

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

St John's School

Full Name of the School	St John's School, Leatherhead
DCSF Number	936/6070
Registered Charity Number	312064
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Age Range	13 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	28th April to 1st May 2008

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 not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. 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 and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found 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 St John's School was founded in 1851 by Ashby Haslewood, the vicar of St Mark's, Hamilton Terrace in St John's Wood, London. He had the dual purposes of founding a school which would both offer free education for the sons of poor clergymen and provide a choir for his large church. In 1854 the school moved into neighbouring Kilburn and moved several more times before, in 1872, it was located to the present site in the town of Leatherhead, Surrey. It remained essentially a charity school until the early twentieth century when it developed the characteristics of a public school, attracting fee-paying parents whilst remaining loyal to the sons of clergymen. Since the 1970s, St John's, whilst maintaining a boarding community, has taken an increasing number of day pupils and, in 1989, the first girls were admitted to the sixth form.
- 1.2 The school is for pupils in the age range 13 to 18. At the time of the inspection there were 469 pupils on the roll, including 206 in the sixth form. The school is mixed but the girls enter in the sixth form and so form a minority of 55.
- 1.3 St John's school is selective, with most pupils coming from local preparatory schools. Admission is through tests in verbal and non-verbal reasoning, mathematics and English, a place being offered subject to achieving 55 per cent in the Common Entrance examinations. The results of standardised tests over the last three years show that the intake is above average. This means that if pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results in public examinations will be above the average for all maintained schools.
- 1.4 One pupil has a statement of special educational need and just over 100 pupils have been identified as having some learning difficulties; 20 of these receive specialist help. Seventeen pupils do not have English as their first language and 10 of these receive additional support. Most of the pupils are day pupils, but 78 boys and 20 girls are boarders.
- 1.5 The aims of the school are: to provide an environment in which pupils can discover and develop their spiritual, intellectual, social and physical qualities in full; to encourage pupils to aspire to high standards and to be confident; to create a happy and secure environment; to provide a wide breadth of extra-curricular activities, opportunities for leadership and responsibility; to enable all members of staff to strive for professional fulfilment, and to encourage parents to share in these aims and to participate in school life.
- 1.6 The school was last inspected by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in February 2002 and the boarding provision last inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection in February 2005.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

School	NC name
Fourth Form	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The educational experience provided is of good quality and meets one of the school's principal aims, that of providing a wide breadth of extra-curricular activities. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with lessons being well supported by an extensive programme of sport and activities. In addition, pupils enjoy a wide variety of educational visits during the holiday periods, many of which are overseas. The sporting programme provides pupils with many opportunities to apply physical effort, while art and music foster creative skills, for example through participation in the school orchestra or jazz bands. The curriculum is regularly reviewed and has improved since the last inspection. Recent changes include the introduction of classical civilisation as an alternative to Latin in Year 9; in addition, information and communication technology (ICT) is now offered at GCSE level alongside the core lessons. Minor changes are now being implemented to allow a significant number of pupils to take the GCSE in three separate sciences.
- 2.2 The curriculum contributes well to pupils' development - in languages, mathematics, science, technology and the humanities, as well as in physical, artistic and practical-based subjects. Basic skills in ICT are taught to all pupils in Years 9 to 11, leading to an internationally recognised qualification.
- 2.3 A broad range of subjects is available at GCSE, AS and A level, and the timetable is helpfully constructed to meet the subject choices of the pupils, with the result that very few are unable to study their first choices. All pupils take full advantage of the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered. An extensive sporting programme allows boys and girls of all abilities the opportunity to participate in competitive games and sport. The activities programme, which operates several afternoons a week, provides more sporting, music and drama-based options, as well as other choices, such as the computer animation club or one on how to become a young engineer.
- 2.4 The thriving combined cadet force (CCF) contingent, comprising the three branches of the armed forces, together with the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme at silver and gold level and the community service unit, all offer excellent opportunities for pupils to develop the skills of leadership by working in teams, with further opportunities provided through sporting activities. Pupils are also encouraged to participate in a variety of outdoor pursuits, many of which are provided by the CCF. Rock climbing, off-shore sailing and the induction camp for new pupils in Year 9 are recent examples of these opportunities.
- 2.5 Pupils receive good careers guidance and advice. A useful programme for careers education is provided for pupils in Year 9; in addition, tutors are responsible for teaching the Year 10 and 11 careers modules. Issues covered include: self-awareness; decisions and choices; action planning, and the world of work. The focus on careers in the sixth form, which is included in the general studies programme, is on advice, information and guidance on higher education. During the inspection, an assembly was helpfully used to promote the university experience. The head of careers, assisted by a small team of other teachers, is based in a centrally-located and well-resourced careers library. An optional work experience, or work shadowing scheme, operates in Year 12, with placements being co-ordinated by the school.
- 2.6 The comprehensive programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) in Years 9 to 11 is good and has improved since the last inspection. It reflects the school's Christian ethos and covers a wide range of social, moral and health issues, including drugs and alcohol awareness, bullying and cyber-bullying, abortion and sexual ethics, racism, environmental awareness and aspects of citizenship. Pupils in Year 9 have a programme of talks and tutor

group discussions led by the head of PSHE as well as external speakers. The programme in Years 10 and 11 is covered within tutorial time and through lessons in biology and religious studies (RS), with further contributions from geography and history. The whole programme is carefully planned by the head of PSHE in consultation with the relevant heads of department to ensure adequate coverage. PSHE is valued by pupils in Years 9 to 11.

- 2.7 The PSHE programme in the sixth form is satisfactory. It forms part of the general studies programme which is taught in extra-curricular time. Year 12 girls follow the sex education course which the boys took at a younger age. Speakers from outside the school address pupils on alcohol and drug awareness and about preparation for life after school. A well-organised programme of community service is available for volunteers.
- 2.8 The support offered to those who experience learning difficulties is of high quality and ensures all pupils make good progress. Pupils are clearly identified by the head of learning support who visits pupils' schools prior to their transfer to gather information and establish their needs. Pupils may also be referred by their teachers, tutors or parents. Such pupils are made known to the teachers, who demonstrate an awareness of their needs in lessons. Where appropriate, individual learning objectives are created for pupils and support is provided in groups and, if necessary, to individuals. Their progress is monitored by their teachers in order that any specific requirement for additional help may be quickly met. Support of high quality was observed in English, chemistry and mathematics. The provision given is in line with statutory requirements.
- 2.9 All pupils whose first language is not English are well supported and make good progress. New pupils are inducted to make sure they understand the school systems. Two qualified teachers offer individual tuition, charged as an extra, and additional support is made available on request. Pupils may be withdrawn from modern language lessons to receive tuition in English where necessary.
- 2.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.11 Pupils' learning and achievement are good. Results in the GCSE and A level examinations over the last three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. This means that pupils' attainment in public examinations over this period has been good in relation to their abilities. Statistical data indicates that pupils make good progress from GCSE to A level. Results in the GCSE have been similar over the last three years, but in the same period there has been a small decline in absolute standards at A level.
- 2.12 Pupils' learning and achievements in lessons are good in relation to their abilities. Their skills are also evident in the wide range of activities, including some notable successes in sport and in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. The school is successful in its aim to encourage pupils' confidence so that they can succeed. Pupils make good academic progress and participate readily in the activities provided. They understand how to approach the tasks set and apply skills purposefully to become effective learners. Pupils enjoy expressing their opinions and make good use of the support offered them by their teachers.
- 2.13 Pupils' achieve well in the broad programme of activities offered. Individual pupils have achieved notable success in sport, including international representation for fencing, at a national level for athletics, and regional representation for both rugby and hockey. Success has been achieved in the Financial Times Challenge cup for shooting at Bisley. The school maintains a strong fixture list and pupils perform well, often against larger schools.

- 2.14 Teams have also performed well in public speaking and in problem-solving competitions. The number of pupils gaining gold medals in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is most impressive and a pupil was recently awarded an Arkwright Design Scholarship for flair and originality in solving engineering design problems. The chapel choir recently sung in Chichester Cathedral.
- 2.15 In lessons, pupils work well and are keen to succeed, tackling tasks readily and seeking guidance from their teachers when required. They enjoy opportunities for working with their peers and show considerable diligence, indulging in repartee with other pupils and their teachers. The good humour shown generally contributes to positive relationships. Pupils are appreciative of the school's aim that they should be well-supported in their learning. They are well motivated, willing to learn from their teachers and each other, and are keen to succeed. They contribute their opinions openly and honestly and show ready respect for their teachers.
- 2.16 Pupils listen attentively, read in class with understanding and expression, and write fluently and with a fair degree of accuracy. Written work is well structured and focused, showing a wide range of vocabulary and increasingly sophisticated reasoning in GCSE and A level work. Pupils respond readily to challenges, as when a Year 9 class interpreted a 17th century poem of some complexity. Similarly, an A level group gave an excellent commentary in French on an excerpt from a film on globalisation. Detail is used well by pupils of all abilities to provide evidence for literary commentary and for argument in debate.
- 2.17 Pupils apply mathematical concepts effectively and this extends into science subjects, such as the Year 12 physics lesson in which boys were processing raw data on damping effects.
- 2.18 Effective use is made of ICT by pupils, especially for researching and word-processing assignments in subject areas. They welcome the opportunity to use ICT for particular projects, for example in design and technology, English, geography, French and data-logging in science. However, opportunities for pupils to use ICT in lessons are not routinely provided by all departments. Although ICT was used creatively in a support lesson to help a pupil learn the symbols for chemicals in the periodic table, and some material for pupils has been posted on the intranet, the use of the school's intranet in developing pupils' learning has yet to be fully exploited.
- 2.19 Pupils readily give their opinions and defend them with reasoned argument. In English, a Year 10 group enjoyed analysing the effect of an advertising campaign on the viewer and in a sixth form drama lesson pupils explored the relative effectiveness of different stagings of a scene from *The Beggar's Opera*.
- 2.20 A range of opportunities outside the classroom are taken up by pupils to develop their independence of thought. In particular, the community service programme and the CCF challenge pupils to work out and implement their own plans. Several councils of pupil representatives consider suggestions for improving the school community and some ideas have been successfully negotiated and implemented; for example, extending the break by five minutes and permitting the drinking of water in lessons.
- 2.21 A study skills course in Year 9 gives pupils a good grounding in techniques for learning and these are reinforced by subject teachers, especially in English, history and ICT. Pupils are efficient takers of notes; the work in their books and files is well organised and presented, particularly in the sixth form.
- 2.22 Pupils are able to focus on individual work in class and are happy to share with others what they have written. They comment readily on each other's work and show respect for

different points of view. For example, in a Year 10 French lesson their role-play was tackled with enthusiasm, as was their work in Year 9 history when analysing a cartoon. Similar co-operative work was seen in a Year 10 biology lesson, which motivated pupils positively to achieve the best results. Sixth formers in art shared their preferences in artists by e-mail, and work in a Year 13 drama class gave rise to impressive co-operative learning. Outside the classroom, teams operate effectively in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the CCF, as well as in the community service scheme and amongst the prefect body.

- 2.23 Pupils settle well to their work in class and in private study time. They produce an impressive amount of written work. Boarders work effectively in study rooms during prep and enjoy researching and word-processing their work on computer. Activities are taken up readily and are well attended.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.24 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding and this strength has built upon since the last inspection. Its success is seen in the warmth of relationships, in the atmosphere of openness and trust and through a clearly understood set of shared values which give the pupils a sense of pride in their community. The school lives up to its Christian foundation and its aim to allow all pupils to reach their full potential
- 2.25 The chapel, where the whole school meets five times a week, plays an important role in the spiritual and moral development of pupils. Daily assemblies promote pupils' spiritual development; for example, in one assembly the chaplain gave an entertaining demonstration of how outward appearances can be misleading. Christian beliefs are embedded in the life of the school, with regular Eucharist services during which many pupils take communion. About 20 pupils each year put themselves forward for confirmation, marking a commitment on their own faith journey. One pupil was able to reflect on how her personal development had influenced a free and creative treatment of a religious theme, which evolved into an excellent portfolio of art work on the Graces and other female figures.
- 2.26 The student handbook contains a clearly defined code of behaviour, written by the pupils themselves, which discourages acts that show lack of concern for others. Topics such as drugs and the law, crime and punishment, and bullying are addressed through the PSHE programme and are also discussed within the divinity department. Pupils therefore have a clear sense of right and wrong and develop a strong moral character, a standard set by the staff and older pupils who aim to lead by example. Pupils show respect for each other, resulting in an ordered and mannerly community. A sense of fair play is apparent in many aspects of the daily life of the school, as exemplified in a play rehearsal where pupils were keen to share the workload equally.
- 2.27 The strong house and pastoral system gives pupils a sense of security and promotes feelings of high self-esteem and self-worth. Pupils are encouraged to express their views with confidence, knowing that they are valued members of the community. Pupils develop a strong social awareness through the variety of activities on offer. Good relationships exist between pupils and staff and among pupils of different age groups. The student council is effective in listening to pupils' requests and responds to them positively. Different councils exist so that all aspects of pupils' concerns can be addressed. Consideration of wider social issues is integral to many lessons, as exemplified by the sensitive discussion of the social stigma caused by mental illness in psychology. Pupils also develop a clear idea of social responsibility through the activities of the community service unit. They participate in projects which include visiting the elderly, both in their own homes and at a day centre, helping at local primary and preparatory schools, befriending homeless people, acting as guides for blind people and visiting a local home for Alzheimer's sufferers. These acts of

service help pupils to become aware of the needs of the less fortunate members of the wider community. Within the school community, older pupils feel responsible for younger pupils and are keen to lead and encourage them.

- 2.28 Pupils develop a good sense of cultural awareness and those of different cultural backgrounds are integrated well into the life of the school. Prejudices and racism are subjects for discussion in physical education and RS. The theme of 'If the Chapel became a Mosque' was considered by Year 9 pupils in religious studies to assist them to come to a better understanding of Islam. Empathy for different cultures was demonstrated in literature through the study of poems in both Gujarati and in a Glaswegian dialect. Pupils also used the lyrics of a reggae composition to illustrate how this genre of music had developed in areas of social poverty.
- 2.29 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.30 The overall quality of teaching is good. It addresses fully the range of pupils' abilities, including those with learning difficulties. The school has recently developed several initiatives to improve teaching and learning, such as the literacy programme in Year 9, the academically gifted policy, and study skills in general studies in Year 12. These are beginning to have a positive influence. The school's aim of helping pupils to aspire to high standards is supported by the quality of teaching.
- 2.31 Teaching in all subjects enables pupils to increase their understanding and their skills, but in the best lessons seen pupils were fully engaged intellectually through the use of stimulating material. For example, in a Year 13 lesson in French, pupils gained a clearer grasp of the concept of globalization through watching a video clip that taxed their comprehension skills, both linguistically and intellectually. Other outstanding lessons were characterised by their pace, pupils' enthusiastic response to the level of challenge, the involvement of all pupils in a class, a clear declaration of the aims and objectives of the lesson, good questioning of pupils with teachers using their responses, and the deployment of a wide range of teaching resources, including ICT. Lessons with some of these qualities were seen in English, art, history, French and design technology.
- 2.32 In the lessons regarded as satisfactory, the planning led to a lack of pace, the teaching did not involve the pupils enough, or there was too much emphasis on the supervision of pupils rather than direct teaching. Some subject teaching strategies are shaped predominantly by examination requirements, leading to a lack of breadth of teaching styles.
- 2.33 Lessons are generally well planned and most teachers make effective use of time. The range of teaching methods used varies somewhat, from rather didactic teaching to the use of different activities, such as group work, that involve pupils more and bring the topic alive for them. Such effective use of group work was seen in English, modern languages and art. A further example used to stimulate pupils was seen in a Year 9 English class where pupils were set the task of creating the front page of a newspaper in the style of a national tabloid.

- 2.34 Teaching shows a good understanding of the ability and particular needs of pupils, for example in Year 9 lessons in design technology, Latin and Spanish where teachers took special care to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties had fully understood what they had been asked to do. Chemistry teaching in Year 9 took account of the interests of the boys of this age group and biology teaching in Year 13 enabled pupils to work to a high standard.
- 2.35 Teachers have a good command of their subject and employ this knowledge effectively in their planning and in lessons. They also have a strong grasp of examination requirements. The effective use of ICT in teaching and learning varies from subject to subject and may be related to variations in teachers' expertise in this area.
- 2.36 Most teaching makes effective use of a very good range of resources. Classrooms are fitted with electronic whiteboards, which are sometimes used very imaginatively, for example in chemistry, where the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning were exemplified by a film clip about incidents in hotels. But in some cases, this resource is under-utilised and often acts only as an electronic blackboard. The provision of ICT facilities in teaching areas is good and was used very effectively for research on the Internet in a Year 12 French lesson. However, the unreliability of the ICT network had a detrimental effect in several lessons. The library, which is due to have a promising new space in a new building, is currently housed in the old chapel. It comprises a good collection of books, magazines and on-line resources in all subjects, many of which relate well to current teaching. It is enhanced by special exhibitions on current topics. But, despite the best endeavours of the dedicated librarian, this resource remains underused.
- 2.37 Pupils' work is marked regularly and most is done thoroughly, the marking criteria being clearly understood by pupils. Some teachers also add helpful comments, especially in the sixth form. Work in some subjects, such as design technology, art and history in Year 9, contained some very constructive advice for further improvement, but this was not the case in all departments. In a few cases, marking did not provide enough support for pupils, for example those with learning difficulties. Some lessons proceeded from the work that was being returned and therefore addressed the difficulties that had emerged.
- 2.38 Pupils' performance is evaluated through the use of effort grades twice a term and achievement grades at the end of each term. Effort grades are used to promote improvement in work ethic. Attainment grades are a constructive and continuous assessment of where a pupil is heading. The clear setting of targets relating to attainment grades enables the school to offer helpful advice, for example about university choices in the sixth form.
- 2.39 Pupils were well behaved in almost all lessons seen and in some cases good working patterns have been established so that lessons can proceed productively without any general preliminary instructions, for example in modern languages and classics. Many lessons showed a very good level of engagement and effort by pupils and some independent learning.
- 2.40 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care is outstanding, has improved since the last inspection and continues to be one of the strengths of the school. The school meets well its aim to provide a happy and secure environment in which pupils thrive. Highly competent senior house staff and house tutors provide first class support and guidance for pupils in their charge. Care for the well-being of pupils is a priority for all staff. Teachers know all pupils well, communicate effectively with parents, and are good role models.
- 3.2 The pastoral care system pre-empts concerns by providing a supportive, caring and disciplined environment. The school sees the pupils' house as a place where they belong and are valued. Many pupils reported this as a real strength and they appreciate the small scale of the school where everyone has a place. A deputy head oversees the senior house staff and promotes effective communication and a sense of collegiality, which is aided by the closely knit nature of the school on its compact site. The ethos of the school is underpinned by Christian values and the new chaplain increasingly plays an important part in pupils' pastoral care.
- 3.3 Pupils get on very well with each other and relationships between staff and pupils in almost every house are marked by respect, good humour, trust and friendliness. Pupils and parents turn naturally to the supportive senior house staff and tutors. Small class sizes and the house structure ensure that pupils are known as individuals. Tutors spend productive time with their tutor groups and records are kept of pupils' activities.
- 3.4 Good behaviour is promoted by all teachers and emphasised in assemblies and house meetings. It permeates everyday life in the school where courtesy and consideration for others are expected. The nature of the accommodation in most of the houses assists friendly professional relationships between senior house staff, house tutors and pupils. Pupils clearly feel at ease in the company of adults and are able to discuss concerns freely. Appropriate sanctions are in place and widely understood, with a deputy head keeping records of more serious disciplinary incidents. The school's procedures to guard against harassment and bullying are clearly defined, effective and understood by pupils.
- 3.5 A first-class facility of 24-hour care is provided by a medical team of four. There is open communication with the approachable staff in the medical centre, who make a significant contribution to pupils' wellbeing. Clear records of any medical incidents are kept. Independent counselling is also available to pupils and is well publicised.
- 3.6 An appropriate child protection policy is in place and the school takes care to enforce the spirit as well as the letter of the policy. A deputy head is the designated person and all staff have been trained recently in child protection. Admissions and attendance registers are kept appropriately.
- 3.7 The school receives regular reports from the fire authority and all necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. Fire practices are carried out regularly and a full record kept. A comprehensive fire risk assessment was commissioned in 2007 and its recommendations are being acted upon.
- 3.8 Health and safety policies are comprehensive, helpful and enforced. Detailed risk assessments covering all aspects of school life are kept up to date. A health and safety

committee oversees the implementation of procedures appropriately. School meals are healthy, varied and are enjoyed by pupils.

- 3.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.10 The school has a very strong partnership with parents, as at the time of the last inspection, and outstanding links with the local community. The overwhelming majority of responses to the questionnaires distributed before the inspection showed parents' satisfaction that the school was bringing out the best in their children and that they had considerable confidence in the work of the school. The great majority of the responses were positive, with all parents agreeing that the school promotes worthwhile behaviour and views. Many parents commented favourably on the pastoral system and praised the house staff highly. Some parents mentioned that the long, intensive day, combined with prep, made their children tired. This issue was also raised by some pupils.
- 3.11 Parents' involvement with the school is good. They are able to contact the school at all times and are invited to attend sport, drama, music, art and house charity events, as well as lectures given by visiting speakers. In addition, they attend chapel services on some Sunday evenings with their children and are also invited to listen to visiting speakers. The school welcomes offers of work experience placements from parents and is eager to invite them to speak about their jobs or interests. Regular newsletters informing parents of achievements in the school and of forthcoming events are sent out at the end of each term and are posted on the school's website.
- 3.12 Parents' evenings are held annually for each year group. In addition, there is an extra sixth form consultation evening where specific parents are invited to attend if there are issues for discussion. Visiting parents from overseas may make special arrangements to consult staff.
- 3.13 St John's Activities Association holds three fund-raising events each year. The profits are used to purchase equipment which is considered beyond the scope of what the school should normally supply, the most recent purchase being a mountain bike trailer.
- 3.14 Full school reports are written at the end of each term and, in addition, grades are sent to parents each half term. Teachers take considerable care in writing these reports, which reflect the fact that pupils are well known and their personal needs understood. However, whilst they contain some evidence about pupils' attainment, the comments tend to concentrate more on their personal attributes rather their achievement in subjects and do not always offer constructive suggestions for improvement in subjects.
- 3.15 Parents are generally very happy with the way in which their concerns are dealt with and indeed there have been no formal complaints during the current or previous year. Discussion with tutors, house staff or the head usually helps to resolve matters, but the school does have a formal complaints procedure, details of which are available on the school's website.
- 3.16 The school's links with the community are outstanding and have been extended, partly through a well-organised and successful Community Service Unit. There is a growing use by the community's of the school's facilities. For example, local groups have used the chapel for recitals and carol services, and it was recently the venue for a celebration of the centenary of the scouting movement. There is a long-standing connection between the school and the Leatherhead Drama Festival and with the Mole Valley Arts Alive Forum. Unfortunately, planning restrictions mean that the school cannot regularly offer the use of its Performing

Arts Centre. Sporting facilities are made available for a wide range of activities, including a premier league football club's *Football in the Community* programme, which provides football coaching for young children.

- 3.17 A partnership with the University of Surrey allows St John's to use the resources and expertise of the university and, in addition, the university provides an annual sixth form scholarship to the school, awarded at the discretion of the head. Good relationships with the Old Johnian Society are fostered, which keeps former pupils informed of developments at the school. In addition, two former pupils spoke to sixth formers about opportunities beyond school.
- 3.18 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.19 Overall, the quality of boarding provision is good and, through it, the school provides excellent pastoral care, so meeting their aim of creating a happy and secure environment. The accommodation ranges from the excellent facilities for girls in Fairfield House and for boys in East, to good provision for girls in Hallaton House and for boys in West, where a major refurbishment is planned, down to adequate in Churchill, where only a small number of modifications has been implemented, such as an internal fire escape route, fire doors and a small increase in bathroom facilities.
- 3.20 Pupils receive excellent care and attention from house staff, with their efforts being underpinned by a very efficient tutorial system. As a result, they are well acquainted with the individual needs of pupils, irrespective of how many days they spend in the boarding house each week. A concerted effort is made to integrate all boarders and day pupils fully. Relationships between staff and pupils in almost every house are good or better. For example, the girls feel very much at home in their house and have an excellent rapport with their housemistress. Inter-house competitions, such as debating, and the use of the sixth form centre enable girls and boys to mix socially.
- 3.21 A smaller number of boarders stay over the weekend than at the time of the last boarding inspection. These are pupils in Year 13 who wish to use the weekend to work, thereby necessitating no need for a formal weekend activity programme. Those who stay are well looked after by house staff at the weekend. During the week pupils have manifold opportunities to participate in a wide range of activities.
- 3.22 The school has followed up all recommended actions in the last Commission for Social Care Inspection report. The improvements made to the accommodation in East have been considerable and created a welcoming environment. The planned refurbishment in West aims to establish a comparable standard. As the girl's accommodation is already of such quality, the area that remains in need of considerable improvement is Churchill, which is being considered within the wider frame-work of the school's plans for development.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The governance of the school is good and has been influential in enabling it to develop, whilst retaining its essential character of a small and friendly school. The business of governance is conducted professionally and is aided by an appropriate range of sub-committees which service the council. Governors take a strong interest in the school and have a good range of expertise.
- 4.2 In many respects the school is at an important point of its history and development. The need to improve certain aspects of its provision, such as some teaching areas and the sports facilities, has been recognised by the council and they have planned accordingly. The ambitious plan involves building a new teaching block, incorporating improved facilities for art, design technology and the library, and a rationalisation of existing teaching space, as well as the modernisation of some of the boarding accommodation.
- 4.3 Governors are kept well informed about current issues in a variety of ways; for example, by regular reports from the head and bursar, and by talks from senior staff about their work and aspects of the school. The education committee discusses examination results with the head and his two deputies and results are also reported to the governing council. Governors also meet staff on various social occasions at the school. Governors have been very effective in ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The leadership shown by the school management team is of a high quality and their complementary skills help them to work effectively as a team. Since his appointment, the head has established a management structure which has been instrumental in improving many aspects of the school. He leads very well, with a quiet authority, and has earned the respect of teachers, parents and governors. The good leadership and management of the school is a key factor in the improvements made since the last inspection and the success the school has in meeting its principal aims.
- 4.5 An appropriate system of groups, with regular meetings, ensures that policy matters and procedures are established, discussed and reviewed. In addition to regular meetings of the school management team, pastoral staff and heads of department, the facility whereby a number of cross-curricular issues, such as study skills, are discussed and promoted encourages professional, open, debate and the healthy development of the curriculum.
- 4.6 Planning for the development of the school is good. One plan takes a strategic look at the school's broad development over the next five years. It is mainly concerned with the expansion of the school's number on roll and the associated improvement in buildings and resources, but also considers aspects of school organisation and management. This plan is kept under review and frequently revised, as is the school's annual development plan. At present, heads of department make little direct contribution of the annual development plan; it is largely constructed by contributions from the school management team, but draws on their knowledge of the needs of subject departments.

- 4.7 There is a strong emphasis on monitoring the work of staff and on supporting them. Because of this, the school management team knows the school well. Opportunities for professional development are freely available; the budget for such has been increased to a good level recently and appropriate records of teachers' participation are kept. A deputy head is responsible for the monitoring of the work of the subject departments. He appraises the work of heads of department annually and ensures that systems for the effective running of departments, such as handbooks and development plans, are in place. This work has been very effective in establishing a degree of consistency in quality, although there is further scope for improvement in the sharpness and ambition of some departmental plans. Similarly, a deputy head plays an important role in overseeing the provision of the excellent pastoral care, working very effectively with house staff. Both deputies play a pivotal part in the thorough appraisal system, which ensures a degree of accountability to both the school management team and the governing council, but is also seen as a positive experience by teachers, since it allows them a voice, good access to senior staff and opportunities to enhance their professional development.
- 4.8 Whilst the ICT facilities in the school are plentiful, the network is too unreliable and leads to a loss of learning in some lessons. The management of ICT within the school has been through a difficult period; the school is aware of the need for improvement, and is putting appropriate plans in place.
- 4.9 The management of almost all subject departments and houses is effective. Heads of department have a clear idea of their roles and are becoming increasingly involved in development, an agenda clearly driven by the school management team. They have developed a greater sense of cohesion and common purpose since the last inspection. Their handbooks and plans are generally thorough, although some departments are not pursuing an ambitious agenda in their future plans. Heads of department make valuable appraisals of their staff and support them well.
- 4.10 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers. In recent years it has been able to recruit good quality staff. Experienced teachers who are new to the school and those starting their careers are very well supported through a well-run induction programme. They receive a good induction into school life, are assigned mentors and helpfully appraised through the school's system. Those spoken to were very appreciative of the help they received. Arrangements for checking the suitability of staff are in place.
- 4.11 Good management of the school's finances means that teachers enjoy the use of plentiful resources. Bursarial staff provide useful financial reports to support the work of the council's finance committee, which meets termly; copies are also provided to the head for his information. Further financial information and forecasts are used to inform other areas of the work of governors, such as that of the general purposes committee. Heads of department negotiate their annual budgets with a deputy head and most, but not all, are accurate in their financial planning.
- 4.12 The administration of the school is such that it allows daily life to run smoothly. This is in part due to the efficient work of the support staff working in administrative, pastoral, catering, and grounds and maintenance areas.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 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 St John's School is successful in achieving its principal aims. In particular, it provides outstanding pastoral care for its pupils through the creation of a happy and secure environment. Similarly, pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is excellent. All other aspects of what the school does it does well, so there is uniform quality of provision. All pupils, including those with learning difficulties, achieve well in public examinations because of the good teaching. They experience a broad curriculum, both in and out of the classroom, which enables them to develop their spiritual, intellectual, social and physical qualities well. Boarders are very well cared for and have, in the main, good and improving accommodation. Excellent contacts have been established with the local community; links with parents are well-established and they are pleased with what the school offers, particularly the warm and friendly atmosphere that prevails. All this has been achieved by good quality governance and management, and the dedication of the staff.
- 5.2 Progress since the last inspection has been good. In particular, there is now a clear structure for the management of the school, roles are clear, and communication is effective. The curriculum has been reviewed, with the result that pupils' personal, social and health education, particularly in Years 9 to 11, has been more firmly embedded in the curriculum and appropriate training for teachers provided. The library is still underused but there are plans to relocate it to a new and better position. Further progress is being considered through an ambitious development plan which will provide improved facilities for sport, teaching and boarding.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no significant weaknesses, but in order to improve on the present good provision, the management and council should take the following steps.
1. Enhance the pupils' learning by:
 - ensuring the reliability of the school's ICT network;
 - developing a strategy for the improving the use of the library;
 - increasing the range of teaching styles used;
 - improving comments on pupils' subject attainment and targets for improvement in school reports.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 28th April to 1st May 2008. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the medical 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.

List of Inspectors

Dr Joe Tierney	Reporting Inspector
Mr Philip Capes	Head, HMC School
Mr Ian Davies	Head, HMC School
Mrs Cynthia Hall	Head, GSA School
Mrs Myra Howard	Head of Sixth Form, GSA School
Mr Nick Munday	Deputy Head, HMC School
Dr Ernst Zillekens	Senior Librarian and Head of Department, HMC School