



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
COTHILL HOUSE SCHOOL**

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Cothill House School

Full Name of School	Cothill House School		
DfE Number	931/6075		
Registered Charity Number	309639		
Address	Cothill House School Cothill Abingdon Oxfordshire OX13 6JL		
Telephone Number	01865 390800		
Fax Number	01865 390205		
Email Address	office@cothill.net		
Head	Mr Duncan Bailey		
Chair of Governors	Sir Henry Aubrey-Fletcher		
Age Range	8 to 13		
Total Number of Pupils	187		
Gender of Pupils	Boys		
Numbers by Age	8-11	87	
	11-13	100	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	0	
Number of Boarders	Total:	187	
	Full:	187	Weekly: 0
Inspection Dates	01 Dec 2015 to 04 Dec 2015		

PREFACE

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*. The inspection on which the report is based took place over a period of four continuous days in the school.

The previous ISI boarding intermediate inspection was in October 2012 and the previous ISI second cycle inspection was in November 2009.

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare.

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

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

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

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with 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 facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Graham Gorton	Reporting Inspector
Mr Dougal Philps	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr David Williams	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Ms Diane Martin	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Cothill House School is a boarding preparatory school for boys from the ages of 8 to 13. It was founded at Packington Hall in 1870 and moved to its present site, in a small village six miles south of Oxford near Abingdon, in 1879. In 1969 it became a charitable trust administered by a board of governors, which also manages eight other schools belonging to the trust. It has been a full boarding school since 1994. The main building houses some of the dormitories, common rooms, dining rooms and recreational rooms, as well as being the centre of administration. Boarders in Year 8 are accommodated at another school about five miles away which belongs to the trust, and some of those in Year 5 live are housed in the Bungalow, situated within the school grounds.
- 1.2 The school aims to treat each boy as an individual, build confidence, and nourish qualities of kindness and consideration. It sets out to send them to their senior schools well prepared for the challenges and opportunities that they will encounter. It seeks to make sure that each individual pupil feels genuinely cared for, and safe and secure. Since the previous inspection new teaching accommodation has been built.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 187 boys on the roll; 87 were in Years 4 to 6, and 100 were in Years 7 and 8. Forty-three boys have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) and receive support with their learning. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 35 pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL); although none is at an early stage of learning the language, 20 pupils receive support with its acquisition. The majority of pupils are of white British origin. Forty-three pupils come from other countries, mainly Spain, China, Thailand, Korea and Nigeria. Most pupils come from families with a professional, business or farming background, with homes all around the UK and beyond. The school has close links with the Church of England, but welcomes pupils from any faith or none. The ability profile of the school is above that of the national average.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) 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 equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
The Sixes	Year 4
The Fives	Year 5
The Lower Removes	Year 6
The Middle Removes	Year 7
The Removes	Year 8

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils achieve high standards in all areas of learning. They are well prepared for the next stage of their education. The high standard of their academic achievements is supported by considerable success in areas such as sport, music and drama. Pupils show strong enthusiasm for learning and are always keen to give of their best. The excellent curriculum is tailored to meet the needs of the pupils and is enhanced by a diverse and stimulating extra-curricular programme. The quality of teaching is excellent and has improved since the previous inspection. The best lessons are delivered with pace and flair, showing strong subject knowledge from specialist teachers. The quality of marking has improved but some still does not provide sufficient information as to how pupils can improve their work. Teaching now uses the information and guidance provided by the specialist learning unit effectively, thus meeting a previous inspection recommendation.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent. They are confident, showing high levels of self-esteem and a deep appreciation of non-material aspects of life. A strong moral code pervades school life and pupils' social awareness is excellent. The pupils' cultural development is strong, as shown in their deep sense of tolerance and respect for all. The strong relationships between staff and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, are a key feature in the personal development of the pupils. Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good, with a strong emphasis placed on the safeguarding of pupils. However, insufficient rigour has been shown towards some matters of health and safety on the school site. Boarding is central to the school and the quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Outcomes for boarders are excellent, as they are extremely well cared for and feel happy. The leadership and management of boarding are good, but managers do not carry out regular reviews of boarding practice for all staff.
- 2.3 Governance of the school is sound and has recently been strengthened through the introduction of a Local Advisory Group (LAG). Governors have an effective overview of all aspects of school life, though the lack of an operational school development plan restricts their opportunities for effective evaluation and monitoring of practice. Arrangements for the oversight of some matters of health and safety have been insufficient. Good leadership and management at all levels of the school are instrumental in the high standards of achievement and excellent personal development of the pupils. School leaders show dedication and are fully committed to the success of their charges. Roles and responsibilities are not sufficiently well defined to ensure effective time allocation and oversight of matters relating to school procedures. Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. Parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the work of the school and they appreciate the individual care given to their children, as well as their high standards of achievement.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- 2.5 The school does not meet all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015, and therefore must take the following action.
- Ensure that staff members working with boarders receive regular reviews of their boarding practice [National Minimum Standard 15.1, under Staffing and supervision, and for the same reason National Minimum Standard 13.8, under Management and development of boarding].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Review roles and responsibilities of senior leaders to ensure that sufficient time is given to the monitoring of all aspects of the school's provision.
 2. Establish an operational school development plan to support strategic aims and strengthen self-evaluation.
 3. Ensure that governors and senior leaders have effective oversight of all matters relating to health and safety on the school site.
 4. Establish consistency in teachers' marking to indicate what pupils should do to improve their work.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 Throughout the school, pupils develop high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. This fully supports the school's aims to encourage high academic standards and an enthusiasm for learning, and is reflected in their success in securing places at the senior schools of their choice. The quality of the pupils' learning and achievements has improved since the previous inspection.
- 3.3 In literacy, pupils show excellent levels of achievement when they write complex texts, applying spelling rules and punctuation with confidence. Their factual and creative writing skills reflect their excellent subject knowledge and understanding. Older pupils write with clarity and purpose, successfully conveying meaning in a variety of genres. Throughout the school pupils are accomplished readers. Pupils are excellent listeners and are able to successfully articulate their thoughts whilst respectfully accommodating the views and opinions of others. Mathematical skills and concepts are understood and successfully applied to their work in other subjects by pupils of all ages. Younger pupils understand the place value of numbers and can recognise patterns within groups of digits. Older pupils become accomplished mathematicians, reflected in their excellent problem-solving skills and in the high standards of their computational work. Pupils' skills in science enable them to predict, experiment and hypothesise successfully from an early age. From a young age, pupils demonstrate excellent skills, knowledge and competency in information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning, whilst the oldest pupils demonstrate their aptitude in computing confidently using animation programs. Pupils' physical development is strong across all age groups. Younger pupils develop co-ordination, stamina and strength through their lessons and free time. Older pupils are accomplished in a wide range of sports and activities.
- 3.4 The pupils' strong academic progress is enhanced by their excellent achievement beyond the classroom. Success in music, art and the high quality of drama productions reflects the pupils' well-developed creative skills. Pupils achieve highly in sporting events, as exemplified by the considerable success of the school's rugby, football and cricket teams and the standards reached in a wide range of other individual and team sports including hockey, cross-country and athletics. Pupils are also successful in a range of other competitions and challenges, such as general knowledge quizzes, debating and story writing.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment, as judged from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' written work, success at the point of secondary transfer, with a good number of scholarships and awards, and interviews with pupils, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Those pupils who are able, gifted or talented and those with SEND make excellent progress because they are extremely well supported by the school.
- 3.6 Pupils' attitudes to learning are strong. They have a distinct desire, enhanced by the strength of their relationships with teachers, to give of their best. Pupils are keen and motivated from the outset, displaying high levels of enjoyment. They are inquisitive learners and show a natural desire to learn and increase their skills,

knowledge and understanding. Pupils work instinctively well together and share their ideas enthusiastically. They listen carefully and show a well-developed respect for the opinions of others.

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

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The school successfully fulfils its aim to devise an academic curriculum and co-curricular provision that provide an excellent breadth of opportunity, such that pupils can discover their talents. The curriculum covers all requisite areas of learning and is strengthened by a comprehensive personal, social, health and economic education scheme of work. The curriculum is well suited for all ages. It is skilfully tailored and highly suitable for the ability range and potential of the pupils. Curriculum planning is thorough and detailed, and is organised to enable pupils to work at a fast pace. The curriculum is stimulating in its content. Provision for pupils with SEND or EAL is excellent. They are withdrawn from lessons for individual or group work, if appropriate, and are regularly supported in class by teachers. More able pupils and those with specific talents are challenged and inspired at every opportunity. The educational programmes are carefully planned to meet these pupils' individual needs and link well with the pupils' learning in the classroom.
- 3.9 In addition to the core subjects, ICT, design technology, art and pottery are significant features of the curriculum, enriching practical opportunities for pupils. The imaginative and wide-ranging general studies programme is a strength of the curriculum and impacts positively on the pupils' academic and pastoral development. Carefully planned theme weeks on topics such as revolution contribute greatly to pupils' wider understanding of the world around them.
- 3.10 An excellent, carefully considered and balanced range of extra-curricular activities is available throughout the school day for all pupils; many offer effective extended challenges for the more able. The school offers extensive musical activities, alongside an eclectic choice of clubs including intellectual, creative and sporting opportunities. Clubs range from off-road cycling and fencing to computer games and origami. Pupils throughout the school take part in drama productions, which enable them to gain confidence by performing in public. Sporting provision at the school is strong. All pupils have the opportunity to play in school matches, and physical recreational resources such as a tree-top climbing frame are available for all ages.
- 3.11 Pupils' educational experiences are significantly enhanced by an excellent selection of visiting speakers, presenting an engaging mix of topics including Walking with the Wounded to the South Pole, the use of nuclear weapons and the making of topical television programmes. Throughout the school a number of highly successful visits are arranged for each year group. These include trips to places of historical and geographical interest, theatres, concerts and museums, broadening the pupils' educational and cultural development. Year 7 spend a term living and studying in a chateau in France. This enables rapid progress in French as well as contributing greatly to their personal and social development. Other residential trips include a history trip to The Somme, a cultural visit to Vienna, a skiing trip and a tennis camp in the USA. The 'Leavers' Programme' for the oldest pupils is varied and stimulating, and assists them in the preparation for life after Cothill. Pupils benefit from strong links with the local community, including churches and a primary school.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.12 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.13 Teaching is highly effective in enabling all pupils to make significant progress and fully supports the school's aim to instil in them a love of discovery and learning. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection.
- 3.14 Throughout the school, teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subjects and of the educational needs of their pupils. These, along with the enthusiasm they bring to the classroom and the relationships they establish, enable pupils to develop their learning and personal skills to an extremely high standard. Imaginative and creative teaching strategies make learning fun and lessons highly enjoyable. The pupils feel extremely well supported and able to seek help with their work whenever necessary. Throughout the school teaching promotes tolerance and respect, and is non-partisan in the coverage of political issues.
- 3.15 Teachers are excellent role models and expectations of the pupils are high. The carefully structured teaching, with thought for pupils' varying needs, including those with SEND or EAL and the more able, ensures that lessons allow pupils of all ages to achieve their best and make good progress. All teachers make excellent use of individual praise and encouragement. The consistent approach to management of behaviour, in line with school procedures, is a significant factor in underpinning pupils' positive attitudes to learning and the maintenance of a calm atmosphere.
- 3.16 The best lesson planning is thorough, with lessons throughout the school incorporating a stimulating range of approaches. Teaching provides excellent levels of challenge, pace is brisk and time is carefully managed. In-class assessment processes help teachers to plan lessons that build on pupils' previous knowledge. Marking at its best provides clear guidance for pupils on how to improve their work. Across both subjects and classes, however, marking lacks consistency of application, and a recommendation of the previous inspection is not, therefore, fully met.
- 3.17 The excellent teaching is supported by high quality, varied and plentiful resources. The classrooms feature bright and interesting displays of current work and posters relevant to subjects; these enrich the learning experience and enhance the learning environment.
- 3.18 The specialist learning unit provides pupils with SEND or EAL with excellent support and this is shared with all teaching staff through regular meetings, fully meeting a previous inspection recommendation. Consequently, this high quality teaching support for individual needs enables pupils of all ages to make rapid progress in their learning.
- 3.19 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and during discussions, parents indicated that they value highly the expertise and work of the staff. Pupils were unanimous in their views that the high quality teaching helps them to make progress at school.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' personal qualities are well developed. In line with the aims of the school, they come to value the British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. In discussions they showed clear respect for the views and beliefs held by other people.
- 4.3 Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent. They are confident in their relationships with their peers and teachers, and show high levels of self-confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem. The spiritual development of the pupils is strengthened through numerous opportunities to reflect upon non-material aspects of life, including assemblies, form time with prayers and Sunday services at local churches. They demonstrate a deep appreciation of nature and of the natural world in their surroundings. Pupils are emotionally mature, while enjoying childhood opportunities of excitement and wonder, particularly in a boarding environment.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils demonstrate a strong moral code where all members of the community value both themselves and others, and where good conduct is the expected norm. They exhibit a clear knowledge of right and wrong, the need for rules and the importance of taking responsibility for one's own actions. Pupils show understanding of agreed consequences for making unwise choices and how to apologise, make amends and improve their behaviour. During discussions, the pupils showed strong understanding of the civil and criminal law of England.
- 4.5 The pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils' high level social skills are reflected in their exceptional rapport with staff. Their social maturity is demonstrated in their personal qualities: they are convivial and good natured, unfailingly polite, kind and courteous, and show strong mutual respect for their peers and younger pupils. Strong social development is shown as they readily take advantage of the many opportunities to show leadership and service in the dormitories, on the school council, or as prefects or class helpers. Pupils accept responsibility for other people less fortunate than themselves through support for a wide range of fund-raising activities, deepening their social understanding.
- 4.6 Pupils' understanding of and respect for other faiths and cultures are excellent. The depth of their understanding is shown as they appreciate that other cultures may hold different beliefs to their own and are welcoming and tolerant of other cultural practices. Pupils delight in the opportunity to celebrate diversity, with special events where they can experience food, music and artwork different from their own. Pupils show an appreciation of Western cultural traditions through a broad range of activities. This includes work in art and music, in their studies of modern literature and history of art, theme weeks and visiting expert speakers.
- 4.7 Pupils have a broad general knowledge of English public institutions and services. They have a respect for democracy and support participation in the democratic process, for example through learning about the working of Parliament in general studies, and holding a mock general election and termly elections to the school council. By the time they leave the school pupils have an excellent standard of all-

round personal development. The high standards identified at the previous inspection have been maintained.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of the arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The school aims to encourage each boy to thrive, to feel secure and safe, and to respect others. As all the pupils are full boarders, staff have an in-depth knowledge of them and pupils know that they are able to talk to any member of staff should they need help or support. Many of the pupils stated that their relationships with the staff are the best thing about the school. Relationships are also positive among the pupils themselves and indicate a caring, tolerant attitude towards one another. Daily staff meetings ensure that information about the pupils' well-being is shared efficiently. Pupils' form tutors provide a valuable source of support and guidance. There is close liaison among all staff with regard to the care of the pupils.
- 4.10 The food provided is wholesome, with good options available, and mealtimes are a pleasant, social occasion. Healthy eating is covered in science, general studies lessons and assemblies, where the importance that the school places on promoting healthy lifestyles is shown. Pupils with specific dietary needs are well catered for. Exercise is a key part of life at the school and is actively encouraged through a wide variety of games and activities.
- 4.11 In questionnaire responses a very small minority of pupils said that teachers are not always fair in the giving of sanctions. From investigation inspectors found that the system is fair and encourages pupils to perform well in all aspects of school life. A co-ordinated system of points and positive and negative marks encourages pupils to always give of their best. A weekly report from the staff ensures that pupils fully understand the system. Logs of more serious sanctions given showed consistency in approach and that any penalty reflects the nature of the incident.
- 4.12 The pupils are able to make their views known through the school council. It discusses all aspects of school life, encouraging debate and discussion. As a result, many new initiatives have been introduced, such as off-road cycling and the tree-top adventure playground. Council minutes, complete with decisions, are posted on a school notice board, showing the importance that the school places on the voice of the pupils.
- 4.13 The school has an appropriate accessibility plan for any pupils with SEND.

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

- 4.14 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.15 The safeguarding arrangements throughout the school are thorough, and both policies and procedures are fully implemented. They fully reflect the requirements of the national strategy for countering extremism and radicalisation. The school works closely with the local safeguarding children's board. Senior staff with responsibility for safeguarding have been trained at the appropriate level and regularly undertake update training. Other staff receive regular training and there is comprehensive induction training for new staff. Careful attention is given to ensuring that all new staff have undergone the required checks for safer recruitment, and comprehensive and accurate records of these are kept centrally.
- 4.16 A detailed fire policy and procedure, staff training and professional fire risk assessments reduce the risk from fire. Records demonstrate regular drills and the maintenance of installations and equipment. Meticulous risk assessments support the safety of pupils in activities on the school site and when they are on trips and visits out of school. The health and safety policy shows careful attention to the health and safety of all at the school and is supported by detailed records. However, the school is not sufficiently rigorous on checking all matters of health and safety. A few health and safety issues were brought to the attention of the school during the inspection, which were immediately rectified. The buildings and grounds are maintained to a very high standard. A comfortable and suitable medical room, staffed by trained professionals, provides excellent facilities for the care of sick or injured pupils or those who have SEND.
- 4.17 The admission register is appropriately maintained and attendance registers are correctly completed. These registers are stored as required.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is good.
- 4.19 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. Boarders are extremely well cared for and feel happy, in line with the school's boarding aims. They are articulate, confident and appreciative of boarding at the school and have respect for each other and the staff. Staff and boarders agree that there is a caring, family atmosphere in all the houses. The boarders' voice is heard at council meetings and there have been numerous outcomes resulting from the pupils' suggestions. Prefects are appointed in Year 8 and are proud of their role. Relationships between staff and boarders are exceptional and pupils themselves demonstrate tolerance, a caring attitude and trust for each other. Their behaviour is highly co-operative and polite. Boarders agree that there is always a member of staff to talk to if they have a concern. Relevant contact numbers for external sources of support are posted next to all telephones which give boarders an opportunity to make contact with someone appropriate outside of school, should the need arise.
- 4.20 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. New boarders are matched with a mentor who helps them when they arrive, continues to keep in touch and writes a report at the end of the year. Mentors take their role seriously. This is appreciated by the younger boarders. The protocols for the management of sick boarders are excellent. Staff are appropriately qualified. Twenty-four hour medical and pastoral care is provided by the nurse and the permanent matrons. Health

plans are circulated as necessary, with photographs provided to assist kitchen staff at mealtimes. Handovers between daytime and evening staff are detailed, with careful records being kept. The school has thorough systems to respond to any communicable illness. Accommodation in the house is well maintained, welcoming and homely, and any issues are dealt with promptly by the maintenance staff. In response to the questionnaire a small minority of boarders felt that the food is not good. Inspectors found the food to be well cooked and healthy, with suitable choices and alternatives. Boys were observed eating well at all mealtimes. Snacks, including fruit and drinks, are available at all breaks and before bed. Laundry is carried out at the main school by laundry staff or in the Year 8 house by the matron, and effective arrangements are in place to ensure that it is returned to the correct pupil. In questionnaire responses a few pupils stated that they do not feel their belongings are kept safe. Inspectors found that all pupils have lockable boxes in their rooms for the storage of their belongings. Stationery items can be obtained from a school shop. The activities provided are varied and numerous, and are much appreciated by the boarders. They make full use of the facilities and grounds, where they are appropriately supervised. There is opportunity for boarders to contact their families using telephone cards, and through email and video messaging. They have access to outside events and news through newspapers and news notice boards.

- 4.21 The quality of arrangements for welfare and safeguarding is excellent. There is an appropriate safeguarding policy, of which staff are aware, and they understand the school's procedures. As well as the regular training in child protection, staff receive the necessary information when updates are issued. All the necessary checks on newly recruited staff are carried out. There is a comprehensive behaviour management policy, and as well as the school-wide system for rewards, awards are given for the dormitories that perform well each week. This helps the boarders to learn to manage their belongings and bed space well. The ethos of a consistent approach to minor misdemeanours ensures that sanctions are kept to a minimum and boarders are very keen to do behave well. During discussions, boarders and staff stated that bullying is not a concern. Pupils are very happy to report an issue and feel sure that it would always be dealt with promptly and efficiently. Records of misdemeanours are kept in each house but they are relatively minor and are dealt with effectively. Risk assessments for premises, trips and activities are carried out and accident records are checked for any significant trends. Fire practices are held at appropriate times and full records of drills and checks are maintained. Boarders' whereabouts are known and they are appropriately supervised at all times. There is always access to a member of staff if they are needed during the night. The excellent registration system accounts for all boarders throughout the day and night.
- 4.22 The effectiveness of leadership and management is good. Leadership and management ensure that the school's boarding aims are met. The houses are well run, with suitably qualified personnel. Staffing levels are high and ensure good support and supervision of the boarders. Policies and procedures are generally well implemented, there is a positive atmosphere in the houses and relationships are outstanding. Routines run smoothly and expectations of the boarders' behaviour are high. Daily records are kept of any significant incidents. Any medication given is recorded electronically and all the necessary records are monitored. All house staff have detailed job descriptions. Staff are aware that there is a budget for professional development opportunities but they do not receive any indication of external training courses available to them. There is no formal system for annual house reviews or audits of compliance with the regulatory requirements for boarding. Required actions for regulatory compliance identified at the previous inspection for

all staff working with boarders to receive regular reviews of their boarding practice and for records to be kept have not been fully implemented. Four other recommendations from the previous boarding intermediate inspection have been addressed successfully.

- 4.23 In questionnaire responses, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the quality of boarding at the school.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound.
- 5.2 The Cothill Educational Trust provides effective oversight of all governance matters relating to the school. Members of the governing board are skilled in a wide variety of areas to support the work of the school and are well supported by the Local Advisory Group, recently established to ensure stronger links between the governors and the school. Chaired by a nominated governor, the LAG consists of a selected group of parents who show a keen desire to contribute to the work of the school and its development. Whilst still in its infancy, the LAG is proving to be a successful conduit between the leadership and management of the school and governors. Reports from the leadership to all meetings provide detailed information to support the work of the governance of the school. Careful financial planning has ensured strong investment in staff, in the accommodation of the school and in resources.
- 5.3 Chairs of both the LAG and the full board visit the school and take a keen interest in its operations. Other governors attend specific events during the year, deepening their understanding of the working of the school, but they are less well known to staff. Governors provide challenge for the school, though they currently lack a structured approach to evaluate the effectiveness of school improvement. There is no operational school development plan by which governors can determine, evaluate and review strategic needs.
- 5.4 Governors successfully carry out their roles and responsibilities in relation to policies and certain procedures, particularly in relation to safeguarding and child protection. The recent annual review by all governors of the school's safeguarding policy and arrangements demonstrates a thoroughness of approach to ensure that pupils are well cared for. However, they are too reliant on information on regulatory matters being provided by the senior leaders of the Trust and the school. Governors have not been sufficiently vigilant in ensuring that all matters of health and safety around the school site are given appropriate attention.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 At all levels, good quality leadership and management fully support the school's aims to maintain a happy, caring and vibrant community that enables pupils to be appropriately equipped for the next stage of their education. Pupils flourish within a school environment that values their individuality and sense of childhood whilst maintaining high academic standards. The strong sense of excitement and challenge within the school is a direct reflection of the school's leadership and management.
- 5.7 The senior management and leadership team leads the school with strong enthusiasm and dedication. The management structure of the school provides good opportunities for leadership staff at all levels to demonstrate their strengths and to make a positive contribution to the school's development. Regular senior

management and leadership team meetings cover every aspect of school life and demonstrate the leadership and management's desire to strive for excellence. School policies are reviewed and generally monitored effectively to assess whether they are being implemented consistently. However, insufficient attention is paid to the oversight of some health and safety matters.

- 5.8 Leadership provides clear educational direction, as reflected in the high quality of the pupils' educational outcomes and the excellent standard of their personal development. Current job descriptions and allocation of responsibilities do not ensure that sufficient time is allotted for the effective oversight of duties in areas such as the performance review of boarding staff and health and safety around the school site. Heads of department understand their roles and responsibilities, although their impact on supporting teaching and learning is not yet consistent. The school has introduced many new initiatives since the previous inspection and their success is evaluated informally to improve the outcomes for pupils. However, the lack of an operational school development plan limits the opportunities for leaders to formally review their practice and to plan for the strategic needs of the school. The school is successful in recruiting, retaining and developing well-qualified staff. Safer recruitment practices are followed. All staff are supported through a professional development programme and are suitably trained for their roles, particularly in the area of safeguarding. In questionnaire responses, parents were overwhelmingly supportive of the leadership and management of the school.
- 5.9 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. In response to questionnaires, parents expressed high levels of satisfaction with the education and support given to their children and the high quality of communication.
- 5.10 The school maintains a very positive relationship with parents and handles any concerns with care, in accordance with its published procedures. The staff are always courteous and helpful, and parents appreciate that they generally follow up any questions or concerns efficiently. Parents particularly value the positive relationships between pupils and staff. They stated in discussions that the family atmosphere of the boarding houses is a feature unique to the school. They believe that the school promotes a true childhood, whilst instilling high standards of behaviour and developing a generosity of spirit and kindness, reflecting the school's aim for boys to be happy, busy and polite. Parents are made to feel very welcome and have opportunities to become involved in school life and work by attending matches, concerts and charity events.
- 5.11 There are excellent lines of communication, and information about school life is plentiful and provided through channels such as the informative website and newsletters. Recent improvements include the implementation of a management information system, and the gradual increase of email has improved communication, strengthening links with parents.
- 5.12 Parents appreciate the school's reporting arrangements. They receive termly reports and are very pleased with the individualised style of these, which clearly shows how well the staff know their children. In addition to many informal opportunities, termly open house afternoons during which more formal meetings take place enable parents to gain a full picture of their children's progress and achievements. In discussions, parents praised the way in which both they and their children are prepared for the pupils' transition to senior schools.

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