

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Wykeham House School

Full Name of the School	<b>Wykeham House School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>850/6053</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>307339</b>
Address	<b>East Street, Fareham, Hampshire PO16 0BW.</b>
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Email Address	<b>office@wykehamhouse.hants.sch.uk</b>
Headmistress	<b>Mrs Lynn Clarke</b>
Chairman of Trustees	<b>Mr Paul Jones</b>
Age Range	<b>2 years 9 months to 16 years</b>
Gender	<b>Girls</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2007</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 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 Wykeham House is an independent school for girls aged from 2 years 9 months to 16 years. It was founded in 1913, moving into a Georgian house on the High Street in 1928, within the Fareham Conservation Area. Outgrowing these facilities after 58 years, the school relocated into a larger Georgian building nearby, still within the Conservation Area, close to the centre of Fareham. The present headmistress was appointed in September 2006.
- 1.2 The motto of Wykeham House School is 'Vouloir C'est Pouvoir': this is given a modern interpretation in the new school prospectus as 'A school where success is realised'. The headmistress recently wrote in the local newspaper that 'Wykeham House's concept of education extends beyond the classroom, with the aim of developing self confident, self disciplined and motivated girls'. It aims to achieve academic success for each girl, whatever her ability. The school further seeks to use small classes to promote real progress, to ensure that, although academic work is seen as important, education goes beyond the classroom. Staff seek to enable frequent opportunities for girls to participate in and enjoy music, drama, sport and out door pursuits. There is emphasis on courtesy and concern for others, with encouragement for girls to take an active part in charitable work, both in the local community and further afield. The school is keen to ensure that teaching methods combine modern technology with traditional rigour.
- 1.3 Improvements to the existing site since the last inspection, have seen the redevelopment of the school hall and the addition of three new classrooms, along with major internal changes and the updating of building fabric. The school is currently organised into four sections: Foundation Stage for girls from rising 3 to 5 years, infants for girls aged from 5 to 7 years, juniors for girls aged from 7 to 11 years and seniors for girls aged from 11 to 16 years. The infant and junior classes are referred to as the junior school. At the time of the inspection, 228 girls were on the school roll, 14 in the Foundation Stage, 15 in the Infants, 81 in the Juniors and 118 girls in the Seniors. Eight of the Nursery pupils attend part- time.
- 1.4 The majority of girls come from middle-class professional families, residing within the area around Fareham, Portsmouth and Southampton: others live in Southsea, Havant, Emsworth, and Hayling Island. Most girls start at school in the Nursery, but they may enter at any stage. After an initial assessment, including a report from the previous school, if relevant, a place is offered if it is thought that a girl's educational and other needs can be met. There are two girls with statements of special educational needs, and a few others have been identified as requiring extra provision for specific learning disabilities.
- 1.5 The girls' average ability is broadly in line with the national average, both when they enter the school into the Foundation Stage, and for those that join the school later. If the girls are performing in line with their abilities their results in national examinations will be broadly in line with the average for all maintained secondary schools.

- 1.6 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) equivalences are shown in the following tables.

***Junior School***

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception
Infant 1	Year 1
Infant 2	Year 2
Junior 1	Year 3
Junior 2	Year 4
Junior 3	Year 5
Junior 4	Year 6

***Senior School***

School	NC name
Form I	Year 7
Form II	Year 8
Form III	Year 9
Form IV	Year 10
Form V	Year 11

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

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The school provides a good range of educational opportunities: these are well suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of the girls. Wykeham House successfully meets its aims. The school's philosophy emphasises the desire to engage girls in many different aspects of life.
- 2.2 The curriculum is broadly based, planned appropriately and provides equal opportunity for all. It ensures that girls' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social, physical and aesthetic development are all provided for. The provision for supporting the acquisition of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy is good.
- 2.3 The Foundation Stage follows the Early Learning Goals. In Years 1 to 6, all the subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, with the addition of French. This pattern continues into the senior school, where each pupil is guided in her choices before preparing for a considerable number of GCSE examinations.
- 2.4 Since the last inspection, substantial improvements have been made to the arrangements for information and communication technology (ICT). The development of the ICT curriculum now includes, for example, mastering the keyboard in lessons. There is a popular and appropriately named 'Fun-keys' after-school computer activity club. Nonetheless, the technology is used inconsistently across the curriculum, because some subjects make only limited use of the two well-resourced ICT suites. The equipment is, however, used very well by some departments. For example, in the Reception class, control software was used to replicate and develop the concept of 'forwards and backwards' identified earlier in the day during a physical education (PE) lesson. Year 11 girls, preparing their GCSE textiles coursework, make very good use of design and publishing software as part of the process of developing their design folders.
- 2.5 Aesthetic and creative development is promoted successfully through art, textiles, performance drama and music. Much two- and three-dimensional art and textile work of outstanding quality is on display around the school. However, there is very limited opportunity for older girls to work with resistant materials. Opportunities to develop musical skills and knowledge, especially in small and large group performances, are also not well developed. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is provided successfully to every age group. Work experience is provided for all girls at the end of Year 10.
- 2.6 A sound range of optional extra-curricular clubs and activities is available to girls in the lunch break and after school. Many of these, for example speech and drama, where girls prepare for external examinations, are well supported. A high proportion of girls in the senior school participate in The Duke of Edinburgh Award's scheme. This successfully involves them in work in the community and in the development of a chosen sport. They also practise for, and undertake, an overnight expedition.
- 2.7 The girls' educational experiences are enhanced by links with the local community. The local farmers' cooperative provides workshops on the production of fresh food; talks by professional people in the area enrich girls' learning in many areas of the curriculum. Visits, such as one to the local magistrates' court, add depth to girls' understanding of their community.
- 2.8 Due attention is given to preparing pupils for the next stage of education, and for adult life. Excellent systems are in place to support girls in their transition to Year 12 and 13 education, wherever that takes place. Girls in Years 9 to 11 are invited to the annual presentation

evenings, where the courses on offer at the many local sixth form schools and colleges may be compared. Girls speak highly of these opportunities and also report positively on the careers guidance available to them at Wykeham House.

- 2.9 Most girls transfer from the junior to the senior section of the school at the appropriate time. This transition is well managed, and includes an induction day in the senior school.
- 2.10 The curriculum has recently been revised and has been planned effectively by an appropriate committee made up of the headmistress, deputy headmistress, heads of the senior and junior departments and the heads of each faculty. However, systems are not yet in place to keep the curriculum monitored fully and or under sufficiently regular review. This means that heads of faculty do not have a sufficiently detailed knowledge of practice in their departments.
- 2.11 The curriculum provides well for all girls and each one, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, has full access to it. Girls who have a statement of special educational needs are well supported. The school has additionally identified a number of girls who require special provision: these receive well judged help in the classroom from the teacher or from an assistant.
- 2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.13 Girls attending Wykeham House are well educated, a key element of its aims and philosophy. At all stages, they are securely and appropriately grounded in knowledge and understanding in the subjects provided by the school. They can apply their skills, and can think and act both critically and creatively. Sound progress has been made since the last inspection, developing the range and quality of achievements. Overall, learning and achievement are good.
- 2.14 The girls achieve high academic standards, are successful in their external examinations and develop confidence, self-discipline and high motivation. The high standards reported on at the last inspection have been maintained.
- 2.15 Girls are thoughtful and articulate. They are able to reason, to argue cogently and to consider issues from a fresh perspective as, for instance, when asked in lessons to consider the purpose of the work they are undertaking.
- 2.16 Pupils' attainment in GCSE examinations is high in relation to their ability. Results in the last three years for which national comparative data was available at the time of the inspection were well above the average for girls in maintained schools. Standardised measurements of progress indicate that progress to GCSE is above national norms.
- 2.17 Levels of attainment seen in the school are at least good: in lessons observed, almost two thirds were judged to be good or outstanding in terms of learning and achievement. This judgment reinforces the evidence of an upward trend in GCSE results over a 5 year period and represents a significant improvement since the last inspection.
- 2.18 There are no significant differences in the relative attainment of different groups of girls, subjects or curriculum areas. Girls at all stages and of all abilities achieve standards of competence that are at the very least in line with, and usually above or well above, those expected of their ages and abilities.
- 2.19 The school achieves creditable success in other spheres, most notably in speech and drama. In 2006, 75 out of 91 candidates achieved honours or distinction in the externally

administrated examinations for which they were entered. Particularly conspicuous success was gained by the two girls who scored the highest marks in the country in the Junior Medal in these examinations. A gold medal was won in the Latin reading competition; the school was a national finalist in the St John's First Aid competition, eventually placed third and were local winners and regional runners up in the Rotary Club 'Youth Speaks' competition.

- 2.20 Individual and group achievement in The Duke of Edinburgh Award's scheme is good, with 18 out of 29 girls in last year's Year 11 participating: all have achieved their Bronze award. In drama, too, group achievement is evident, with 81 trophies having been won in the Fareham Drama Festival over the past three years, including both Junior and Senior *Victor Ludorum* in 2007. Many girls at the school have used their talents in the community, for example winning scholarships to the English Youth Ballet for a performance of *Sleeping Beauty* and by taking part in the production of *Music Man*, by Fareham's Musical Society.
- 2.21 The school succeeds in its aim to provide academic success for all its girls. This success is fostered in no small part by the girls' enthusiasm and keenness to learn. This is, in turn, reinforced by the very positive relationships that exist between girls and their teachers.
- 2.22 Girls at Wykeham House listen effectively to their teachers and to one another. They read carefully and write fluently. They develop very good listening, reading and writing skills. They speak fluently, using a wide vocabulary. Nearly all reason and argue cogently, demonstrating in class and in conversation that they think for themselves and are very articulate.
- 2.23 Skills in numeracy are also well developed, as for example in a Year 6 class where girls applied their mathematical knowledge effectively when simplifying fractions such as  $\frac{24}{36}$  to  $\frac{2}{3}$ . Most make good use of information, communication and control technology to support their learning. In many lessons, girls showed that they study and work effectively both on their own and co-operatively, working in groups. Without fail, they settle quickly to their work and apply themselves diligently.
- 2.24 Their study skills are somewhat less well developed: effective note taking and independent organization of their work were abilities that were not as evident as their other aptitudes.

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

- 2.25 Wykeham House School is successful in its aim to produce confident, self-disciplined and motivated girls. Emphasis is also placed on courtesy and concern for others. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the girls is good: social and moral development are particular strengths of the school. There has been steady improvement since the last inspection, especially in the development of roles and responsibilities to which the girls can aspire within the school.
- 2.26 Spiritual development is good. Older girls were seen having a discussion about spirituality when working in pairs to discuss the topic 'Was Jesus the Son of God?'. Work in art and textiles on display around the school further reflected the work on spirituality. Assemblies contribute well to spiritual development, both in their religious nature, and through the opportunities given to girls for reflection and quiet thought. In discussions in lessons and at lunchtime, it is clear that girls have a good understanding of how other human beings feel, and how that impacted on their own sense of well being. Thus through the curriculum and through other school activities, girls acquire a sense of identity and self-worth, as well as developing personal insight. As they mature, they learn more about human values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and about the way in which they can and do affect other

- peoples' lives. The positive relationships at Wykeham House enhance the girls' confidence and thus they have a well balanced sense of their own identity.
- 2.27 Girls have a clear and strong sense of right and wrong. Codes of conduct are displayed in classrooms: the adults in the school provide good role models for personal behaviour. Within their own form groups, girls are given the opportunity to take on roles of responsibility, for example form captain, vice captain, council representatives and monitors.
- 2.28 The girls are almost always at ease with adults: they are helpful and caring towards each other. In the playground, girls include less confident peers in a sensitive and thoughtful way. Frequently senior girls help to take care of the younger girls. Recently, the school has undertaken a new initiative of peer mentoring as a result of a suggestion by a girl in the school and a parent has assisted in its implementation. The early signs are promising. During lunchtimes, the girls from the junior school helped the infants choose books, and some were seen enjoying reading stories to individuals or small groups.
- 2.29 During lessons, in the playground, in the lunch hall and in their movement around the school the girls are well behaved, courteous and helpful. At lunchtime, behaviour is unfailingly polite and supportive. It demonstrates a real understanding of the impact their behaviour has on others.
- 2.30 Behavioural issues are dealt with in a positive way by teachers: this means that girls learn to take responsibility for their actions from an early age. Parents comment very positively about the success of the school's behaviour policy.
- 2.31 A thorough and effective scheme of work for PSHE underpins the development of social and emotional confidence, self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. The programme is developed to build on skills year upon year and to provide cross curricular links. This is achieved through role play, discussion, circle time and written work. For example, a Year 3 class had completed work on 'Feelings' to help develop self-awareness. The girls are encouraged to feel proud of themselves, their achievements and the work they do. Each girl has a Record of Achievement which contains lists of their awards, posts of responsibility and a record of their outings and favourite pieces of work. The girls report that this provides the opportunity for them to remember and celebrate their successes and achievements.
- 2.32 Girls acquire an appreciation of their own culture, and learn to respect other cultures. Outings within the local community, links with the church and contributing to events in the town of Fareham all support this learning. The school promotes tolerance and understanding of different cultures through its involvement with local, national and international charities. The girls are currently involved in raising money to support orphanages in Zambia and they are learning about the issues connected with Fair Trade.
- 2.33 Through religious studies, art, geography and literature, the girls develop awareness and understanding of different faiths and beliefs. In a religious studies lesson, the younger girls learnt about different faiths and their festivals. Classes have also made visits to local churches and a Hindu Temple.
- 2.34 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.35 The quality of teaching is good and some is excellent. Throughout the school the carefully planned and thorough teaching combines with small class sizes and good relationships between the girls and the staff to promote the girls' learning well. This helps them achieve high standards, and fulfils the aims of the school. It also ensures that girls generally fulfil their potential appropriately. Teaching has improved further since the last inspection.
- 2.36 Teaching enables the girls of all ages and abilities, to acquire new knowledge, make good progress, increase their understanding and develop their skills. The girls are encouraged to be motivated, work hard, and to focus on achieving high standards.
- 2.37 Relationships between the teachers and the girls are excellent and the teaching encourages the girls to behave responsibly. They have the confidence and ability to articulate their thoughts and knowledge when given the opportunity, because they feel secure with the teachers. In the best lessons teachers posed challenging questions and tasks, which were open ended and well matched to the girls' previous achievements. Examples of this included a Year 6 science lesson to construct a framework to hold an egg, and a Year 11 English lesson where girls were contrasting poems in preparation for coursework. In a Year 7 religious studies lesson, the girls responded with enjoyment and creativity to a well planned and implemented lesson enacting a Chinese creation myth. All these lessons allowed the girls to reflect, think critically, and analyse material.
- 2.38 In a small number of lessons in both senior and junior schools, teaching is too dependent upon adult input and direction, consequently providing insufficient challenge. In these lessons, the girls are being required to produce too great a volume of information or text without sufficient analysis or commentary. This emphasis on writing limits the opportunities for the girls to think about the subject matter being taught.
- 2.39 In both senior and junior schools, teachers know their girls very well and often use this knowledge to shape their teaching to suit the girls' strengths and needs. For example, a lesson planned and implemented using small programmable robots arose out of the Reception girls' responses to an earlier PE lesson.
- 2.40 Sometimes however, the high achieving girls require more challenging work to encourage them to take intellectual risks. The girls rise to this level of challenge when it is offered, for example in Year 11 geography when discussing the quality of life and standard of living, and in a history lesson for Year 8 on the Medicis when girls initiated questions involving hypothetical answers.
- 2.41 Teachers clearly know a great deal about the subjects which they teach. The use of some senior school staff in the junior school has the advantage of introducing the girls to these specialist teachers, as well as easing their transfer into the senior school at Year 7. The additional help provided by the learning support teacher is well judged and matched to the needs of the girls.
- 2.42 Teachers use a wide range of resources, for example the excellent pack of World War 2 memorabilia used with Year 6. Interactive whiteboards are effectively used in many lessons to support the teaching. The library, located centrally in the senior school, is well stocked and maintained, and managed very efficiently; this supports both teachers and girls.
- 2.43 Marking and assessment is regular, but does not always make it clear to girls how to improve their work. In a few cases in both sections of the school, the marking is insufficiently annotated with written comments. The marking is however supplemented by oral comments

from the teachers during lessons, which are by their nature unrecorded. Throughout the school, girls understand the marking and grading systems. Girls sometimes set targets for themselves under the guidance of their teachers, but these goals are not pursued to completion in all subjects.

- 2.44 Results of examinations and report grades are now recorded using a commercially produced data management system. It can then be used by staff to recall and monitor a girl's progress against the school's aims. This allows teachers to track both attainment and progress more effectively: for some teachers this is working well. This represents an important improvement since the last inspection. However, some teachers lack confidence in the use of the system and the wealth of information it produces. For example, they do not always see how analysis of past assessments can be used to plan teaching and refine lesson planning.
- 2.45 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils**

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care, and the welfare, health and safety of girls are good. Pastoral care is excellent, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school is very successful in meeting its aims, which are central to its ethos.
- 3.2 A large majority of girls confirm that their form tutors provide effective support and guidance. Comments on a small number of pupil questionnaires indicated that they did not feel this to be the case, but no further evidence to support this opinion was found.
- 3.3 The school operates a very effective system of pastoral care which is overseen diligently by the deputy headmistress. She is well supported by the head of senior school, the head of junior school and the form tutors. Trustees also work with the staff to support when necessary. Documents such as the staff handbook and the teaching and learning register inform staff of the guidelines, and provide relevant and useful information which helps to underpin the system.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between the staff and girls, and amongst the girls themselves, is excellent. A small number of girls expressed views to the contrary, but all further evidence suggests relationships are strong and positive. The role of the pastoral staff in helping girls with learning needs is effective and valued.
- 3.5 The conduct of the girls is exemplary. The policies, guidelines and procedures which the school has put in place are successful in promoting this good behaviour. This is supported by the staff and older girls acting as good role models for the younger girls. Procedures and policies are also in place to deal with incidents of harassment and bullying should they occur.
- 3.6 The admissions register and the daily attendance registered are maintained competently and correctly. Attendance is very good. The school has designated the headmistress, deputy headmistress and a trustee to be their child protection officers and all the measures are in place and secure. Through lessons, displays and excellent school lunches, the school encourages and promotes a healthy lifestyle.
- 3.7 The school has an efficient system for ensuring that risk assessments are completed and this routine is overseen by the deputy headmistress, in consultation with the bursar. Six members of staff are trained first-aiders and there is a clear system in place for informing staff, parents and carers should there be an accident or illness. A medical room is located near the offices and medical boxes are also located around the school.
- 3.8 The school provides a safe environment and the bursar is diligent in ensuring that the health and safety arrangements are effective and that the school has due regard for the health and safety requirements. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. However, the issue of traffic management, referred to in the last inspection, regarding congestion as parents deliver and collect their girls continues to be under review. There are proposals to create a pathway and implement a system to improve traffic flow.
- 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 quality of links with parents and the community is good. The school has maintained a high standard of contact and communication with parents. Its aim to help girls take an active part in the community, both local and international is met well.
- 3.11 There is a good partnership with parents and worthwhile links with the community. Parents regularly receive information about what is happening at the school through the 'Wykeham House Times' and the school's calendar. They receive information about their child's work and progress, through reports and parents' evenings, and particularly through the school newsletter. Reports, though regular, sometimes tend to emphasise what has been done instead of what has been learnt. Whilst generally informative, few include constructive comments for improving future progress.
- 3.12 From the analysis of parental questionnaires, most parents are very happy with the quality of education that the school offers. The main issues that were highlighted by the analysis have been addressed by the school. The recent introduction of a 'record of concern' form is an effective response and should allow for concerns brought up by parents to be better handled by the school. Complaints are handled with due care and sensitivity, although they are rare.
- 3.13 The school has a new prospectus which is of good quality and has relevant new information as additional sheets in the back. The recently created website is not being updated sufficiently frequently for it to be of full benefit to the school, parents, girls and the community alike.
- 3.14 The school adopts an open door policy and parents are encouraged to come and speak or make appointments to see the headmistress or senior staff. A request can also be made to obtain an appointment with one of the trustees via the school office where letters addressed to the trustees may be left.
- 3.15 Parents can get involved with extra-curricular activities if they wish to do so and the school has put on lessons for parents to attend. For example the adult 'Fun-keys' computer club is well attended. A PSHE lesson on the effects of stress took place for parents, prior to the annual general meeting of the parents' association.
- 3.16 There is a strong parents' association. It is a thriving organisation that has organised many events to raise money for the school through quiz nights, hog roasts, "pampering" night and Christmas Fayres. Parents can contact committee members of the Wykeham House Independent School Parents Association by leaving letters for them in a box in the reception area.
- 3.17 Links with the local and wider community are strong, forged through sporting fixtures, musical events and charitable deeds. The girls sing at the local church and old people's homes at Christmas time. They have sports fixtures throughout the year with other local schools. The school has a strong charitable tradition making donations to charities at home and abroad. In the past they have given to UK charities like the Brittle Bones Society and the school's current charity is an Aids orphanage in Zambia. The school has also recently set up a partnership with a local junior school through the independent/state school partnership fund. This is in order to share good practice and resources in the areas of creative arts, sport and the challenging of gifted and talented pupils.
- 3.18 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good. Since the last inspection, changes in the structure of the board of trustees and its sub- committees has improved the way in which they are able to oversee the school. The appointment of a curriculum trustee has strengthened an already strong team. There are four subcommittees which appropriately focus on marketing, finance and general purposes, curriculum, and staff liaison and health and safety. Each subcommittee has responsibilities for different areas of the school and reports back to the full board of trustees.
- 4.2 The board and each of the subcommittees meet at appropriate intervals, once a term. A member of the curriculum and staff liaison committee has already visited the Foundation Stage of the school this year: all the members of the curriculum and staff liaison committee have visited at least one area of the school and watched a lesson. Visits to other departments have been set up for later in the term.
- 4.3 There is good financial planning by the trustees. In the last six months a large investment has been made in the purchase of computer equipment, the refurbishment of the main corridor on the ground floor and the restructuring of the Foundation Stage area.
- 4.4 Relationships between staff and trustees are very good. A member of the trustees regularly comes into the staffroom and is available for staff to talk to. Similarly members of staff have been invited to make presentations to either the subcommittees or to the board of trustees, in order to keep them up to date, for example the presentation given to the curriculum and staff liaison committee by the head of science on the current delivery of science and the international GCSE. Trustees have a very good working knowledge of the school, visit regularly and are generally well known to staff.
- 4.5 There is now a rolling programme of reviewing school policies, with the first set having been ratified by the trustees during the last academic year.

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

- 4.6 There is clear educational direction and leadership provided by the recently appointed headmistress. She is well supported by the deputy headmistress, the bursar, the two heads of school, and the heads of faculty. This is reflected in the overall ethos of the school, in the high quality of education provided, in the good care taken of the girls, and in the fulfilment of the school's aims. There has been further improvement since the last inspection, as the role and impact of the leadership team has been developed.
- 4.7 The headmistress and her team have identified appropriate areas for development. These have been communicated to all staff through regular formal meetings, consultation exercises and many informal meetings, so that all are involved in and informed about the planned development of the school.
- 4.8 The headmistress has been effective in analysing the school's needs and in setting sensible and achievable targets. There is a general and agreed awareness of shortcomings. For example, the development and review of policies has been driven by the careful prioritisation of the importance of each policy to the school. Planning to meet these priorities is carried out by the senior leadership team and the heads of faculty. This process means that the school is gradually introducing more rigour into the process of monitoring and evaluating, but there is

- still some way to go. For example, heads of faculty worked recently on developing a marking policy within their groups, then looked at a selection of girls' books. They spoke to the girls about the marking systems, in order to assess the general level of understanding of these but the impact of this process is not yet seen in all subjects, because monitoring has not been uniformly effective.
- 4.9 Management at all levels is effective in drawing up procedures and policies. An appropriate range of policies is in place: this guides the educational and personal experience and activities of the girls, and provides for the welfare, health and safety of the girls.
- 4.10 Heads of faculty and departments do not currently have sufficient opportunities to monitor the implementation of policies nor to evaluate regularly the effectiveness of their departments or faculties, the quality of teaching and learning and the standards achieved. Consequently good practice is not always disseminated.
- 4.11 The school has recruited teachers of high quality, who have suitable qualifications and experience. Child protection checks are carried out in accordance with requirements. Appraisal of the staff has not been taking place until very recently: a performance management system is now in place, and the headmistress has gone through the process already. The formal identification of staff training needs is currently underdeveloped. The lack of a system of lesson/peer observation means that the dissemination of good practice amongst teachers, for example in the use of integrated ICT, is not as effective as it could be.
- 4.12 The school does participate in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers, but does not have any teachers on the scheme at present.
- 4.13 Finances are very well managed by the school trustees, working closely with the headmistress and the bursar. Resources are made available sensibly to meet the needs of the girls and the staff. The high quality of maintenance of the school's buildings ensures an attractive and stimulating environment for all who study and work there. For example, the gardens are very well maintained, and the decoration of the younger girls' cloakroom is delightful. Classrooms are bright and cheerful, with good displays that support teaching and learning.
- 4.14 The administration of the school is cheerful, effective and efficient. Administrative, catering, maintenance and other support staff contribute significantly to the ethos of the school. The positive relationships they have with one another, with the girls, and with the parents, uphold and further the aims of the school. All contribute to the friendly family feel of Wykeham House, which all appreciate.
- 4.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.16 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 Wykeham House is successful in meeting its aims. The girls achieve good standards and are effective learners. The pastoral care provided is outstanding: the staff really know the girls well. The girls are courteous, caring and hard-working, whilst retaining a sense of fun. They are a credit to the school. Teaching is good overall and some is excellent. In some lessons, there is too much emphasis on writing, and not enough on thinking. The school is very well led by the headmistress and the senior leadership team. The school staff are very dedicated. Currently there are too few opportunities for staff with management roles to monitor the curriculum, standards and the quality of teaching. Assessment is not used consistently to plan the next stage of learning.
- 5.2 Progress since the last ISI inspection has been good. A more coherent approach to the collection and management of assessment data has been introduced. However, not all teachers fully understand the role and uses of assessment in planning for the future learning of the girls. The health and safety of the girls and staff are tightly monitored and controlled. The role of the curriculum leaders has been further developed, although the impact is not uniform, because of limited opportunities for some heads of faculty and department to monitor teaching and learning. The school is well aware of its strengths and the areas that could be improved further. The senior leadership team is involved in planning to make these further improvements. Progress since the last Ofsted Nursery inspection has been sound. Changes have been made in the way the provision is managed which meet most previous recommendations, and have also enhanced the capacity for further improvement.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 In order to build further on the strengths of the school, it should do the following:
1. extend the opportunities for heads of faculty and heads of department to contribute to the monitoring of standards in the school, including through lesson observations;
  2. establish better understanding of the role of recorded assessment and its use in planning;
  3. promote teaching techniques that involve the girls in work other than writing, and that encourage thinking skills, including reflective thinking.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2007. The inspectors examined samples of the pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a wide range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr Mark Evans	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Susan Barnes	Former Headteacher, ISA school
Mr Laurence Fleck	Head of English, GSA school
Mrs Rowena Morgan	Senior Teacher, GSA school
Mr Nicholas Park	Deputy Headteacher, IAPS school
Miss Bridget O'Connor	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Val Weakley	Deputy Headteacher, ISA school