

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### **Ardingly College**

The preparatory and pre-preparatory schools were inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	<b>Ardingly College</b>
DCSF Number	<b>938/6200</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1076456</b>
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Headmaster	<b>Mr Peter Green</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Robert Alston</b>
Age Range	<b>13 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills 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 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate. The Ofsted report is available separately at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

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

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Ardingly College is a co-educational day and boarding school of the Woodard Corporation, for pupils between the ages of 2½ and 18. It was founded in Shoreham in 1858 by the priest and educationalist Canon Nathaniel Woodard, to teach the Christian faith. In 1870, the college moved to its present location of 260 acres in the West Sussex countryside, close to the village of Ardingly and the town of Haywards Heath. It became fully co-educational in 1982.
- 1.2 The college aims to enable all pupils to develop their love of learning, academic potential and individual talents, within an ethos where servanthood and tolerance are highly valued. It promotes a caring community, fostering sensitivity, confidence, a sense of service and enthusiasm for life. The current focus points for development are marketing the college, maintaining and developing the facilities and widening access.
- 1.3 The three sections of the college, the senior, preparatory and pre-preparatory schools, each have their own headteacher, senior leadership team and buildings. The headmaster of the senior school has overall responsibility for all three schools within the college. The college is governed by a board of governors known as the School Council, who are ultimately accountable to the Woodard Corporation.
- 1.4 Pupils are drawn mainly from business and professional families. Senior school pupils come from the local area and much further afield, often using the school buses travelling from Surrey, East and West Sussex, and Kent. Boarders are drawn from a variety of backgrounds; over four-fifths are from the United Kingdom. Pupils from about 30 countries enhance the international ethos, with most coming from Germany, other European countries and Asia.
- 1.5 The majority of pupils from the preparatory school move through to the senior school although a few leave to attend a range of day and boarding independent schools, and to maintained schools in the area.
- 1.6 The senior school has grown in size since the last inspection by the ISI in 2002, from 417 to 470 in 2008, of which 291 are boys and 179 girls. Years 9 to 11 have 270 pupils and 200 are in Years 12 and 13. There are 240 day pupils, 25 of whom board for at least one day a week. Those in full boarding number 230. Pupils enter the senior school in Year 9, just over half from the preparatory school, and the remainder from ten main feeder schools. Entry into Year 9 depends upon pupils' academic capability as shown in examinations, Common Entrance, an interview, and a report from the head of a pupil's previous school. Each year, 10 to 15 pupils leave at the age of 16 and 25 to 30 join the sixth form, following GCSE or similar examination success and/or an interview, and a suitable report from their current school.
- 1.7 Evidence from nationally standardised tests of Year 9 pupils indicates that the average ability of pupils is above the national average for all maintained schools but below that in maintained selective schools. The school has several very high attaining pupils and about one in five who are of average ability or below. If the pupils perform in line with their abilities, their results will be above the average for maintained schools.
- 1.8 In the senior school, English is not the principal language for about one-sixth of the pupils, and about half of these receive additional support for their English. About one-quarter of the pupils in the senior school have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or

disabilities and just under half of these are provided with specialist learning support. No pupils have a statement of special educational need.

- 1.9 Since the last inspection, the senior school has introduced a new timetable, the numbers taking the International Baccalaureate (IB) have greatly increased, a campus-wide information and communication technology (ICT) network has been introduced, two new boarding houses have been built and others refurbished. A cross-college leadership group has been established, led by the senior school headmaster. All three schools have recently appointed new headteachers and many other senior staff.
- 1.10 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Shell	Year 9
Remove	Year 10
Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The school provides a wide range of high quality educational opportunities suited to the interests, abilities and needs of its diverse range of pupils. This good educational provision is consistent with its declared aims and philosophy. The academic curriculum provides a broad and balanced range of subjects, with excellent choice available in the sixth form through the IB and A-level courses. Pupils are well prepared to move on to university and to take their place as responsible citizens in society. Since the last inspection, progress has been made in several areas, such as the refurbishment of the library into a high quality curriculum resource centre.
- 2.2 The academic curriculum in Year 9 is broad and balanced, and contributes to the aim of developing both pupils' academic potential and their love of learning. The carousel of creative subjects does not include music, however, which limits the range of subject opportunities for pupils. In Years 10 and 11, a compulsory core of mathematics, science, English and English literature is well supported by optional subjects that cover languages, humanities, technological, physical and creative areas. Pupils have good opportunities to acquire skills in listening, speaking, literacy and numeracy. The lack of ICT within the subject curriculum limits the chance for pupils to develop their skills in this area. In Years 12 and 13, the extensive choice of courses, twenty A levels, seventeen higher level and thirteen standard level IB courses, is much appreciated by pupils, who speak enthusiastically about the subjects that they can study. New areas have been introduced when a demand is identified, such as philosophy to the IB and economics as an A level. The carefully constructed two-weekly timetable has developed in an evolutionary way over the last few years, and the recent establishment of the academic planning committee is introducing a complementary strategic direction to planning.
- 2.3 In Years 9 and 10, a good programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught through the school's 'learning for living' course, which gives pupils clear instruction about school rules and policies. All pupils take part in useful work experience. They are heavily involved in organising this themselves. In the sixth form, a recently launched syllabus for general studies and occasional lectures help to provide appropriate information on life at university and beyond.
- 2.4 The curriculum is designed to provide an appropriate programme for all pupils. In Year 9, pupils are grouped in ability bands and also as a consequence of subject choices such as Latin. Academic sets are reviewed regularly to ensure that groupings are changed where appropriate as pupils develop. Curriculum continuity and progression from the preparatory to the senior school are secured through regular contact between the staff of the two schools. At present, there is no clear policy for the gifted and talented. Pupils seeking additional intellectual stimulation can request extra work on an individual basis, and a wide range of stimulating extra-curricular activities is available for all. In the sixth form, a good programme of extension is available to ambitious pupils considering highly selective universities, such as a talk by an academically renowned former pupil on medical developments in the field of AIDS research. All departments have helpful schemes of work but few examples of detailed planning show how pupils' individual needs are met.
- 2.5 The learning support department screens all pupils for learning difficulties and/or disabilities effectively and provides a curriculum that meets the needs of identified pupils; about 60 benefit from regular support. The English as an additional language department similarly

provides good tuition for pupils, who are grateful for the confidence boost this provides. Many pupils from overseas are sufficiently fluent in English not to require extra help.

- 2.6 The opportunities to be involved in extra-curricular activities are outstanding. In Years 9 to 11, a compulsory programme of sport and physical education has enabled sporting achievement to grow in all areas. The school has a long tradition of sporting excellence and this is apparent in the recent success of teams with very competitive fixture lists. In addition, pupils have many opportunities for sport on a more recreational basis. The major sports are supplemented by a large number of other pursuits such as sailing, shooting, squash and golf. Opportunities are provided for pupils to develop servanthood through charitable projects, and leadership through a resurgent Combined Cadet Force and a popular Duke of Edinburgh's Award programme. A comprehensive range of musical groups, such as the strong chapel choir, drama and a large number of clubs, are on offer in the afternoons and evenings. The school often arranges trips overseas in holiday time. Recent examples include history department trips to the battlefields of Flanders and the expedition to northern Peru in the summer of 2006.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.8 Pupils are well educated and gain good knowledge and skills which they apply effectively. They are more academically successful than at the time of the last inspection. The school is meeting its aims in that pupils develop a love of learning, and they strive to achieve their academic potential.
- 2.9 Pupils have a positive attitude to learning, working to very good effect independently and co-operatively in lessons. When given the opportunity in drama, design and technology and art, pupils are creative and thoroughly enjoy the experience. In English and theory of knowledge lessons, pupils think and act critically, developing their intellectual skills. Pupils listen very effectively and write fluently. They are articulate and express opinions with confidence. In modern foreign languages, for example, pupils of varying abilities speak confidently in the target language and make good progress in developing their writing skills. Literacy skills in general are very good. Pupils' work in most subjects demonstrates a sound level of competence in ICT, although evidence of computer use in lessons is limited. Numeracy skills are well supported by work in a range of subjects. In biology, for example, the statistical data used to support fieldwork reinforces analytical skills, and work in geography involves tabulation and substantial work with number. Pupils are developing the essential skills and approaches needed for their future careers.
- 2.10 Girls have gained more high grades in GCSE and in the sixth form than boys over the past five years, but different levels of attainment were not apparent in lessons. The school is aware of this trend and has been consulting internally, agreeing strategies to focus on boys' study skills and support their learning. In lessons observed, where work was not well matched to the differing abilities present, those pupils at the extremes of the ability range tended to achieve less than others.
- 2.11 Pupils' attainment in GCSE, A level and the IB is good in relation to their abilities. GCSE results over the past three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools, and A-level results over the same period have been above the maintained school average. IB results have been well above world averages and the average compared with schools in Britain that take the IB. Results at GCSE and in the sixth form show an improving trend over time.

- 2.12 The school has a very good record in individual and team achievements. For example, about a quarter of the pupils gained certificates in instrumental music examinations in 2006/7, ranging from pass to distinction. The school has athletes who are successful at a national level and pupils are playing football at county level. A number of academically gifted pupils do well in the Mathematics Challenge and in science ‘olympiads’ each year.
- 2.13 Pupils develop very good independent study habits at an early stage in their school careers and organise their time well. They take responsibility for handing in their homework according to agreed deadlines and study outside the school day in a sensible way. Study planners are not used consistently by all pupils, their parents and house staff, to monitor work and progress. Folders and exercise books show good standards of presentation and organisation, although there are differences between subjects. Sixth form pupils showed the outcome of their excellent organisation and study skills as they gave presentations on demanding philosophical topics of their choice in a theory of knowledge lesson.
- 2.14 Very effective co-operative working was exemplified by a Year 10 hockey session, where the successful outcome was only possible because the pupils gave each other excellent mutual support in the exercises. A similar picture was apparent in a Year 9 religious studies lesson, where each pupil listened intently to the differing views of others as they took part in a lively discussion about forgiving someone who had committed serious crimes.
- 2.15 Pupils in all year groups show a mature attitude to the task in hand. They settle quickly in lessons, and do not give up easily, persevering with tasks. Presentations in class are thoughtfully prepared and confidently delivered; the pupils listening are attentive and supportive. Relationships amongst pupils and with staff are of a high order, which results in enjoyment in lessons and in the wide range of activities.

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

- 2.16 The school has built on existing good practice since the last inspection, with the result that pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and has outstanding features. This is central to meeting the aims of the school and contributes to its special atmosphere. The school takes very seriously its responsibility to maintain the Christian values of the Woodard Corporation and this has a strong, positive effect on pupils.
- 2.17 The school’s ‘learning for living’ curriculum provides the opportunity for pupils to learn successfully about relevant social and moral issues. This has a very good impact on pupils’ personal development.
- 2.18 Pupils’ spiritual development is very good. The chapel is central to school life and pupils explore belief at different levels, through Eucharist services, chapel services in the crypt and preparation for confirmation. Whole-school assemblies take place on a Wednesday morning when topics such as honesty are used to challenge the pupils both morally and intellectually; they appreciate these occasions. Pupils of other faiths are able to develop their own spirituality, with encouragement from the school. For example, Muslim pupils have a room in which to pray and are supported through Ramadan. A drama piece by Year 10 pupils, exploring the complex issues of the role of conscience and decision making, exemplified the school’s spirituality and ethos. The school’s belief in servanthood is demonstrated by the variety of community projects in which the pupils are involved. Local examples include helping in homes for the elderly and supporting the homeless in a night shelter in Brighton. Pupils raise substantial sums of money to support needy groups, for example through auctioning their own art works and playing in a jazz concert organised by the parents’ association. Pupils gained insight into different ways of worshipping on a recent art

department trip to New York, which included a gospel service in Harlem and a visit to a Buddhist museum.

- 2.19 Pupils' moral development is excellent. Moral and ethical dilemmas are tackled in the debating society and are discussed in house crypt services. A small group of pupils gave a very good presentation to their houses on Cool Earth, an 'eco-school' charity, articulating clearly the issues involved. Pupils have a strong understanding of moral codes and consequences as a result of specific courses where moral issues are discussed, and through subjects where, for example, genetic engineering is explored and abortion is debated. They clearly know right from wrong and accept responsibility for their own actions. Pupils have good knowledge of public institutions in the United Kingdom as a result of a taught component within the PSHE programme.
- 2.20 Pupils have excellent social skills and make a very strong contribution to school life. Almost all the parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire about the school said how confident they were that the school promoted good attitudes and behaviour. The student council and the food committee meet regularly; their views are listened to and acted upon. The school timetable was adjusted at the start of the year because of pupils' misgivings about the length of the day on Fridays. Prefects, sacristans and games captains all play a very important part in the running of the school. Most opportunities for social service occur in the sixth form, although there is a real interest in participating from the younger pupils. Prefects provide an excellent example to other pupils through the high levels of courtesy, respect and maturity they employ in carrying out their duties. Pupils at Ardingly develop well-balanced social awareness.
- 2.21 Cultural development is good, with pupils showing an appreciation of and respect for other traditions as well as their own. They enjoy the many opportunities to take part in musical and other creative activities. A strong feeling of community and racial harmony exists. The induction programme in both Year 9 and Year 12 helps all new pupils, particularly those from overseas, feel part of the school. Celebrations of festivals, including Chinese New Year, are organised and valued. Pupils described as life changing the experience of spending time teaching in a school in the Gambia during Year 12. In recent years, a good number of pupils have taken part in visits to Poland, France, Germany, New York and South Africa, further enhancing their understanding of the world and their place within it.
- 2.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.23 Teaching is good and of a similar quality to that at the time of the last inspection. Staff are effective in encouraging pupils to behave responsibly and enjoy learning, thus realising the school's aims of enabling all boys and girls to develop their love of learning, and to make good progress.
- 2.24 The great majority of teaching is satisfactory or good; occasionally it is outstanding. A few lessons are not satisfactory and do not engage or challenge pupils sufficiently. Pupils are fortunate to be taught in small classes throughout the school. Where lessons are well taught, a variety of methods are used and open-ended questioning brings out the best from pupils. In contrast, some lessons are dominated by teachers talking and some are not planned sufficiently well. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are assessed carefully. A number of staff provide effective one-to-one and small group tuition to bolster skills in specific areas. Expert advice is given to subject teachers of these pupils but this knowledge is not always acted upon. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are assessed

before joining the school and those who need extra help are taught effectively by a specialist. Glossaries of terms are provided in some subjects, which are very helpful to these pupils.

- 2.25 Encouragement for pupils to take risks in their work fosters their creative thinking and, where work is challenging, their intellectual skills are maximised. Not all staff achieve this, but a number do. Teachers inspire confidence in their pupils when excellent verbal interactions and high quality questioning are employed. Physical effort is valued and the pupils know this, which leads them to further effort and success in games and physical education. Pupils are very interested in their work and think for themselves, at times even when teaching is rather too teacher led, with few opportunities for pupils to become involved in their learning. Almost all teaching ensures that pupils are given accurate information but too often pupils are passive recorders, rather than active learners developing critical thinking skills.
- 2.26 The excellent relationship that teachers have with pupils, and pupils' commitment to learning, mean that behaviour in lessons is usually excellent. Practical work in drama and science is carried out with evident enjoyment, as is debate in English. Teachers encourage pupils to listen to each other and provide good learning environments in many rooms.
- 2.27 Several lessons observed were very well planned, including activities that helped pupils enjoy sessions and make progress. For example, in a Year 12 religious studies lesson, pupils made rapid progress as they participated in a wide range of activities involving debate about the existence of God. An equally well-planned Year 9 geography lesson used role play to explore political asylum and factors affecting refugees' lives. Some lessons were overly reliant on the textbook or worksheets and some lacked pace.
- 2.28 Teachers are well qualified in the subjects they teach and show in-depth knowledge of their subjects. Tasks set, however, do not always match pupils' prior learning or their capabilities and so progress for some is limited. In the sixth form, where relationships are usually excellent and mutual respect results in easy and effective communication, work usually meets pupils' needs well. For example, in a Year 13 small sized history class, the teacher spent ten minutes with each pupil, helping them with their individual assignments. This approach was much appreciated, as is the individual help provided, on request, out of lessons.
- 2.29 Teaching is supported by a good range of resources that are used effectively in many subjects. In biology, a web camera enables pupils to see teacher demonstrations, for example of a dissection. Film clips are helpful in illustrating points and stimulating debate and discussion. Good quality, modern textbooks are often used well. Some departments, however, are not making effective use of the range of resources available, particularly the digital projectors and interactive whiteboards available in many rooms.
- 2.30 Assessment is satisfactory. Although varied, the quality of marking of pupils' work is also satisfactory overall. In some subjects, helpful, detailed written comments and specific targets are given, although this is not the case in all. One-to-one and group discussion is used effectively in a number of lessons to help pupils understand misconceptions and overcome difficulties. In the best teaching, work is adapted in the light of knowing what pupils find easy and what they struggle to understand. Pupils' grades are based on their efforts and measured against the appropriate GCSE, A-level or IB criteria, and teachers communicate these carefully to pupils. Information about pupils' performance comes not only from homework but also from end-of-topic tests and internal examinations. Teachers mark tests carefully and give feedback on how to improve further.

- 2.31 The school has access to a range of pupil performance data which would enable judgements to be made on the relative performance of pupils in different classes and subjects. This data is not yet used effectively to measure academic success or to set targets and grades for pupils to work towards.
- 2.32 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 A notable feature of the school is the values and the strong Christian ethos which support all aspects of pupils' personal development. The quality of pastoral care is good and is consistent with the school's stated aims and philosophy. Good progress has been made in most areas since the last inspection in maintaining the standards of pastoral care, and in ensuring the satisfactory welfare, health and safety of pupils. The pastoral care and welfare management structure is broadly effective in achieving the desired outcomes for pupils.
- 3.2 The good quality of pastoral care is exemplified by the assembly in which the headmaster asked, 'How honest are you when no one is looking?' This generated discussion during the day as staff and pupils considered the implications of the question. A caring atmosphere pervades the school. Respect is shown between staff and pupils, as well as amongst pupils, which creates a very positive ethos of support and kindness. All pupils of whatever background or capability are highly valued and as pupils know this, there is a strong sense of trust and high self-esteem. An example of the way in which the school perpetuates its caring ethos is the 'forgiveness project' where pupils are able to explore complex issues of forgiveness in a highly supportive and structured class-based exercise. As a result of the strength of community spirit, pupils grow into confident, polite, supportive and enthusiastic young adults, who have great pride in their school.
- 3.3 The housemasters and housemistresses are particularly effective in maintaining the quality of pastoral care. They have very good knowledge of their pupils and carry out their responsibilities thoroughly. The tutor system, whilst based on the good practice of one-to-one communication between teachers and pupils, is variable in quality and in the approaches used by tutors. The school is aware of the inconsistency within this aspect of the pastoral care system. Although appreciating the great strength where the role is carried out well, it is reviewing the process to ensure that all pupils benefit from the same quality of good practice. Tutorials have varied content, driven by the needs of pupils, but do not include aspirational target setting or structured monitoring of pupils' progress. Registration is carried out appropriately and the admission register is maintained as required.
- 3.4 The level of participation by pupils in a wide range of activities is excellent. The many opportunities for challenge and personal development contribute strongly to pupils' well being. Pupil leadership opportunities are good, with the potential to develop further through increased use of members of the sixth form in the non-sixth form houses.
- 3.5 The school has clear and very detailed policies for all aspects of behaviour. Appropriate anti-bullying definitions and guidelines, including those relating to cyber-bullying, are available for staff as well as pupils. All are aware of their rights and responsibilities. Good staff understanding and implementation of these systems, working against bullying and unacceptable behaviour, underpin the strength of pastoral care. Rewards and sanctions are clearly established, with the housemaster/housemistress vital in creating a positive and disciplined atmosphere. The housemasters/housemistresses are supported well by senior colleagues in their discipline role and clearly have the best interests of pupils at heart. High expectations of pupils' behaviour are key elements in the school's success in creating such a positive ethos.
- 3.6 All teaching and support staff have been well trained in child protection. A whole-staff session in September 2007 reinforced its importance. Staff know who the designated child

protection officer is and pupils are made aware of sources of support. Arrangements are good.

- 3.7 The school has good measures in place to reduce risk of fire and other hazards, with regular testing and staff training. The fire brigade are appropriately involved, visiting regularly to make assessments and give advice. Systems to ensure health and safety are in place and are satisfactory overall. The school shows due regard for health and safety legislation; a few minor points were pointed out during the inspection and these were dealt with promptly. The school's rolling programme covers the testing of portable electrical appliances. Risk assessments and procedures are clearly stated in staff documentation and are followed, for example concerning the use of the swimming pool, all extra-curricular activities and external visits. Reporting requirements of identified health and safety concerns are sound. The school has an appropriate number of trained staff for first aid, with a three-yearly cycle of training. The medical centre is well staffed by nurses 24 hours a day and local doctors offer regular medical clinics and support.
- 3.8 School meals are healthy and wholesome and have improved over the last few years. The student food committee has been effective in bringing about improvements. The food choices from the tuck shop and machines do not promote or encourage healthy eating options, however. Regular, frequent and well-planned games and physical activities ensure that all pupils are involved in regular physical exercise.
- 3.9 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**

- 3.10 The school has good links with parents and the community, fulfilling its aim to work closely with parents. Links have improved since the last report.
- 3.11 The great majority of parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated that they are very happy with the education provided for their children. Parents are pleased with the quality of the curriculum, the information they receive, homework, and the help and guidance provided for their children. Parents are very positive about the progress their children make at school, the worthwhile attitudes and values they develop, the provision for boarders and the high quality range of extra-curricular activities available. A minority of parents commented on misbehaviour, but other parents were very positive about behaviour, referring to the dedication of the house staff in demanding high standards throughout the school. A significant minority of parents have been unhappy with the ways in which they can become involved in school life, some aspects of the support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the way concerns are handled.
- 3.12 Inspectors found that parents have good opportunities to be involved in activities and are encouraged to visit the school and support their children in many ways. Concerts, plays and sports fixtures are well publicised and listed in the 'Kalendar' sent to all families. An active parents' association has regular meetings and organises and promotes fund-raising events. A parents prayer group meets regularly and all parents are welcome to attend the Sunday evening service in the chapel crypt, although few do. Social events for parents are arranged by the headmaster and house staff. Inspectors also found behaviour to be very good, and particularly so in the sixth form. Specialist provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is good; however, not all class teachers take sufficient account of individual needs.

- 3.13 Parents are encouraged to contact staff if they have any concerns, and procedures for this are stated in the parents' and staff handbooks. A small number of parents commented that the school has been tardy in the past in responding to queries but that the situation was improving. The school's complaints procedures do not fully comply with statutory obligations in that when a panel hearing is established to hear a complaint, no provision is made for an independent member, parents are not told that they can be accompanied, and it is not stated that copies of findings and recommendations will be given to the complainant, headmaster and chair of governors.
- 3.14 Prospectuses are instructive and well presented and information for new pupils and their parents offers helpful advice and guidance. Parents of prospective pupils, with their children, are welcomed to the school and are given helpful documentation and information as well as a tour. Reports on pupils' progress are informative, summarising their academic progress, effort and pastoral welfare. They are written each term, but do not always indicate how work could be improved. Half-term grades, which include a summary from the tutor and housemaster/housemistress, are also sent to parents, and parents' evenings are held for each year group annually. Appropriate information evenings for parents of those making option choices in Years 9 and 11 are held each year. Pupils use the student planner in which to record homework and communicate with parents, although its use is not consistent throughout the school. Termly newsletters, which include articles and pictures taken by pupils, communicate information well to parents about individual and collective achievements.
- 3.15 The school works hard to develop and maintain strong community links, enriching both pupils' experiences and the school curriculum. Good links are made with the local community through, for example, work with a club attended by children with disabilities, and by regularly giving music performances in local churches and homes for the elderly. Other opportunities to carry out service in the community are linked to the creative, action and service component of the IB. A number of local organisations use school facilities on a regular basis, such as the use of the swimming pool by a local primary school, and there are an increasing number of events with the local church, fostered by the chaplaincy and headmaster. Further afield, the biology department conducts a research project with Kew Gardens, the art department offers teacher training to postgraduate students at Brighton University, and there are established projects in the Gambia and Kenya.
- 3.16 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) ensure that the written complaints procedure states that, in any panel hearing, one person will be independent of the management and running of the school; parents are allowed to attend and be accompanied if they wish, and the complainant, chair of governors and headmaster, and where relevant the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations [Regulations 7.(g) to (i)];
  - (b) ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are aware that they may request a copy of the revised complaints procedure [Regulation 6.(2)(j)].

## **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.17 The school provides a boarding experience that supports and enriches the college's aim of enabling boys and girls to develop their individual talents within a caring community. Over the last few years, boarding numbers have risen and there has been considerable investment in the improvement and refurbishment of boarding facilities. However, the school has not fully implemented the recommendations of the last visit by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in 2004. The new headmaster is aware of the need to deal urgently with the requirements concerning staff recruitment identified in that report.
- 3.18 Excellent, positive and supportive relationships exist among pupils and with boarding staff. Pupils are confident in and appreciative of the pastoral support that they receive. Boarders know to whom they can turn for advice and feel that the policies and protocols of boarding life outlined in house handbooks are both fair and sensible. In all boarding houses, the atmosphere is friendly and welcoming. The Year 13 house provides ample opportunity for individuals to take responsibility for themselves in an environment that is an ideal stepping-stone to university. Boarders are largely content with the provision and demonstrate great loyalty to their houses.
- 3.19 The college offers boarders a good range of activities outside the main working day. Evening prep is well organised and boarders appreciate the chance to work quietly. They can also participate in a number of extra-curricular activities such as drama rehearsals, musical events and sporting commitments. The excellent range of facilities available includes a swimming pool, sports hall and squash courts. In addition, houses have good social amenities and casual games to aid relaxation. Strenuous efforts have been made to put on a programme of sports and other activities to fill the weekend for the relatively small number of full boarders. A programme of trips every second weekend provides opportunities for the broadening of cultural horizons, such as a recent trip to the Tate Modern, as well as offering occasional 'retail therapy'. Lack of a full activities programme every weekend was commented on unfavourably by some boarders.
- 3.20 The quality of accommodation and resources for boarders ranges from outstanding to satisfactory. The Year 13 co-educational house is noteworthy for its design, ambience and facilities. The houses for boys in Years 9 to 12, built since the last CSCI inspection in 2004, provide excellent accommodation. Plans are already in hand to refurbish the girls' houses to bring them up to the same high standard. In all houses, communal areas have been equipped and furnished very well. All houses radiate a feeling that they are well cared for and respected by those who live and work in them.

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 By the terms of their membership of the Woodard Corporation of over 40 independent and maintained sector schools, Ardingly College governors, referred to as the School Council, are accountable to the Corporation members, who have final responsibility for the college.
- 4.2 Governors support the school satisfactorily in securing an effective education for the pupils. They are well aware of its significant strengths in the ethos and environment provided, and the pupils' positive attitudes and excellent relationships. They are less secure in their knowledge of the issues that need to be dealt with and have not held the school to account sufficiently for necessary changes identified in the last ISI and CSCI reports of 2002 and 2004. Not all aspects of the safeguarding of pupils through appropriate appointment procedures, and the provision of an appropriate complaints procedure, fully meet requirements.
- 4.3 The governors' committee and meeting structure is sound and they have a wide range of suitable expertise. Strategic and finance committees complete much of the detailed and overlapping work in their two areas, reporting to the full governors' termly meetings. Financial, resources and strategic management are discussed in some detail, but academic matters receive much less emphasis. The establishment of a further important group to focus on academic matters, designated the education committee, is an appropriate response to this situation, although it has yet to meet.

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

- 4.4 The overall quality of leadership and management is good. The new headmaster is providing firm and very effective leadership as he audits the educational provision available and provides a new direction for the school. The greater emphasis on teaching, learning and achievement, in a caring Christian community, entirely reflects the school's aims. Since the last inspection reports, substantial improvements have been made in several areas. However, a number of important issues remain, including the effectiveness of middle managers.
- 4.5 An excellent analysis of the school's strengths and areas for improvement has taken place. This shows a substantial list of positive features, of which the school is justifiably proud, but it also identifies significant issues, several of which require urgent attention. The challenge facing senior leaders now is to prioritise their actions so that important as well as urgent issues are given appropriate emphasis, and that expectations and the rate of change are realistic. New senior appointments and changes in role amongst leaders mean that transitional arrangements are in place. These are evolving as the school focuses on improving pupils' achievements through better teaching and the use of pupil performance data to guide what is taught.
- 4.6 Currently aspects of the leadership and management of senior and middle leaders are insufficiently effective. Good policies and procedures exist, for example those concerning the sixth form curriculum, the provision of activities, the manner in which bullying is minimised, and the way in which pupils are taught to value one another. Other systems are rather vague at best and they are not effectively monitored. The result is inconsistency in practice. This is exemplified by weaknesses in the marking of work and in the way heads of department review the variable quality of teaching and learning in their subjects.

- 4.7 The school's procedures are appropriate in most respects for ensuring that suitable staff are appointed to the many and various roles within the school, but evidence is not available that all necessary checks have been carried out for qualifications where appropriate, references, previous employment details, and medical fitness. A central register is kept and has appropriate headings but not all the required information is accurately recorded. A substantial budget is allocated to staff development which many use well to improve their expertise. The school subscribes to the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and provides a good programme of support. Not all teaching staff, however, have up-to-date job descriptions and the performance development review programme is not firmly established. The appraisal system for non-teaching staff is as yet only in draft form and has not been ratified by governors. In-service training is not always related to review statements. Although a central record is kept of the training staff undertake, its contribution to development is not regularly monitored. Communication amongst staff is good.
- 4.8 Financial management is effective. Pupils benefit from good, well-used resources, for example in music and sport. Some accommodation is rather dated but a good ongoing modernisation and refurbishment programme is resulting in an improving environment. The school is well cared for and clean. The library is a good facility and much better than described six years ago. The number of computers available for pupils to use is good and many classrooms now have digital projectors – although these are little used in some rooms.
- 4.9 School administration is sound. A substantial number of school documents are held on the central computer system, improving access and communication. Administrative staff are very helpful. Not all senior staff have appropriate access to administrative support, however, which results in inefficiencies. An audit of provision against identified needs has not been carried out for a number of years.
- 4.10 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) ensure that checks are carried out to confirm in respect of each person appointed: qualifications where appropriate, references, previous employment history, and medical fitness [Regulation 4.(2)(a)];
  - (b) for each appointment, enter on the central register the completion of all required checks [Regulations 4C.(2) and (3)].
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5].
- 4.12 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 educational experience provided meets the school's aims. Pupils enjoy learning, strive to achieve academic success and develop their individual talents through involvement in an excellent range of activities. The school's feeling of community and strong Christian ethos are valued and support all aspects of pupils' personal development. They grow into confident, polite and enthusiastic young people, presenting themselves as ambassadors for the school. Pupils make good progress in their studies, attaining well above average standards at GCSE, above average standards at A level and well above the world averages for the IB. The quality of the curriculum is good in Years 9 to 11. The large number of popular courses available at A Level and within the IB make outstanding provision for the sixth form. Teaching is good with a number of strengths, but also significant areas for improvement that affect achievement. Data on pupils' progress is not yet used effectively to inform planning. Pupils are very well cared for and the quality of relationships is high. Boarding adds considerably to the educational provision for pupils.
- 5.2 Governors provide support for the new headmaster as he implements a strong academic drive for the school. His vision and direction are clear and dynamic. The roles of senior leaders are in transition as several new members have been appointed recently. Not all heads of department are sufficiently effective in leading and managing their subjects. Insufficient monitoring of several areas of school life results in inconsistencies in practice not being identified and resolved. The school has successfully dealt with two recommendations from the last inspection report, improving the quality of the library and the use of ICT, but has not focused enough on resolving middle management issues.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standards 4 (suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors), 6 (provision of information) and 7 (the manner in which complaints are to be handled).

## Next Steps

- 5.4 To improve the quality of the educational provision, the following actions are recommended:
1. monitor the quality of education provided more rigorously and ensure that any shortcomings are identified and resolved;
  2. improve the quality of teaching, matching work better to pupils' prior knowledge, making tasks more relevant and exciting, and involving pupils more in their own learning;
  3. improve the quality of departmental leadership, working to achieve consistent implementation of school policies;
  4. improve pupils' standards through using data on their achievements to set challenging targets and track individuals' progress.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) ensure that the written complaints procedure states that, in any panel hearing, one person will be independent of the management and running of the school; parents are allowed to attend and be accompanied if they wish, and the complainant, chair of governors and headmaster, and where relevant the person complained about, are given a copy of any findings and recommendations [Regulations 7.(g) to (i)];
  - (2) ensure that parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are aware that they may request a copy of the revised complaints procedure [Regulation 6.(2)(j)];
  - (3) ensure that checks are carried out to confirm in respect of each person appointed: qualifications where appropriate, references, previous employment history, and medical fitness [Regulation 4.(2)(a)];
  - (4) for each appointment, enter on the central register the completion of all required checks [Regulations 4C.(2) and (3)].

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

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> February 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the sanatorium. 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.
- 6.2 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of three Ofsted inspectors over four days.

### **List of Inspectors**

Mr Peter McGregor	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Jane Abbotts	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Susan Ashby	Deputy Headteacher, HMC school
Mr Andrew Cleary	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Jenny Dwyer	Headmistress, GSA school
Mr Andrew Fisher	Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Mark Turner	Headmaster, HMC school