INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

BLACKHEATH HIGH SCHOOL GDST

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Blackheath High School GDST

Full Name of School	**Blackheath High School GDST**			
DfE Number	**203/6295**			
Registered Charity Number	**306983**			
Address	**Blackheath High School GDST** **27 Vanbrugh Park** **London** **SE3 7AG**			
Telephone Number	**020 8853 2929**			
Fax Number	**020 8853 3663**			
Email Address	**info@bla.gdst.net**			
Head	**Mrs Lisa Laws**			
Chair of Governors	**Mr Julian Vennis**			
Age Range	**3 to 18**			
Total Number of Pupils	**718**			
Gender of Pupils	**Girls**			
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	**96**	5-11:	**267**
	11-18:	**355**		
Head of EYFS Setting	**Ms Sandra Eastaugh**			
EYFS Gender	**Girls**			
Inspection Dates	**25 Mar 2014 to 28 Mar 2014**			

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule,* which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

(i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
(ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
(iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
(iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of local governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Richard Mannix	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Gillian De La Torre	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Ann Aughwane	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr Alfred Bogyor	Team Inspector (Senior Master, IAPS school)
Mrs Linda Griffith	Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Dr Tracy Johnson	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Ms Heather Owens	Team Inspector (Head, GSA school)
Mr John Parsonage	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, HMC school)
Dr Wendy Bowring	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

1.1 Blackheath High School is a non-denominational independent day school for girls aged 3 to 18. The school was founded by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST) in 1880 and is located in the south east London suburb of Blackheath in the London Borough of Greenwich, a short drive from the City, the Docklands and Greenwich Park. The school site is divided into two distinct centres: a Senior School, housed in a mixture of historic and modern buildings, including a theatre, and across the heath, the Junior School, with a purpose-built Nursery, and play and forest areas. The schools share a five-acre sports field with a pavilion and an all-weather pitch. The school is overseen by the trustees and executive of the GDST, assisted by a local School Governing Board (SGB).

1.2 The school shares with other GSDT schools a commitment to develop all girls' skills and competency to ensure that they are successful and happy. Individually, it aims to value personal qualities, such as respect and responsibility, and academic qualities in equal measure. It seeks for teaching and learning to be supported by 'pillars of learning', which include: resilience; enterprise; innovation; community spirit and environmental awareness.

1.3 There are 718 pupils on the roll. Of the 363 pupils in the Junior School, 96 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) for children aged 3 to 5, of whom 31 attend part-time. A total of 355 pupils are in the Senior School, of whom 66 attend the sixth form. The pupils come from a wide range of international and cultural backgrounds. Most pupils live locally; others travel from further afield, including south east and east London.

1.4 Entry into the EYFS at the age of three is by informal assessment and is by more formal assessment into Reception and above. The majority of pupils transfer from the Junior School to the Senior School, with a similar number entering the Senior School from other schools. The ability profile of the pupils is above the national average. In the Junior School a wide spread of ability is represented and there are marked variations across different year groups. In the Senior School most pupils have at least above average ability and almost a quarter have well above average ability. The ability profile of the sixth form is slightly above the national average, with a wider spread of abilities than in Years 7 to 11.

1.5 Of the 122 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL), 2 receive specialist support. The school has identified 66 pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to whom it makes specialist learning support available.

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

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2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

2.1 Pupils' achievement in their work and activities is excellent throughout the school and they are very well educated, fully in line with the school's aim to promote academic excellence. High achievement is strongly supported by the pupils' excellent attitude towards learning, which richly fulfils the school's aim to nurture a love of learning and develop independent and enquiring minds. Excellent curricular and extra-curricular provision is well balanced and fully supports the pupils' learning. Excellent teaching, characterised by the teachers' knowledge of their pupils as individuals, is seen at all levels in the school. Children in the EYFS make extremely good progress, with the overwhelming majority exceeding the Early Learning Goals by the end of the Reception year. Progress in the Junior School and up to GCSE level is also excellent. At A level, progress is good and sometimes excellent. Pupils with SEND or EAL and the more able are strongly supported by the school and make excellent progress in relation to their abilities. Pupils at all ages are enthusiastic learners and show exceptionally well-developed speaking and listening skills. Attitudes and behaviour are excellent throughout the school, and pupils value the opportunities given to them.

2.2 At all stages the pupils' personal development is excellent. Their spiritual development is excellent and this fully reflects the school's aim to develop the whole person by building self-esteem and confidence. Pupils have an exceedingly well-developed sense of right and wrong, and fully recognise the importance of their actions and their effect on the school community. Pupils willingly take on positions of responsibility and are very happy to play their part in the life of the school and in the wider community. The school community is extremely diverse and it successfully thrives on the pupils' acceptance and enjoyment of each other's cultures and backgrounds. Excellent relationships between pupils and staff and the pupils' natural ease with one another are great strengths of the school. Throughout the school, the arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.

2.3 Governance provides a very effective oversight, ensuring that the school's aims are strongly maintained throughout all sections. The school's educational provision for pupils is very effectively monitored and regularly evaluated. Governors' responsibilities for the EYFS, child protection, and welfare, health and safety are diligently undertaken. The SGB provides excellent support for the leadership and the senior leadership team, and contributes significantly to the school's success. At all levels leadership and management provide excellent, clear educational direction. The staff as a whole are dedicated, highly motivated and very focused on achieving the best outcomes for the pupils. Links with parents are excellent. Recommendations from the previous inspection relating to imbalances in the junior curriculum and the use of specialist junior teaching facilities, such as art and science, have been fully addressed. In addition, the recommendation that the tasks set by teachers should be sufficiently varied in difficulty to take account of pupils' prior attainment has also been fully met, with an excellent, individually focused approach now in place.

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2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Improve the administration and monitoring of school policies to ensure that all such policies reflect the most recent regulatory requirements.

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3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.

3.2 Throughout, pupils are very well educated in line with the school ethos that promotes academic excellence whilst nurturing a love of learning and independent enquiring minds.

3.3 At all ages, pupils respond well to challenges and show a high level of intellectual ability that allows them to build upon their knowledge and develop their skills. For example, children in Reception complete with great confidence addition and subtraction operations up to 100 and can fully explain how numbers can be broken down into factors. In the Senior School, pupils showed a strong, evaluative understanding of the impact of wartime propaganda.

3.4 Pupils' speaking and listening skills are exceptionally well developed. In the earliest years, confident, courteous and highly articulate junior pupils extolled the advantages of using their tablet computers for researching ancient Egypt, and Year 13 prospective candidates for head girl each gave highly persuasive short talks to their peers on their suitability to the role. Throughout the school pupils very confidently debate issues, reason highly effectively and enjoy expressing their opinions, as seen in a Year 9 class discussion on the impact of 'extreme tourism' on the economy and social change in developing nations.

3.5 Pupils read with fluency, expression and obvious enjoyment across the school, and excellent literacy and numeracy skills are in evidence across the curriculum. Pupils confidently problem solve and show enquiring minds and a love of learning, as demonstrated by a Year 6 mathematics group who enthusiastically discussed which of their several problem-solving methods was the best. Pupils' information and communication technology (ICT) skills are excellent throughout, and the confident and highly effective use of tablet computers across a wide range of subjects is a strength of the school. Pupils' independent learning and creative skills are highly advanced. Senior pupils' work has been exhibited at the Tate Modern and they have had great success in national debating competitions. Junior pupils' poetry has been published and received awards, and the Junior School chamber choir has won contests at the Beckenham Festival for the previous four years. Pupils achieve notable success in external accredited speech and drama and music examinations, and in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE). Numerous pupils enjoy excellent success in sporting activities, with county and national representation. The achievements of pupils who have SEND or EAL, and of those who are more able, are equally strong and reflect the high level of support they receive throughout the school. When they leave, pupils mostly move on to their first choice of university, with a significant number gaining a place at highly competitive institutions.

3.6 The following analysis uses national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparable statistics are available. Results in national tests at the ages of 7 and 11 have been well above the national average for maintained primary schools. Results in 2012 were exceptional. Results in reading tests at the age of 11 are also exceptional. Pupils' performance at GCSE has been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Results have shown improvement from 2011 to 2013. A-level performance has been above the national average for

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girls in maintained schools and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools.

3.7 In the Junior School and up to GCSE, pupils make excellent progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities, and at A level pupils make good and sometimes excellent progress. Pupils' numeracy, literacy and evaluative skills as seen in their written work and in lessons show strong development as they move up through the school. In the Junior School, pupils with SEND or EAL and those who are more able also make excellent progress. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire a very large majority of the pupils and parents felt that pupils make good progress with their work.

3.8 Pupils throughout the school, including the EYFS, are excellent learners. They are enthusiastic and motivated in their efforts to learn. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and enjoy their learning. Their behaviour, support for one another and organisational skills are excellent. Pupils readily take the initiative and enjoy applying new skills.

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

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

3.10 In all years the curriculum is highly effective in meeting the aims of the school. The taught curriculum is extremely well supported by an extensive range of extra-curricular activities, the number of which has significantly increased since the previous inspection. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents indicated that the school offers an appropriate range of subjects and experiences. The curriculum is very carefully planned and resourced to fully meet the needs of all ages and abilities.

3.11 The curriculum is broad and balanced, and goes beyond National Curriculum requirements. Throughout the school, curricular provision inspires excellent learning and provides opportunities to develop thinking skills and to enrich personal development, giving pupils the chance to value their education in wider terms than examination outcomes alone. For example, the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) and the version adjusted for Year 9 enable a large number of pupils, including the most able, to develop excellent research skills and independence in their learning. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated that they are very happy with the school's support for their children.

3.12 The EYFS curriculum provides rich and varied experiences. The children relish choosing activities from the wide range on offer in the well-equipped and spacious setting. Weekly physical education and circus skills sessions greatly enhance the children's physical development. The Junior School curriculum has an excellent breadth of subjects, which include critical thinking, French and Latin. The introduction of tablet computers to Year 3 pupils has provided them with excellent access to information and extends the variety of media available for the presentation of work, which is especially appreciated by pupils with particular language and learning needs. In the Senior School the curriculum is of a similarly high standard. Throughout the school, ICT is very strongly rooted in all subjects, allowing pupils to develop and maintain strong, effective skills in this area.

3.13 Pupils feel well served by the guidance given when making their option choices at GCSE and A level, and the school is highly accommodating with regard to individual subject options. Careers guidance is excellent, and pupils are very positive about

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the assistance offered. The school has attained a Career Mark award and promotes effective work-related learning through initiatives such as 'Take Your Daughter to Work Day' and through opportunities to shadow alumnae at higher education institutions. The comprehensive provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very effective in meeting the needs of the pupils.

3.14 A recommendation of the previous inspection was that the school redress imbalances in the junior curriculum and make greater use of the specialist facilities in the Junior School. Inspection evidence showed that this imbalance has been remedied.

3.15 A broad range of extra-curricular provision encourages a sense of adventure and risk taking through outdoor pursuits and expeditions, such as the DofE. Trips, such as a recent visit to Iceland, develop strong global and cultural awareness. Pupils enjoy participating in public speaking competitions, and success has been achieved in several enterprise competitions. Older pupils develop their very good leadership skills through opportunities to organise events, for example a Year 7 disco and a tea party for the elderly. Pupils develop excellent social awareness through involvement with societies such the 'eco' club and Amnesty International. Alongside regular musical performances, dramatic productions and sporting activities, the wide range of activities available are much appreciated by pupils, with most commenting favourably in response to questionnaires on this aspect of school life.

3.16 Links with the community are very strong, and frequent external visitors enrich pupils' access to positive role models and greatly increase their awareness of global issues. Community initiatives such as 'Shine', an outreach programme to develop creative skills for primary pupils in the maintained sector, significantly strengthen pupils' involvement with the wider community.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

3.17 The contribution of teaching is excellent.

3.18 The school thoroughly fulfils its aims to promote academic excellence and nurture a love of learning, with an emphasis on developing independent, enquiring minds. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire a very large majority of pupils agreed that teachers help them to learn and give them the individual attention that they need. A very small minority of pupils felt that they are not given sufficient individual help or an appropriate amount of work to do. Inspection evidence does not support this view.

3.19 At all stages, teachers have high expectations and, particularly in the EYFS, they show a clear understanding of how children learn. In lessons, the majority of teaching observed was excellent and none was unsatisfactory. In both the Senior and the Junior School the teaching is planned with a high degree of care to enable pupils to work confidently and independently. Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subjects and convey this to the pupils with commitment and enthusiasm, which encourages the pupils to adopt similar rigour in their learning. Teaching demonstrates an excellent understanding of the needs of the pupils as individuals, and a range of teaching methods is employed to cater for the variety of abilities and learning styles. Throughout the school, strengths of the teaching are the excellent relationship between pupils and teachers and the extra time given to support the pupils' learning.

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3.20 Full use is made of the excellent library, ensuring that the broad curriculum and pupils' independent learning are further strongly supported. The school's strong emphasis on ICT to enhance learning is much in evidence in the classroom, with particularly effective use of tablet computers to encourage independence and enjoyment in the pupils' approach to their learning. Teaching also makes excellent use of a variety of other techniques, including pupil-led discussions and practical investigation, to further aid pupils' learning and understanding.

3.21 Since the previous inspection the school has implemented a system to closely monitor teaching. This forms part of teachers' professional development. All teachers are expected to observe one another teach and best practice is disseminated through focused training. A recommendation of the previous inspection was that the work set for pupils should take better account of their previous learning. This has been very effectively acted upon and now features significantly in the way in which teachers approach their lessons.

3.22 Regular assessment is made at all stages, with marking and various pupil performance data being used very effectively to plan the next stage of work. This enables the pace of learning to be effectively linked to the individual pupil, and thus allow all pupils to make highly effective progress.

3.23 The school has a clear marking policy that is adhered to across the curriculum. Throughout the school, marking of pupils' work is very positive and thorough. In the best examples of marking, teachers' comments actively encourage the pupils to consider ways of improving their learning and challenge them to develop the application of their knowledge to a higher level. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire a small minority of pupils felt that homework does not help them to learn. Inspection evidence does not support this view: inspectors found that appropriate work was set in the lessons observed. A very large majority of the pupils felt that they are encouraged to do things for themselves and work independently, and this was particularly evident in their EPQ work.

3.24 Support for pupils with SEND is very well monitored, allowing for rapid intervention and support. This holistic approach enables these pupils to achieve well and to make considerable progress. There is very good liaison in the Junior School between support staff and class teachers, ensuring that individual, group and class support in lessons is carefully planned and resourced to meet each pupil's needs. In the Senior School the 'pupil passport' initiative helps to promote the self-esteem of pupils with SEND. Pupils feel that teachers know them well and that their learning needs are fully met. Pupils with particular language needs are identified early and are very well supported. The brisk pace of the teaching and high expectations allow the more able pupils to make excellent progress.

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4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.

4.2 Throughout, the pupils' spiritual development is excellent and fully reflects the school's aim to develop the whole person by building self-esteem and confidence. Pupils' work is well represented in the vibrant displays around the school, in recognition of pupils' efforts and abilities. The pupils are extremely self-aware and, through their conversations with each other and with adults, they demonstrate confidence and emotional maturity beyond their age. Pupils fully embrace the experience of philosophical debate and, as a result, they are strong communicators who relish the chance to share their opinions on an exceptionally wide variety of topics. Pupils value opportunities that enable them to contemplate non-material aspects of life, for example 'mindfulness' assemblies and excellent performances, such as those of the Junior School chamber choir, whose gentle singing creates a sense of peace for all to enjoy.

4.3 The moral development of pupils of all ages is excellent. They have a highly well-developed sense of right and wrong. From the earliest age, they are accepting of the consequences associated with any poor behaviour towards their peers whilst enjoying and being proud of rewards for good behaviour and good work. They recognise the importance of their individual actions and their effect on the community as a whole. The moral awareness of the pupils is very effectively developed through their discussions in lessons and debates in clubs and activities, as well as their contact with excellent visiting speakers, such as those invited into school for the 'BBC News Report Day'. Pupils are very courteous, considerate and well mannered, and listen well to each other's opinions. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, an overwhelming majority of parents felt that the school achieves excellent standards of behaviour.

4.4 Throughout the school the social development of the pupils is excellent; they are wholehearted in their appreciation and understanding of charity days. Pupils have numerous opportunities to accept positions of responsibility and the school is highly proactive in maximising access to these positions throughout the age range. For example, all pupils in Year 6 apply to become prefects with particular areas of responsibility in the Junior School and they are supported very well by form captains in the younger years. In the Senior School, the 'student ambassador' and 'peer mentor' positions are particularly sought after. For the appointment of prefects and head girl, 'hustings' are used to excellent effect, followed by pupil elections, and pupils highly value the whole process. The pupils welcome and respond very positively to any opportunity for competition and the friendly rivalry of the house system is much in evidence.

4.5 The cultural diversity of the school community is highly effective in promoting pupils' cultural development. Pupils feel at ease with each other and exhibit a strong understanding of the cultural differences within their own environment as well as those encountered in the wider world. The cultural development of the pupils is further supported by assemblies, for example about Easter traditions around the world, and by visits to different places of worship in the local area. The pupils also have many opportunities to experience different cultures at first hand, for example through exciting overseas expeditions to the mountains of Borneo or through more local excursions to Chinatown for those learning Mandarin. The high standard of

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music and drama in the school and the generally wide appreciation of the arts are reflected in the pupils' high regard for these pursuits.

4.6 The pupils experience an excellent standard of personal development during their time at the school.

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

4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.

4.8 In both the Junior and the Senior School, organised pastoral structures and staff commitment to pupils' welfare ensure that excellent support and guidance are given to pupils of all ages, in accordance with the school's aims. Active and regular monitoring enables identification of any concerns and facilitates effective early intervention.

4.9 The overwhelming majority of parents feel that the school achieves good standards of behaviour and that their children are well looked after. In the EYFS, the staff understand the children extremely well, and help them to learn to be independent and manage their own personal needs. In Years 1 to 6, relationships between class teachers and pupils are excellent, ensuring a supportive environment. The 'Buddy Group' system links pupils of different ages in groups with a teacher, and supports the highly caring and inclusive community. Sensitively planned PSHE lessons enable pupils to explore their emotions with reason and logical thought. In the EYFS, resilience is routinely reinforced.

4.10 In the Senior School, the peer mentor system is proactive and effective in strengthening the sense of community and promoting a culture of care for others. Through excellent relationships, pupils feel confident that staff have their welfare and best interests at heart and they appreciate the support and guidance available. Pupils know who they can turn to if they have any concerns and they comment favourably on the excellent camaraderie fostered by the school's positive ethos.

4.11 A minority of pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire felt that the school does not ask for or respond to their opinions, that the sanctions and rewards that teachers give are not always fair and that not all teachers show concern for them as individuals. In each case inspection evidence did not substantiate these concerns. In the Senior School, annual pupil surveys for Years 7 to 13 and the school council provide excellent and effective mechanisms for the pupil voice to be heard. Changes such as introducing 'mindfulness' and the refurbishment of the dining hall confirm that pupils' opinions are sought and are responded to. In interviews, pupils reported that their views are sought by the school and that they feel listened to. A well-established system of rewards was found to be much valued by pupils.

4.12 Healthy eating habits and exercise are promoted through the comprehensive PSHE programme and through the provision of a wide range of activities related to health and fitness. In the Junior School pupils are encouraged to eat healthily, and fruit and juices are provided at break, lunch and after-school clubs. In the Senior School the pupils speak highly of the quality and wide choice of food available.

4.13 The school has effective plans in place to improve educational and physical access for pupils with SEND.

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

4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent**.**

4.15 The school gives the highest priority to the need to safeguard pupils' welfare, and in accordance with its aims provides a broad, all-round education in a safe environment.

4.16 Safeguarding procedures are robust, comprehensive and applied very effectively, closely following official guidance. The school has a designated child protection officer, and all members of staff receive appropriate child protection training. Guidance for safer recruitment is very carefully followed. Detailed records are kept of any safeguarding issues. Staff are aware of the requirements for child protection and day-to-day implementation is excellent. A small number of concerns about bullying were raised in responses to the pupil and parent questionnaires. Inspectors found that reported incidents are effectively and appropriately addressed by the school. In a few areas, whilst practice was appropriate, written policies were found not to reflect the most recent regulatory requirements. However, the school acted quickly to update its policies so that by the end of the inspection the identified shortcomings had been rectified.

4.17 Measures to minimise the risk of fire and other hazards are stringently applied. Regular fire drills are carried out, and the school keeps detailed records of all evacuation drills. Risk assessments are carried out rigorously for all activities taking place either on the school premises or off site. The school has a highly effective system in place for identifying and supporting pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

4.18 The health and safety policy is clear and detailed, as is all related documentation. Safety protocols in laboratories and workshops are observed scrupulously. Staff awareness of health and safety matters is high, reinforced by the GDST health and safety handbook. In questionnaire responses, pupils commented upon the poor state of sanitation in some toilets. During the inspection, toilet facilities were seen to be hygienically maintained. Some parents commented on the school's slowness of response to their concerns but this view was also not supported by school records viewed on inspection. The overwhelming majority of parents and pupils indicated in questionnaire responses that pupils feel safe at school.

4.19 The school's arrangements for the care of any pupil who is taken ill or sustains an injury are suitably robust. Most members of the teaching staff and all relevant support staff receive regular first-aid training, which is co-ordinated by the school nurse. High levels of paediatric first-aid training are provided to appropriate staff in the Junior School.

4.20 Registration of pupils in the morning and afternoon is carried out thoroughly. Any unexpected absences are followed up promptly and effectively. The school's admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored for the preceding three years.

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5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.

5.2 Governance provides a very effective oversight of the school, ensuring that its aims are strongly maintained throughout all sections. The Council of the GDST, together with its executive officers, provides excellent direction, support and impetus to ensure that the school provides an excellent education for the pupils in its care. Regular contact and reports allow the Council to monitor and evaluate standards and to inform planning and development. Investment in resources, buildings and staff ensures that all sections of the school are able to deliver education and care of a high quality.

5.3 The GDST executive provides excellent oversight of the EYFS through regular reports and external moderation of the EYFS Profile by the local authority. Governance effectively discharges its responsibility for the oversight of child protection, welfare, health and safety. An annual review of the school's arrangements for safeguarding is conducted by the GDST.

5.4 The local SGB provides support for the head and the senior leadership team and contributes significantly to the school's success. The added level of oversight provided by this enthusiastic and diversely experienced group is influential and effective. The SGB uses its astute, in-depth knowledge of individuals to provide the school with judicious counsel. Visits to the school by individual members of the SGB are frequent, and are used both to support the staff and the senior leadership team and to ensure that the SGB has a secure and informed knowledge of the workings of the school.

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

5.5 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.

5.6 The senior leadership team discharges its duties with a high degree of commitment to the school's aim to promote academic excellence; to nurture a love of high level learning and to value pupils' individual needs. As a whole, the team is strong and mutually supportive. It functions as a cohesive unit, effectively monitoring implementation of the school's development planning, whilst remaining alert to new educational initiatives and their relevance to the school and benefit to the pupils. In their questionnaire responses, parents expressed confidence that the school is well led and managed and that they would recommend it to other parents.

5.7 The senior leadership team devises and implements whole-school policies to ensure that they best serve the pupils. Scrutiny of evidence prior to the inspection showed that in a few cases administration and monitoring had not been sufficiently rigorous to ensure that all written policies reflected the most recent regulatory requirements. By the end of the inspection the identified shortcomings had been rectified so that all policies complied with requirements.

5.8 Leadership provides excellent, clear educational direction, with specific areas of responsibility delegated in the Junior School to the EYFS, Years 1 and 2, and Years

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3 to 6, and in the Senior School to heads of faculty. Regular, efficient monitoring of standards includes work scrutiny and lesson observations, and staff meetings regularly feature discussion of teaching and learning. The effectiveness of the approaches used has enabled the school to maintain the high quality of pupils' education and personal development.

5.9 The process of self-evaluation is supported by annual updating and auditing of the development plan, which enables appropriate priorities to be identified and set. Changes to the parents' website portal are an example of recent improvements resulting from the review process to which staff, pupils and parents are encouraged to contribute.

5.10 A well-understood management structure has been established within the school. The staff appraisal system is highly effective, with peer observation playing an integral part in professional development. The school provides specific leadership training through a development programme for middle leadership and the staff welcome this opportunity to develop their skills.

5.11 Management is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating high quality staff and ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the pupils' needs, including safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. Newly appointed staff undergo a thorough induction programme. All required checks on governors, trustees, staff and volunteers are carried out and suitable records are diligently maintained.

5.12 Senior management ensures that the children in the EYFS are well cared for in a secure environment. Managers appraise and closely supervise EYFS staff and there is ready access to resources for professional development. Self-evaluation enables all EYFS staff to be involved in formulating clear, ambitious priorities for the setting and to contribute to its development plan.

5.13 Throughout, links with parents are excellent and firmly support the school's aims. Parents expressed a high level of satisfaction with the education provided by the school, citing as particular strengths the range of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to all pupils, the availability and approachability of staff, and standards of behaviour.

5.14 A very wide range of opportunities is available for parents to participate in the life of the school. An active parent teacher association supports the school through networking, fund raising and arranging a variety of social events for parents and pupils, and the school greatly values its hard work and dedication. In the EYFS, parents are given many opportunities to be actively involved in their children's learning. In the Junior School, parents are invited to give talks to support topic work and to run activities, such as the Spanish and puppetry clubs. In the Senior School, parents contribute by offering opportunities for work experience or by giving career-related presentations to pupils. Parents are also encouraged to attend sporting events, concerts and dramatic productions, and many take part in the school's charitable fund-raising activities. They also take advantage of the regular information and consultation evenings, such as key educational stage forums and transition meetings, and presentations on issues such as e-safety, and drugs and alcohol. The school has an appropriate complaints procedure that is efficiently implemented. The school's response to parents' concerns is appropriate and effective.

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5.15 Parents receive a large amount of high quality information about the school's life and work through the dedicated online parent portal, social media sites and the weekly newsletter, *HighLife.* In pre-inspection questionnaire responses, the overwhelming majority of parents indicated that they are satisfied with the availability of information provided by the school.

5.16 Information for the parents of pupils joining the school is fully comprehensive and detailed, and the parents of current pupils greatly appreciate the ease with which they are able to communicate with the school, for example through direct email access to academic and pastoral staff. The school also contacts parents by email and text message. In addition, the parents of those in Years 1 to 13 receive grade cards or full reports twice a term, the latter providing clear, detailed information about their children's progress, as well as excellent suggestions and strategies for improvement.

5.17 In the EYFS, parents have daily opportunities to discuss progress with staff. Parents particularly appreciate the ability to share in their children's achievements by contributing to the blog, which provides opportunities for an effective two-way dialogue. Parents are informed of their children's progress through regular parents' evenings, an information evening and written reports. In responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost all parents indicated a high level of satisfaction with all aspects of the EYFS.

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

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