progress they are making;
 2. adjusts school disciplinary procedures to best meet the different needs of pupils in different age cohorts in the senior school;
 3. develops further the curricular links between the junior and senior school.
- 5.9 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

6.1 The inspection was carried out from 29th January to 1st February 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Terence Dillon	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Ann Stranack	Assistant Reporting Inspector. Former Head, ISA School
Miss Lynne Ashley	Deputy Head, GSA School
Mrs Susan Barnes	Former Head, ISA School
Mrs Brenda Davis	Former Head of Department, ISA School
Mr Paul Morgan-Jones	Houseparent, LAPS School
Mr John Gibson	Head, ISA School
Mr Cliff Vote	Head, ISA School
Mr James Wilding	Head, ISA School