

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Woldingham School

Full Name of the School	Woldingham School
DCSF Number	936/6111
Registered Charity Number	291258
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Chairman of Governors	Mr Richard Stone
Age Range	11 to 18
Gender	Girls
Inspection Dates	19th to 22nd November 2007

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills 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 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 Woldingham School is a boarding and day school for girls aged 11 to 18. It was founded in 1842 as a Convent of the Sacred Heart Foundation and was transferred to lay management in 1985. The school's assets are wholly owned by the Sacred Heart Foundation, but the strategic direction and governance of the school is delegated fully to a board of governors. Trustees of the society are represented on the governing body. The current headmistress joined the school in September 2007.
- 1.2 Woldingham School aims to be a caring and supportive Christian community in which girls are happy, confident and inspired to meet challenges and achieve excellence in whatever they choose to do, according to their ability. The intention is to encourage girls to become independent, enquiring young women, who forge lasting relationships, achieve academic success and become positive influences in the world.
- 1.3 A late Victorian mansion forms the centre piece of Woldingham School, which is situated south of London, within its own 700 acre grounds. All the school buildings, including accommodation for boarders and sporting facilities, are together on one site. The school was last inspected by ISI in 2001. Since this last inspection, the school has benefited from various improvements in boarding accommodation, including a new, purpose-built Year 13 boarding house.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection 478 girls were on the roll; 325 in Years 7 to 11 and 153 in the sixth form. Just over two-thirds of the pupils board. These figures are slightly lower than when the school was last inspected six years ago, but not significantly so. Sixth form numbers have increased, as has the number of pupils entering the school in Year 9. The majority of girls are of white British background, but currently a quarter come from other ethnic origins, predominantly South America, Spain and Hong Kong. Following assessment days during the autumn preceding entry, conditional offers of places, dependent on results in the Common Entrance examination, are made to Year 7 candidates, and firm offers are made to applicants to Years 9 and 10. The normal conditional offer for entry into the sixth form is eight A* to B grades at GCSE, with a minimum of grade A in subjects chosen for A-level study. In total, 86 pupils do not have English as their principal language and 66 of these girls receive extra support to improve their fluency. A total of 36 pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). One pupil has a statement of special educational need.
- 1.5 Nationally standardised tests are administered to pupils at the beginning of Year 7. The scores for the last seven years indicate that pupils' average ability is well above the national average. Just less than half of the pupils are of average or above average ability and just over half are of well above or far above average ability. Only a very small number of pupils are below average ability. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results will be well above the average for all maintained secondary schools, but below the average for maintained selective schools.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a good and wide range of educational opportunities, which are consistent with its declared aims and philosophy; within this caring and supportive Christian community, the girls are happy and confident and can be inspired to achieve excellence and to become successful, positive influences in the world. Some good work is being done to encourage them to be independent and enquiring.
- 2.2 Since the last inspection there have been many improvements in the curriculum; it offers a good balance of subjects, which contribute to the girls' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. Appropriate provision is made for the acquisition of skills of speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy. Girls are cogent and confident to a point, but some find it difficult to continue an argument in the face of probing or counter-suggestion. Although they are generally articulate their ability to speak eloquently and persuasively where the demands are more sophisticated is less well developed.
- 2.3 All the girls' experiences are enriched by an extensive and regularly reviewed menu of extra-curricular activities available during the lunch hour, after school, in the evenings, during the Saturday Active programme and at weekends. The quality of many of these activities is excellent, with professional support provided for a significant number of them. All the extra-curricular provision is managed to an exemplary standard. The options are monitored as to their popularity and value. The activities are well promoted and systems have been developed to minimise clashes. The success of the extra-curricular programme, which is in large part recreational, does leave some girls with restricted time for study.
- 2.4 Many opportunities exist for the girls to be involved in the local and wider communities. Theatre in Education projects with a local primary school and extensive and impressive fund-raising for house and form charities are just some of the projects embarked on with zeal and followed through with energy. Work experience is encouraged for all girls after the GCSE examination period and about three-quarters of them secure placements. Governors and parents co-operate to help provide a wide range of opportunities and this support is much appreciated. Girls are trained in the skills of writing letters of application and the drafting of curriculum vitae in preparation for work experience.
- 2.5 Personal, social and health education (PSHE) lessons are thoughtfully planned and are well received by the girls. Topics addressed include bullying and alcohol abuse, and mature discussions take place. Careers guidance is a strength of the school. Careful attention, through a thorough and very well-planned careers programme from Years 7 to 13, is given to preparing girls for the next stage of education, training or employment. By means of talks, interviews, visits and a biennial careers convention, girls are encouraged to think constructively about their futures. The careers department is energetically, meticulously and enthusiastically managed, with a steady focus on review. It receives strong support from the senior management team (SMT) and the governors. This is all much appreciated by the girls.
- 2.6 Considerable effort goes into curriculum planning and review. Department handbooks all speak of the need for appraisal of what is taught and the school's curriculum policy is that review should be annual; balance, coherence and relevance, within the school's spiritual context, are the objectives here. An example of very good practice in this context is the development of the general studies and IDEAS – Independently Designed Ethical and Academic Seminars - lessons for Year 13. These two innovative courses, which are regularly

- reviewed and adapted, are ideally structured and are in line with the school's aims. However, not all reviewing processes are handled so effectively.
- 2.7 Pupils requiring special provision for LDD all have individual learning plans. These describe the girls' areas of difficulty and suggest strategies for enabling them to manage their learning; they are drawn up by the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), reviewed biannually, and distributed to all teachers. Some teachers make good, systematic use of them but some departments have a more focused approach on how to use this information than others. A significant number of pupils with LDD receive individual support from the SENCO to develop their organisational skills.
- 2.8 The head of English as an additional language (EAL), appointed since the last inspection, ensures that girls identified as needing EAL support receive it, in the form of a structured programme of study. Some of these pupils also attend individual sessions, focused on work being done in specific subjects.
- 2.9 There are essentially two distinct cultural groups of pupils with EAL: Spanish speakers and Chinese speakers. EAL support is generally good for both groups and departmental schemes of work indicate that teachers are aware of the pupils concerned; some good practice was observed. However, in a few lessons, sub-groups comprising entirely either Chinese or Spanish speakers were seen working together and conversing in their mother tongues, which did not encourage their rapid development of English communication skills.
- 2.10 With regard to provision for the gifted and talented, some good examples of extension work take place, but a few of the more able pupils, particularly in Years 11, 12 and 13 feel under-challenged. In some subjects, however, girls are invited to attend lectures and workshops aimed at older pupils with a view to stretching and challenging them.
- 2.11 The documentation detailing policies and procedures for pupils with LDD or EAL and gifted and talented pupils is sound and leads to appropriate achievement, but systematic monitoring of the actual practices is not widespread.
- 2.12 Since the last inspection, there has been substantial investment in information and communication technology (ICT), principally the installation of 23 interactive whiteboards in classrooms and the upgrading of the three ICT suites. The school's sporting facilities have been enhanced by a full size all-weather pitch and the refurbishment of the swimming pool and netball courts.
- 2.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.14 The good quality of pupils' learning and achievement, listed as a strength in the last inspection report, has been maintained. The positive attitude which pervades the school and the evident enjoyment of lessons and activities make significant contributions to the good standards of achievement across the curriculum and this is in line with the school's aims.
- 2.15 Pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skill and understanding in subjects and activities. Many examples were seen, particularly amongst the younger pupils, of girls demonstrating the ability to think and act critically and creatively, seizing the opportunities provided to apply their skills and so make good progress. There are no significant differences between the achievements of girls from different groups. Pupils with LDD or EAL generally achieve well.

- 2.16 Girls' attainment in public examinations is good in relation to their abilities. GCSE results in the last three years for which national comparative data was available at the time of inspection were well above the average for all maintained schools and above the average for maintained selective schools. During the same period, A-level results were also above the average for maintained selective schools. Nationally standardised measurements of progress from Year 7 to GCSE show that, in the last three years, progress has been consistently good, and has been well above national norms in almost all subjects. Particularly good progress was recorded in art and design, design and technology, ICT, German and Spanish.
- 2.17 Some significant individual and group successes have recently been achieved. This summer, eight girls were selected to compete for the South Surrey team in the county athletics championship and both the under-14 and under-16 netball teams are the South Surrey district champions for 2007. Girls do well in the national mathematics Olympiads, gaining many gold awards and regularly qualifying for the international Olympiads. Also, three girls were selected for projects for the National Youth Music Theatre following auditions throughout the UK. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is popular with the girls and a successful gold award expedition, canoeing on the river Severn, has recently been completed. These successes, combined with the good academic results and the strong extra-curricular programme, reflect the way the school enables girls to develop a wide range of talents.
- 2.18 Girls come to lessons expecting to work hard and they have a very positive attitude to study, which enables them to make the most of their opportunities. They focus quickly, though the interruptions caused to the start of some lessons by late arrivals make this difficult at times. They listen effectively and respectfully to others and willingly contribute their own ideas to general discussions, as seen, for example, in a lesson on international competitiveness.
- 2.19 Mathematical skills are effectively developed in most girls and they are able to apply mathematical concepts resourcefully. Good understanding and interpretation of graphical data was seen in several lessons across a range of subjects. ICT is used effectively, particularly in art and design, and in design and technology. The girls use word-processing skills proficiently in all subjects, access information on the internet and communicate electronically with competence.
- 2.20 Partly as a result of their good listening skills, many pupils respond readily to questions and their answers show clear thinking. The relaxed atmosphere in most lessons allows the girls to feel confident enough to risk their ideas and have them challenged by others, but in some lessons there was less evidence of independent thinking and risk taking.
- 2.21 A significant feature of the girls' work is the high level of organisation of their exercise books and files. As pupils mature, they develop the ability to take notes independently very well.
- 2.22 The girls' enthusiastic willingness to learn is evident in all subjects. They are always keen to give of their best and they study and work effectively, both on their own and co-operatively with others.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.23 The quality of spiritual, moral, social, and cultural education is an outstanding strength of the school. The excellent provision for pupils' personal development reflects the aims of the Sacred Heart Foundation. The quality of this aspect of education at Woldingham was a feature of the last inspection report and it remains of a high order.
- 2.24 Pupils grow spiritually as part of a community network supporting faith and moral guidance. Opportunities for prayer and development of self-knowledge exist at many levels, for example in days of reflection, house meetings, year meetings, tutor groups, and the occasions given over to national celebration. An impressive example of the life of faith and prayer at work in the school was witnessed in a Year 7 lesson dedicated to exploring the significance of Advent.
- 2.25 Pupils are aided in moral development by the prevalence of the goals of the Sacred Heart (evidenced in the broader aims of all departments), by the strong personal example of the staff, by the pervading nature of prayer, and by the encouragement to reflect upon human courses of action and personal conduct. The school places a notable emphasis on the importance of social justice and girls are encouraged to directly consider how they can make a difference in righting ills, which is in line with the school's aim that pupils should become positive influences in the world. Girls give proof of their compassion and commitment to social justice through widespread fund-raising for charitable purposes. Amongst the many causes supported are the Sacred Heart sister school in Uganda, the Make-a-Wish Foundation, and homeless people in Rwanda. A particular strength of the school's giving is the way in which small groups of girls take specific responsibility for the support of individual charities.
- 2.26 Pupils are socially adept and mutually supportive in a wide range of contexts. A system of merits encourages and rewards courteous and responsible behaviour, and this is valued by the girls. Taking responsibility within the community is encouraged at all levels of the school. For example, young pupils take charge of fish tanks, sixth form committees have defined responsibility for supporting subject areas such as drama and older pupils are tasked with manning reception in the evenings. The strong PSHE programme reinforces girls' respect for other individuals and teaches them effectively about the public institutions of their country.
- 2.27 There are many opportunities for the promotion of tolerance, cultural understanding, and mutual respect. Some examples of this are in new girls' induction, in the celebration of Chinese and Japanese ceremonies, in the many visits made abroad and in links with the Sacred Heart network overseas. A variety of school departments embrace the opportunity to celebrate the distinctiveness of other cultures. Notable examples were observed in the excellent fine art focus on African tribal art, in the development of mask and jewellery design and in the focus on Islamic influences in a Year 9 project involving arabesque designs. School assemblies are widely used to promote and affirm the values of other cultures.
- 2.28 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.29 The overall quality of the teaching, identified in the last inspection report as a strength of the school, remains good. A number of lessons demonstrated excellent teaching in terms of planning, understanding the needs of the pupils, arousing interest and excitement and inspiring confidence. The teaching generally enables pupils to take an active responsibility for their work and progress, both within and beyond the classroom. The pupils also encourage and support each other in their work, especially around examination times. The atmosphere within lessons is almost always positive and constructive, with a clear mutual respect evident between pupils and their teachers, reinforced by the unlimited availability of the staff at other times of the day for extra help.
- 2.30 The good quality of the teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, make good progress relative to their ability, increase their understanding and develop their skills. In some outstanding lessons the teaching was adventurous and imaginative, most notably in an inspirational Year 13 history of art lesson on the Cubists. However, in a few lessons the approach was cautious and left the most able pupils unchallenged.
- 2.31 Much of the teaching encourages pupils to exert intellectual, physical and creative effort, show interest in their work and develop the ability to think and learn for themselves. This is not wholly even across all subjects, nor between different teachers within departments, with some teaching relying too heavily on printed handouts. A high level of intellectual performance was noted in a Year 12 English lesson on *Frankenstein*, where pupils were able to respond to challenging questioning on the text. In a Year 7 geography lesson, the pupils were set a demanding task, to which they responded with enthusiasm, enabling them to work to their full ability. Physical effort is promoted through much skilled and dedicated teaching by the physical education specialists; the gym and other sports facilities are used extensively. Opportunities abound for pupils' creativity in music, art, drama and design.
- 2.32 Teaching is well planned and a good range of effective strategies are employed in all subjects. In most lessons good progress is made, particularly when a brisk pace utilises the lesson time fully. In the less successful lessons, the pace is slow and relies too heavily on the teacher's exposition of the material, inhibiting the opportunities for pupils to explore for themselves. Some significant loss of classroom time was evident throughout the inspection, due to the late arrival of pupils and staff whenever consecutive lessons were sited in different buildings. Teaching was less effective because of the consequent lack of focus to the start of these lessons.
- 2.33 Teachers know their pupils well and are able to pitch their lessons appropriately to the needs, aptitudes and prior attainments of the girls. Teachers are aware of those pupils who need extra help though there is limited evidence in some lessons that special provision has been made for them. The setting of pupils in some subjects has been helpful in ensuring that the teaching is optimal. For example in a Year 8 mathematics lesson, the teacher of a lower set was assisted by the head of year, who was able to support a pupil with EAL.
- 2.34 A particular strength of the teaching is the very clear knowledge and understanding of the subject matter shown by the teachers. In many cases, these attributes are coupled with unbounded enthusiasm and energy in the delivery, and excitement in their communication of the subject. In all lessons, teachers are able quickly and confidently to answer pupils' questions. Recent investment and training in ICT is reaping rewards in many lessons, although this resource is not yet fully embraced by all teachers. Some lessons are significantly enhanced by the use of interactive whiteboards, which help to give greater impact to the learning. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson, ICT enabled pupils to make rapid progress in their assessment of the Treaty of Versailles. Technical support in ICT and

science and other subjects is excellent and assists the work of the teachers in the classroom. Although the library arrangements have improved since the last inspection, pupils do not make significant use of the facility.

- 2.35 The teaching at every level includes frequent assessment within lessons and through tests and written homework, though this is not consistent in all subjects. The use of effort grades for all marked work discourages progress in the situation where pupils are new to the teacher and therefore the allocation of the effort grade is, to some degree, random. The best marking is detailed and offers helpful and constructive comments to assist improvement by the pupils and inform the planning of the teaching. Standards of marking are variable and insufficiently monitored to ensure consistency of practice.
- 2.36 The school possesses a considerable amount of assessment data on the performance of the pupils with reference to national norms, though this information is not consistently utilised effectively by all the teaching staff.
- 2.37 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 excellent quality of pastoral care is a strength and enables the school to meet its stated aims in this area. The school's success here is shown by the warm friendly atmosphere, confident pupils, caring and committed staff, and supportive relationships evident across the whole school community. When asked to describe their school in three words, 'caring' and 'friendly' featured in responses from all year groups and one Year 9 girl said: "I feel very lucky to go to this school".
- 3.2 Pupils appreciate the excellent support and guidance provided by staff, all of whom are committed to a pastoral role and to attending to the individual needs of boarding and day pupils. Pastoral care arrangements commence for the youngest pupils with the highly effective Year 7 induction day and, as noted elsewhere, include outstanding careers and higher education advice and guidance, and provision of real leadership opportunities at the top end of the age range. The well-planned PSHE programme contributes positively to the pastoral care, welfare, health and safety of pupils.
- 3.3 The staff are greatly assisted in their pastoral responsibilities by effective arrangements. The director of pastoral care oversees, and meets weekly with, the heads of year, who benefit from the appointment of assistant heads in all year groups except Years 7 and 8. The heads of year in turn have weekly meetings with their tutorial teams; each girl is a member of a tutor group organised on a house basis. Tutors often retain the same group as girls move up through the school and the heads of Years 10 and 11, and of Years 12 and 13, rotate to give continuity of care at these important stages.
- 3.4 In addition, pupils from Year 10 upwards can choose a personal tutor who serves as another counsellor and advisor, as do the resident nurses. The school doctor has a longstanding knowledge of the school and girls can self-refer to an independent counsellor who comes in to school one evening per week. The trained sixth form 'buddies' and the GAP Year students provide further support that is very much appreciated by girls, particularly in the younger years. The school chaplain is 'everywhere for everyone' and is a key person in the pastoral team, providing opportunities for prayer, meditation and wise counsel for pupils and staff and occasionally acting as guardian for Spanish-speaking overseas boarders.
- 3.5 Much of the organisation of pastoral care is in horizontal groups. The heads of the four whole-school houses ensure that the house system provides opportunities for vertical integration through house events, including charity fund-raising, sport, drama, music, feasts and weekly assemblies. The school is considering ways, including year and house committees, of building on this system and providing additional opportunities for leadership within junior years.
- 3.6 The Pastoral Academic Liaison System works well; emails in particular ensure everyone who should be is in the loop, including overseas parents. The head of sixth form provides invaluable assistance to the heads of the sixth form boarding houses and to girls in both year groups. The pastoral care of staff is exemplified by the parents' association's theatre trip for catering staff and the forthcoming lunch for grounds' staff.
- 3.7 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is outstanding. Staff lead by example, and girls support one another, both formally and informally. Girls are quickly known and supported by staff, who willingly give their time to address individual

- needs within and outside the classroom, take on boarding house duties and contribute to the extra-curricular programme.
- 3.8 A very high standard of discipline and behaviour is evident in all areas of school. There is a clear code of conduct and comprehensive rewards and sanctions policies. These policies are understood and appreciated by the girls who consider them to be fair and appropriate. The school rules are based on the 'four Rs' of respect for self, others, the environment and responsibility for actions; successful observance of these is well reflected in pupils' attitudes and behaviour. There is also a clear and effective anti-bullying policy and bullying is a recurrent topic in the PSHE programme. An anti-bullying ethos prevails across the whole school; the rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
- 3.9 Pupils were keen to acknowledge recent improvements in the quality, variety and choice of food at meal times. Pupils using one dining room did comment on the rushed nature of lunch arising from seating limitations. However, the suppers take place in a happy and relaxed atmosphere.
- 3.10 Effective child protection policies are in place and both admission and attendance registers are meticulously maintained. The director of pastoral care is the designated child protection officer and has been working with the local child protection office. All members of staff have received nationally produced guidance for the protection of children and staff in education settings. The director of pastoral care is in the process of training different groups of staff, focusing on their specific situation in recognising and dealing with child protection issues.
- 3.11 The school initiated a full and comprehensive fire safety audit in August 2007, but has not yet drawn up an action plan in response to this report. One important recommendation was to improve signage throughout the site, including fire notices in every room giving the escape route to the fire assembly point. These notices are still missing in some areas. The school has a record of fire drills held during the school day and each boarding house conducts fire drills out of school time.
- 3.12 Arrangements to ensure the health and safety of the girls are generally effective and the school has due regard for health and safety statutory obligations. The health centre is well equipped and an appropriate number of the teaching staff hold first-aid qualifications. The bursar has issued a comprehensive health and safety procedures handbook to all employees and the health and safety forum meets once each term. All departments have detailed risk assessments in place and appropriate risk assessments are made for both day and residential educational visits.
- 3.13 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) improve signage throughout the site, ensuring that there are fire notices in every room giving the escape route to the fire assembly point [Regulation 3.(5)].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.14 The well-grounded partnership with parents and good links with the wider community are outstanding strengths of the school. The school has a comprehensive range of methods through which it communicates with parents and keeps them informed about their daughters' progress and the school's activities. Pupils with LDD are provided with additional support by the SENCO, who directly communicates with parents and staff and also attends some departmental meetings, as does the head of EAL. The quality and range of all communications have been improved since the last inspection through the use of the school website and email, identified by the school as a way to disseminate information efficiently and effectively.
- 3.15 Parents made very positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and showed a high level of satisfaction with the education and support provided by the school. These sentiments were corroborated by the chairman of the Woldingham Parents and School Association (WPSA), which involves parents of both day pupils and boarders. There is a main committee and an events committee, each of which meets termly, and their key remit is to arrange social events as well as being a forum for school updates from the headmistress and bursar.
- 3.16 Parents have many and varied opportunities to be involved in activities in the school and in the work and progress of their children. Both social and fund-raising events are organised by the WPSA. Sponsored walks and charity fund-raising are regular events. The fireworks display involves Years 7 and 8 making 'guys' as a competitive event. There are parent and daughter tennis tournaments, parent and staff rounders matches and midsummer musical events. Additional highlights have included an annual lunch in school for the parents of each year group, a cocktail party at a London rowing club and a French evening with cancan dancers.
- 3.17 Parents are provided with good, wide-ranging information about the school. Reports are sent once each term for Years 7, 8 and 10 and twice a year for Years 9, 11, 12 and 13 and provide clear information. Parents' evenings occur once a year for Years 8 to 13 and twice a year for Year 7. A sixth form open evening is held at the end of Year 10. There is a school prospectus, girls' handbooks, termly newsletters and diaries of events and a parents' handbook. Parental concerns are speedily handled by the school, firstly by the head of year, who responds to parents within 24 hours. More serious issues are dealt with by the SMT.
- 3.18 The school promotes valuable links with the wider community. Every tutor group raises money for a particular charity and the whole school charity is currently raising money for disadvantaged schools in Africa. There are joint days of reflection and music concerts with a neighbouring independent school, whilst the Combined Cadet Force is run in conjunction with another independent school. The school facilities, such as the tennis courts, are used by a local tennis club, whilst the school grounds and prize day marquee are used by a local parish for a day.
- 3.19 The Woldingham old girls' association holds a reunion in London every year as well as an annual reunion at the school. These enjoyable occasions encourage the girls to form lasting relationships in line with the school aims.
- 3.20 The school promotes positive links with the wider community and encourages the girls to have respect for all people. Events, such as the community service group organising Christmas, Easter and summer parties for the elderly from three residential homes, reflect the school's care and support for the local community. The confidence and cheerfulness of the girls add a special dimension to these social occasions.

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

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.22 The quality of boarding education is good and contributes significantly and positively to the pupils' educational experience and personal development. Pupils have genuine pride in, and affection for, their school, and the boarding experience contributes to the school's aim to develop mature young women who will, in line with the school's vision, leave to become positive influences in the world. There have been significant improvements in the accommodation within the boarding houses since the last inspection, including a new, purpose-built Year 13 boarding house, the refurbishment of the junior boarding house and the introduction of study bedrooms in the middle school houses.
- 3.23 Relationships within boarding are warm, mutually respectful and highly supportive. The building of a new sixth form house and the reduction in boarding numbers overall enabled major improvements to be made in the organisation of accommodation in the other houses, which in turn enabled rearrangements to secure improved integration of day girls within these houses. Day girls can, and often do, arrive in time for breakfast and leave late after supper and evening activities; organised sleepovers generate great excitement. Rotation of room occupants on a termly basis in all houses encourages mixing and every effort is made to integrate overseas boarders. Heads of year and their assistants do an excellent job in creating a safe, secure and homely base for boarders, assisted by tutors, GAP Year students, the chaplain, director of pastoral care, head of sixth form and sixth form pupils. Appropriate support and guidance is given for the age range in the different houses and there is strong integration of year groups within each house. The school is investigating ways to enhance pupil integration between boarding houses.
- 3.24 Boarders are offered an excellent range of activities out of school time and at weekends, to which day girls are also invited. The Saturday Active programme for Years 7 to 10 was described as "so much fun" by three Year 9 girls, who between them had already experienced Taekwondo, dance, ceramics, drama, pottery and digital photography and had represented the school in Saturday sports' fixtures. In addition, weekend trips offering shopping, cultural, creative and practical experiences are popular.
- 3.25 The concern that boarders are unable to commence exeat before Saturday lunchtime, as noted in the last inspection report, is less evident, but still felt by a few pupils. However, such concern is counterbalanced by evident enthusiastic participation in weekend activities, the protection of weekend overseas boarders from isolation and strong commitment to the Saturday sports' programme. An excellent range of activities is offered in two separate evening slots, again open to boarding and day pupils. The priority system is designed to assist participation across different year groups and to minimise clashes, for example, between sport, music and drama. Facilities such as the art room are open to pupils until late each evening.
- 3.26 In addition to the extensive range of activities, there are many opportunities for teamwork and leadership. For example, Year 8 girls supervise Year 7 study, and Year 11 in turn supervise Year 8. Sixth formers can train to be 'buddies,' apply to be Ribbons (prefects) and offer to man the main school reception in the evening. There is a good gradation of responsibilities across houses with regard to facilities, daily procedures and permission to go off-site in the evenings.
- 3.27 The sixth form boarding houses are jewels in the crown of the boarding facilities. The school is well aware of the need to continue the programme of enhancing other areas of its boarding

accommodation and is addressing this. The pupils' repeated requests for mobile phone coverage and wi-fi internet access have been noted by the school.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Good governance ensures that an appropriate quality of education is offered to all pupils, in line with the school's aims.
- 4.2 The structure and management arrangements for governance are well defined. The whole board meets four times a year and the four sub-committees meet once each term. The minutes of these meetings clearly show the real involvement of all members of the governing body, their interest and their commitment. All members have a good understanding of their role in effectively governing the school, which is in part the result of a helpful induction process. The board provides strong and reliable support for the headmistress and staff. The SMT and governors meet regularly off-site for a strategic school review. Long-term planning and proper financial oversight are secure.
- 4.3 The governing body brings to its work an extensive range of business, financial, legal and educational expertise. There is active monitoring of standards and of school performance; governors show particular interest in maintaining and building on the high academic profile of the school. They also exercise their responsibility for child protection. The benefit that should come from close monitoring of other policies by the board is less evident.
- 4.4 Executive responsibility is delegated to the headmistress, who keeps governors well informed, both on school issues and on matters of educational legislation. Other members of the SMT contribute effectively to governors' meetings, reporting appropriately on their specific areas of responsibility. Further useful communication takes place when heads of department make presentations to governors on the education sub-committee. The whole staff are invited to meet with the chairman and the chairmen of the four sub-committees twice each year in an open forum, where an exchange of information and opinion is beneficial in fostering good relations between governors and staff. This opportunity for the board to communicate its vision for Woldingham School and to offer an appropriate level of challenge to the staff is well used. The governors' good understanding of the school enables them to respond effectively to the interests and concerns of the whole school community.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The school enjoys good leadership and management. All members of the SMT have significant strengths. The new headmistress is aware of the opportunity to streamline strategic planning and enable more effective monitoring and review of policies and procedures in order to further improve what is a very successful school.
- 4.6 Appropriate educational direction and leadership are provided by the headmistress and the other members of the SMT, all of whom are fully committed to the ethos of the Sacred Heart goals, as reflected in the school's aims and objectives. The spirituality of the Sacred Heart finds expression in their commitment to each other, and to the staff whom they lead. This concern for the dignity of the human person ensures that the tenor of care afforded to pupils is of a high order, while the quality of education provided reflects a desire to constantly refine and improve the overall experience enjoyed by girls at Woldingham.
- 4.7 The headmistress has already introduced some measures to raise the standard at GCSE further and has taken a personal interest in guiding Year 13 girls in interview technique as they apply for university places. Her actions in these and other matters have been welcomed

by the whole school community. The way in which the role of the deputy headmistress, a post newly created in January 2007, fits in with the responsibilities of the other members of the SMT is at an embryonic stage.

- 4.8 Considerable attention is paid to analysing and reviewing the school's needs, as evidenced in the curriculum development and improvement plan. However, clear priorities do not emerge from the planning process and this limits the school's ability to build upon existing educational achievement. This absence of clarity is partly owing to the number of targets which remain ongoing from year to year. The considerable degree of detail contained in a variety of strategy and policy documents makes it difficult to establish a vision for the future, characterised by readily identifiable objectives. Since the last inspection, the roles of the SMT have been redefined, as then suggested, to ensure a focus on strategic rather than procedural planning. Nevertheless the members of the SMT each work largely within specific sectors of the school. This diminishes their overview of the whole school and their overall capacity to set priorities, as evidenced, for example, in the absence of a resolution to the ongoing problem of cross-site lack of punctuality.
- 4.9 The school has a wide range of policies and procedures in operation covering all aspects of school life. A quality assurance scheme which is popular with heads of department has been established, with the objective of ensuring that policy objectives are met. Nevertheless there is a lack of consistency in the application and review of certain policies, notably regarding the implementation of standardised assessment criteria across all departments.
- 4.10 The school management at all levels is effective in securing, motivating, and retaining high quality staff. Particular care is taken in the recruiting exercise to attract members of staff who share a commitment to the school's aims. The school has good arrangements for checking the suitability of staff and proprietors. However, confirmation of the medical fitness of some peripatetic staff is not on file. Induction, mentoring, effective oversight by heads of department, and support by members of the senior management team are ways in which new staff are quickly made to feel themselves in full membership of the school community. Arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers are supportive and appropriate.
- 4.11 The financial resources of the school are well managed to secure generous support for the school's educational aims and the needs of its pupils. The bursar is well supported by a team of eight managers, who ensure between them that the school's life is backed by an environment of high quality. The administration of the school is efficient and communications are effectively maintained between differing sectors and departments by the intranet, which is well planned and managed, ensuring a regular flow of easily accessible information.
- 4.12 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) carry out appropriate checks to confirm the medical fitness of all members of staff [Regulation 4.(2)(a)].
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5].
- 4.14 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school is very successful in meeting its aims. The outstanding provision for pastoral care ensures exceptionally good personal development of the girls, whose spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness is at a high level. The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is outstanding, and a very high standard of discipline and behaviour is evident in all areas of the school. The result is a very caring and supportive Christian community, which is enhanced by the attractive and secure setting of the school, in which girls of all ages are happy and confident. The dedicated staff provide good teaching, leading to good standards of achievement and learning. Girls are given some challenging tasks, which contribute to their development into independent, enquiring young women. Good governance, leadership and management ensure that an appropriate quality of education is offered to all pupils. The school has a wide range of policies and procedures, but some lack of monitoring limits their effectiveness. Clear priorities do not always emerge from the planning process. The well-grounded partnership with parents and good links with the wider community are strengths of the school.
- 5.2 The school has made progress towards meeting the recommendations of the 2001 ISI inspection report. Registration obligations are met and many aspects of boarding have improved. The library has been reorganised as a first stage to improving provision in this area, but has yet to become a real centre for supporting pupils' learning. Provision for pupils with EAL is greatly improved. Some steps have been taken to manage the movement of pupils and staff between buildings, but loss of time still impacts adversely on teaching and learning. The school is aware of this problem. Changes to the structure for managing the curriculum and pastoral care have been made with beneficial effect. The last Commission for Social Care Inspection boarding report made two recommendations. One, regarding school policy on child protection procedures has been implemented, but with regard to the second, recruitment procedures are still not fully in line with current guidance. However, the school is aware of the need to carry out appropriate checks to confirm the medical fitness of all staff and is addressing the matter.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standards 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils) and 4 (suitability of proprietors and staff).

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has many strengths. However, in order to improve further, the school should take the following steps:
1. streamline the planning processes to minimise paperwork and thereby clarify strategic objectives;
 2. re-evaluate the complementary roles of the SMT, to facilitate a better overview of the whole school and more effective monitoring of policies and procedures;
 3. prioritise action to reduce the daily disruption caused by movement of pupils and staff between buildings.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) improve signage throughout the site, ensuring that there are fire notices in every room giving the escape route to the fire assembly point [Regulation 3.(5)];
 - (2) carry out appropriate checks to confirm the medical fitness of all members of staff [Regulation 4.(2)(a)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 19th to 22nd November 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the health centre. 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 three days.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Pat Watson	Reporting Inspector
Mr Stephen Jefferson	Senior Teacher, GSA school
Mrs Janet Pickering	Head, GSA school
Mrs Alison Rhodes	Head of Art, HMC school
Mrs Susan Smith	Deputy Head, GSA school
Mrs Carolyn Thomas	Head of English, HMC school
Mr David Warwick	Former Head of Music, HMC school