

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### St Edmund's School

The junior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	<b>St Edmund's School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>886/6050</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1056382</b>
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Proprietor	<b>Mr Michael Terry</b>
Age Range	<b>13 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> November 2009</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A (1) (b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate. The Ofsted report is available separately at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 Edmund's School was founded in 1749 by the Clergy Orphan Corporation and moved to its present location in 1855. Girls were accepted into the school in 1982. Control was devolved in 1996 when the school was incorporated with a new governing body. The current headmaster was appointed in 2005. The school occupies an extensive site overlooking the city of Canterbury and its Cathedral. The original main building is used predominantly as administrative offices, dining hall, and day and boarding houses. Most of the teaching takes place in separate blocks of varying age around the campus with good provision for specialist teaching in practical and creative subjects. Plans for further developments are being discussed by the governors.
- 1.2 The school is committed to providing, within a caring and disciplined community informed by Christian principles, a broad education which will ensure that boys and girls are both happy and successful. The crucial importance of developing compassionate and decent human relationships is emphasised alongside the nurturing of individual interests and talents, so that each boy or girl may proceed from the school with the best possible academic qualifications, a mature awareness of the spiritual and ethical life, a self-confidence which is founded on self-knowledge and self-discipline, assured social skills, well-developed physical capabilities and a broad cultural awareness.
- 1.3 Although a Christian foundation, the school welcomes pupils from all backgrounds. At the time of the inspection there were 279 pupils, 175 boys and 104 girls, of which 135 were in the sixth form. Seventy were boarders. The majority of the school's intake (38 out of 46 in the current year) transfer from the junior school and achieve automatic places in the senior school if they have spent at least their final two years in the junior school. Until this year, these pupils took the Common Entrance examination as a form of 'graduation examination' but in the future the examination process will be internal. The remaining entrants are accepted through the normal Common Entrance route or via separate tests and interviews. A very small number of pupils join the school in Year 10 and others, about 20 in recent years, are taken directly into the sixth form. Forty-nine pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom thirty-two receive support for their English. The school accepts pupils of a broad range of ability, but the average ability of pupils on entry to the school is above the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in public examinations will be above the average for all maintained secondary schools. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and is funded by the local education authority, and the school has identified 67 others with specific learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD).
- 1.4 A significant number of pupils receive help with school fees through bursaries and scholarships at ages 13 and 16. A few pupils, about six to eight, leave the school after GCSE; all of these proceed to full-time education at either further education colleges or other school sixth forms. A high proportion of leavers at age 18 proceeds to university or other higher education institutions.

- 1.5 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 NC equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Lower 5	Year 9
Middle 5	Year 10
Upper 5	Year 11
Lower 6	Year 12
Upper 6	Year 13

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

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The school provides a good educational experience for its pupils, consistent with its aim to help pupils enjoy their education and to nurture their individual interests and talents. The quality of the generally broad and balanced curriculum is better than at the time of the last inspection. The curriculum is well supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and enhanced by visits to places of educational interest.
- 2.2 The educational experience enjoyed by pupils contributes effectively to their progress in all areas of learning. It includes all the subjects of the NC plus a choice of modern foreign languages, religious studies (RS) and personal, social and health education (PSHE). For a school of this size, a wide range of optional subjects is offered in the sixth form. The newly-established AQA baccalaureate course has brought new challenge to able sixth formers, by adding a unit in critical thinking to their academic studies and, in Year 13, a research project. Other changes made since the last inspection, such as the introduction of the International GCSE in mathematics and separate sciences at GCSE have also contributed to improved provision. Pupils said that they are very happy with the curriculum they are offered. They appreciate the wide choice of courses and the small group sizes in which they study.
- 2.3 Throughout the school, all the pupils have good opportunities to develop effective skills in listening and speaking in several subjects and particularly through their study of English and modern foreign languages. Year 13 pupils displayed outstanding abilities in practical criticism and, in modern foreign languages, a Year 9 Spanish class showed great enjoyment in expressing themselves on a topic for which they had a good grasp of the vocabulary. Elsewhere the small set sizes allow each pupil to make well-expressed contributions to discussions. Mathematics is the major contributor to pupils' development of good numeracy skills. The provision in science, information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology (DT) encourages pupils' scientific and technological development whilst their physical development is promoted through physical education (PE) and games. Music, drama and art further pupils' creative and aesthetic development. The time allocated to PSHE and RS, though limited, contributes well to pupils' personal development. The PSHE programme includes careers guidance, as well as sex and relationships education, and plays its part in producing happy and balanced pupils, whose concern for others is expressed in a strong school community and in the readiness to help others farther afield.
- 2.4 Long- and medium-term planning of the curriculum is of good quality, influences short-term planning and ensures coherence in the courses offered. There is good communication on curriculum matters between the senior and junior schools, an outcome of the number of senior school teachers who teach in the junior school, and the curriculum is discussed formally at several levels in the senior school. All pupils have equality of access to what the school has to offer and in some extra-curricular activities the relatively small size of the school means that participation of all is necessary in order to raise teams. Existing arrangements are clearly set out in numerous publications for pupils, staff and parents.
- 2.5 Provision for LDD pupils and those with EAL is sound. The one-to-one support is good and teachers build on the careful analysis done of the strengths and weaknesses of these pupils. Teachers from the senior school are involved in end of Year 8 examinations, and work with junior school teachers to ensure that the setting by ability in the senior school is appropriately done. At this transition point detailed notes regarding pupils' LDD requirements, based on their known strengths and level of need, are discussed and passed on for distribution to class teachers in the senior school. Judgements concerning gifted and talented pupils are made with reference to their scores in standardised tests undertaken at the beginning of Year 9.

The resultant individual education plans are helpful documents to which teachers have ready access; dyslexic pupils are allowed to use laptop computers in class. The setting arrangements in the core subjects are designed to allow teachers to direct their lessons at pupils across the ability range. Nevertheless, provision for the gifted and talented and LDD pupils is inconsistent in mainstream classes. The work in their books and in lessons indicates that only limited amounts of different work for pupils of different ability are set.

- 2.6 The extra-curricular programme offers a range of opportunities, which include choirs, orchestra and bands of different groupings, along with some first-rate drama. Pupils also have the opportunity of being involved in social awareness groups and team games in a variety of sports. A variety of visits to places such as the Festival Hall further enhance their experience. Contacts with the local community and links with schools overseas encourage their understanding of communal welfare. All of these experiences broaden pupils' educational experience.
- 2.7 Pupils are prepared well for the next stage of their education. The well-established and extensive process begins in Year 9 and all pupils take part in the independent schools' "Futurewise" scheme. They are given good advice, in which the housemaster and housemistress play an important part, about opportunities available to them in, and beyond, higher education. For the few who leave at the end of Year 11 or Year 13 to seek employment, good contacts with outside careers advisers provide valuable guidance. Work experience at the end of Year 11 also plays a part in this good provision, whilst the accomplished examination performance of most provides them with the wherewithal to make sound choices regarding their future careers.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.9 Pupils, including those with LDD and EAL, perform well, as was reported at the last inspection. There is little difference in the performance of boys and girls, especially in national examinations. Several pupils reach high standards in extra-curricular activities. Pupils' overall performance is in line with the school's evaluation and its aim to nurture individual interests and talents, so that each boy and girl may proceed from the school with the best possible academic qualifications.
- 2.10 Pupils do not take the national tests at the age of 14, but they take a series of standardised tests in mathematics, English, and verbal and non-verbal reasoning, as well as tests that indicate their progress and likely achievements at GCSE and A level. The results of such tests indicate that pupils make good progress. Their attainment in the national examinations at age 16 and 18 is good in relation to their abilities. GCSE performance over the last three years for which there is comparable data has been well above the national average, and that at A level has been above the national average. In 2009, the school's A-level results were significantly better than in 2008, a factor attributable to good teaching and learning, though as yet there are no national averages against which to compare these results.
- 2.11 In the great majority of lessons observed, pupils achieved good standards. Pupils are capable and competent in the application of essential skills to their work. Attitudes to study are positive and pupils were found to be generally motivated, taking pride in their achievements. They enjoy their studies, demonstrate outstanding commitment, are keen to succeed and persevere in what they are doing.

- 2.12 Pupils are articulate and good listeners. They write fluently and contribute well to class discussions, which is beneficial to their learning. In a Year 12 English lesson, pupils employed considerable skills discussing symbolism to derive a fuller appreciation of issues surrounding the title character in 'The Great Gatsby', whilst scrutiny of files of work in a range of subjects provided several good examples of extended writing. Pupils show the ability to think for themselves wherever they are encouraged to and ask pertinent questions. Mathematical and problem-solving skills are well developed and pupils of all abilities are able to apply mathematical concepts to a range of related topics. In a Year 12 business studies class pupils demonstrated this by their ability to draw different demand curves for luxuries or necessities.
- 2.13 Pupils are well behaved and keen to learn. They can work independently and in pairs to good effect, as was seen in some RS and English lessons and their written work is well presented in an organised fashion. Pupils also work well together in class. In Year 9 music classes, for example, more able instrumentalists teach others simplified instrumental parts for ensemble performance. They willingly support one another's learning and are quick to offer praise for work well done.
- 2.14 Outside the classroom, pupils have achieved distinction in a number of activities. Individuals have been selected for the National Youth Theatre and National Youth Choir. In addition, there have been finalists in the Marlowe Young Musician of the Year competition. There has also been county and national representation in sports ranging from hockey and cricket to martial arts and ultimate Frisbee.

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

- 2.15 Pupils develop outstanding qualities in relation to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural life. This is stronger than at the time of the last report. It also fulfils the school's aims to develop compassionate and decent human beings with a mature awareness of the spiritual and ethical life, a self-confidence which is founded on self-knowledge and self-discipline, assured social skills, and a broad cultural awareness. The school helps pupils to develop confidence, enthusiasm for learning, and a strong sense of moral responsibility. It provides a positive Christian environment with strong, respectful relationships which enable the different groups within its community to feel comfortable. The genuine warmth between pupils and their peers and between pupils and staff provides evidence of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development that is strength of the school.
- 2.16 Pupils respond well to the opportunities for prayer and reflection and discuss easily the spiritual life, especially in RE. They have the luxury of regular assemblies in the school chapel and regard the chaplaincy as an important part of their school experience. These times for prayer, reflection and celebration help pupils to develop insight and a sense of identity. They willingly involve themselves in the opportunities offered by art, drama and music, as well as other activities which broaden their understanding of a world that they are beginning to see is more than secular. They are confident and recognise through their own self-worth that each pupil has something to offer. They have no hesitation in celebrating the achievements of their peers. They have an understanding of the concepts of goodness and truth.
- 2.17 Pupils have a strong moral commitment, recognising what is the right thing to do in relationships with their peers and their teachers. Their generally excellent behaviour in class and around the school demonstrates their recognition of the importance of rules and the importance of abiding by them; as one pupil said, 'we follow the rules not because they are enforced but because it is the right thing to do'. They willingly see as beneficial the moral duty of helping others. In school this extends to older pupils providing support for younger

pupils. Beyond this they willingly contribute well to charities and take a lead in their organisation, as demonstrated by the activities of the Interact group. Several local charities benefit from their generosity and pupils also work hard for charities in Tanzania and Eastern Europe.

- 2.18 Pupils develop outstandingly well socially. They take on responsibility as they move through the school, acting as prefects, leaders of houses and captains of teams. They show initiative and confidently deal with others, as demonstrated when showing inspectors around the school. The school council provides them with the opportunity to develop social skills as well as learn the ways of democracy. They can point to a variety of successes their discussions within the school council have brought. Pupils also benefit from their learning in subjects such as PSHE and history and, as they move through the school, develop a good understanding of the political system in England as well as in other parts of the world. There is little doubt that they are developing social strengths that help them understand social cohesion and the value of the common good.
- 2.19 Pupils' cultural development is strong. They learn about other faiths, such as Judaism and Islam in RE and PSHE, and learn about other lands and peoples in geography. Pupils also learn about the lives of different people through their study of history. The work in music and art, both strengths in the school and both giving them the opportunity to explore the music and art of other countries, helps them to understand something of the cultures of different parts of the world. In the sixth form in particular pupils benefit from mixing with children of other nations, especially Germany and South East Asia. Inevitably they begin to recognise how one group of people react with another and the importance of overcoming the barriers that sometimes exist.
- 2.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.21 The overall quality of teaching is good with a significant number of outstanding lessons. Very few lessons observed were judged unsatisfactory. This is better than at the time of the last report and is in line with the school's aim to help pupils achieve knowledge, skills and understanding, along with the development of their physical and creative attributes. Teaching helps pupils gain good academic qualifications. The procedures for assessment and marking of pupils' work are good and help teachers, pupils and parents to understand the progress being made.
- 2.22 Staff-pupil relationships are excellent and in the great majority of lessons pupils respond well to the good teaching they experience. Teaching is knowledgeable, and this is an important factor in the good standards that pupils reach and the progress made by pupils of all abilities. Some outstanding teaching is capable of inspiring and enthusing their pupils. Teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly and enjoy learning. In most lessons the level of teaching and teacher expectations are appropriate to the pupils' ability and prior attainment. The most effective lessons were characterised by teachers transmitting their own enthusiasm and passion for the subject to pupils, supporting pupils of all abilities well and challenging appropriately.
- 2.23 Across the curriculum lessons were observed in which relationships were friendly but firm, and created a working atmosphere that led to effective learning of pupils across the ability range. Excellent examples were observed in a Year 11 music lesson in which the less skilful performers, having been given very good support, performed to a high standard and in a Year 9 RS lesson in which expert questioning challenged pupils effectively across the ability

- range. There was much evidence of good planning and well managed lesson time, with teaching moving at a brisk pace, as seen in a Year 10 mathematics lesson and in a Year 11 drama session. The effective teaching methods and well-constructed class activities encouraged pupils to think for themselves, apply intellectual rigour and make real efforts to push forward their thinking. These characteristics were observed operating to good effect in a PSHE lesson in which pupils were tackling complex issues associated with being both an individual and being a member of a community.
- 2.24 On the few occasions where teaching was less satisfactory, too few techniques were employed to stretch the most able and insufficient use was made of open questioning or extended tasks to promote intellectual challenge for them. Likewise, tasks especially adapted to LDD and EAL pupils did not always support their needs effectively and so hindered their learning. In these lessons pupils tended to lose interest and lack concentration.
- 2.25 A satisfactory range of resources supports teaching and learning and is generally well used, with the video, data projectors and some interactive whiteboards contributing effectively to lessons. A Year 11 physics set were treated to an animation demonstrating the different planes of a comet's orbit when compared with those of the planets, for example. ICT was well used in music and DT, but was less evident in other subjects as a tool for research or project work, where its main use was for word processing. The library is well stocked and well furnished but is used too little as a teaching resource to help pupils benefit from reference work.
- 2.26 The quality of assessment is good. The school carries out a series of nationally standardised tests to enable teachers to identify those pupils with particular strengths and those with obvious weaknesses, and also to measure progress. The information has enabled the director of studies to build up a detailed picture of performance across the school against national averages. Individual pupils' performance is transferred onto academic review cards (ARCs) and as a result pupils have a clear idea of how well they are doing. The outcome of the assessments is used well in some areas, such as science, drama and art, to influence teachers' planning. They have yet to be used fully enough across the curriculum and so the extent of their impact on teachers' planning is limited.
- 2.27 Marking is often good and on occasions very good, with worthwhile comment and suggestions as to how work can be improved. The printed guidance to assessment criteria in the front of the pupils' exercise books in some subjects is an extremely useful source of reference for them, helping them both to gauge what is expected of them and to understand why a piece of work has been marked as it has.
- 2.28 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 care for pupils is outstanding and the provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is also strong. This is as reported at the time of the last inspection. The high quality of care stems from the school's aim to provide pupils with an education within a caring, disciplined community. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and pupils genuinely value this. Pupils feel safe, secure and valued.
- 3.2 The division of pupils into the four day houses, whether they are boarders or not, provides the basic structure of pastoral care and contributes to the general feeling of family that exists throughout the school. The housemasters oversee the pastoral care of the pupils through a team of tutors who are responsible for relatively small groups of pupils of about seven or eight. Together they nurture the academic and personal development of the pupils in their care. This structure is most effective in facilitating good and constructive relationships amongst the pupils and encourages the obvious confidence they have in their teachers. They talk fondly of the arrangements. Despite some indicators in the pupils' questionnaire that they felt they were not listened to, in talking to pupils formally and informally, inspectors found that pupils felt they could approach any member of staff or a senior student with any concerns and notice would be taken. They say willingly that one of the most important features of the school is the small classes and tutor groups where staff and pupils get to know each other well. The house system provides a sense of belonging for every child and an opportunity for pupils to contribute to their community.
- 3.3 Housemasters give excellent guidance and support through house assemblies, the daily registrations and the easy access they offer to all pupils. They are provided with time for this essential pastoral work by not having a tutor group themselves. They can, therefore, provide support for the house tutors, who are all the teachers other than those in the senior management team. Such an organisation helps overseas pupils to integrate well and enables them to describe their class and 'housemates' as friends.
- 3.4 The School Chaplain plays a key role in the pastoral life of the school. Day and boarding pupils appreciate his accessibility and his genuine interest in them as individuals. His teaching in the junior school prepares younger pupils well for their transfer into the senior school.
- 3.5 The school has clear rules which are well known to the pupils and to parents through the pupils' and parents' handbooks. The good anti-bullying code is well known by the parents, staff and pupils, and pupils said that bullying was not an issue in the school. They are well aware of the anti-bullying stance taken by the school and feel confident that if there was bullying it would be dealt with appropriately.
- 3.6 Pupils' positive response to high expectations of behaviour demonstrates the high regard they have for their teachers and their community. A system of reward and sanction cards is in operation and the blue merit card is highly coveted.
- 3.7 The school has a good child protection policy. It has been endorsed by the governors, who have a named person as their representative. The chaplain is the designated person for child protection in senior school. The policy and procedure are known to staff and all have had appropriate training. A policy on e-safety is in place and guidance is given through the PSHE programme. The supervision of pupils at break times and lunchtime is adequate.

- 3.8 The health and safety committee has appropriate representation from key areas in the school. It works effectively to ensure that committee policies are carried through. Procedures for protection against fire are thorough, with all fire appliances and evacuation procedures regularly tested and up-to-date. Risk assessments are of high quality and regulations concerning electrical equipment and the security of hazardous areas such as science laboratories are fully in place. The use of protective clothing and eye wear in science and DT was observed. An appropriate number of staff hold first aid qualifications; a good first aid policy is in place, and first aid boxes are strategically placed around the school and checked by the school nurse. The quality of the medical centre is outstanding. Medical provision is well structured throughout, with a nurse on call 24 hours a day. All relevant medical policies are in place and procedures are clear and tightly adhered to. Pupils feel welcome in the medical centre and often use it as source of advice on physical and mental health matters that are of concern to them. The nursing staff contribute significantly to the health section of the PSHE programme.
- 3.9 Opportunities for pupils to express their views about food are very good. The dining hall committee provides a channel of communication for pupils to contribute to the healthy eating policy of the school. Meals provided are of high quality and pupils are offered a good variety of healthy options. Pupils enjoy the food. The importance of regular exercise is effectively dealt with across the curriculum in science, PSHE and in PE. The opportunities to be active are excellent and a wide range of physical activities are offered in the PE programme, inter-house and inter-school matches and in the activities programme.
- 3.10 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**

- 3.11 The school has outstanding links with its parents and with the community, a judgement stronger than that reported in the previous report. It is also in line with the school's aim to educate pupils within a caring community that reflects the wider community of family. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the frequent communications they receive about the school's work and their children's progress. The school makes a first-rate contribution to the local community and to communities in other parts of the world, all of which make a very positive contribution to pupils' educational experience.
- 3.12 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were very positive, with no general feeling of disappointment with any of the areas covered. Parents have a high degree of satisfaction with the education and support provided by the school, some parents describing St Edmund's as a kind and caring school, and the very good behaviour of the pupils. Other areas of strength identified by the parents, and supported by the inspection findings, were: the good academic progress of their children; the diversity of the curriculum; the worthwhile views and attitudes promoted by the school; and the good provision for boarders.
- 3.13 The school's communication with parents is highly effective. The school provides an abundance of well-balanced information at appropriate times of the year. The various handbooks are of good quality and helpful to parents. Further general information, school policies and news items are readily available on the school's very comprehensive website. This provides both existing and prospective parents with extensive information about the school. It contains a very useful 'Parents' Zone' page where they can access a very wide range of information, which includes contact details for the chairman of governors, staff lists, and school policies on matters such as the safeguarding of children, the complaints policy and the sex and relationships education policies. At the end of the Michaelmas term all parents receive a copy of the school's *Chronicle*, the excellent school magazine which

provides a comprehensive and colourful review of the school year and celebrates school, house and individual pupil successes.

- 3.14 Regular opportunities exist for parents and guardians to meet with teachers to review the progress of their son or daughter. For all year groups there is an academic review twice in the Michaelmas term and once in the shorter Lent term. For Years 9, 10 and 11 there is also an annual review at the end of the summer term. Written information is sent to parents regularly. From time to time, teachers give a grade for a pupil's attainment and effort in each subject and offer a predicted grade relevant to likely performance in GCSE or A-level examinations. The grades are recorded on the ARC which is sent home, giving parents an indication of their child's achievement and progress. Informative and helpful full school reports on all pupils are issued twice a year. They indicate effectively to parents how well their child is doing. Pupils have the opportunity to reflect on the comments made by their teachers and add their own self-appraisal to their reports. At the back of the report booklet is a parental response sheet which may be removed and returned if parents also wish to comment on matters arising from the report.
- 3.15 The school handles the concerns of parents with due care. A well-written formal complaints procedure is in place and published to parents on the school website and in the new parent handbook. The school deals with concerns promptly and sensitively, as pointed out in some of the responses from parents through the pre-inspection questionnaire, so that no complaint has reached the final formal stage in the last two years. A written complaint last year reached the chair of governors but was then resolved.
- 3.16 Excellent links exist with the local and wider community and these enhance the personal and social development of the pupils. The 'Rotary Interact' group is pupil led and pupil run, with support and encouragement from the staff and a member of the local Rotary organisation, and gives pupils the opportunity to take on leadership, commit to good causes, and demonstrate helpfulness and respect for others. The group has raised money for a range of local charities, including local homeless, handicapped and terminally ill children and Kent Air Ambulance. Pupils have also provided physical support to local projects such as taking responsibility for cleaning a beach, helping to paint a local nursery school and digging out two ponds for the Kent Wildlife Trust. They are currently forging links with a local primary school to set up a one-to-one reading support scheme. Internationally, the school supports a school in Tanzania, has recently established links with a Polish school and works for an international charity. These, and a range of other numerous activities, contribute to pupils' moral understanding of commitment to the common good, as well as helping them see the importance of contributing to society where there is a need. The interesting development of the school offering the opportunity for young musicians in the locality to come into school to play with an orchestra, and the regular summer fest, contribute further to pupils' understanding of the need to share.
- 3.17 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**

- 3.18 The quality of the boarding experience at St Edmund's is good and fits in well with the school's aim to help pupils develop within a caring and disciplined community informed by Christian principles. It is better than at the time of the previous inspection.
- 3.19 The boarding accommodation is based in the heart of the school. It has facilities for full-time boarding pupils and a number of flexi-boarders.
- 3.20 The accommodation is good. It provides appropriate areas for leisure and study, good bed space and easy access to toilets, showers and kitchen facilities. Older male boarders generally benefit from single or double bedrooms with en-suite facilities, whilst younger pupils live in dormitories with communal use of the facilities. The provision for girls' boarding accommodation is generous as they all have single or double study bedrooms with individual washing facilities. Two new common rooms are a very welcome feature in the life of boarders. Here they can mingle and relax, though one of the other rest areas for the girls is rather small for the number of boarders. Boarders have access to the school library until nine o'clock in the evening.
- 3.21 Relationships between staff and pupils in the boarding houses are outstanding and pupils speak fondly of their boarding experience. House staff and tutors provide outstanding support for pupils in their care and are well supported by the medical staff. The communication between house staff is good.
- 3.22 The relationships between boarders are excellent. Boys and girls can mix in the boarding houses during the school day and in the early evening and enjoy the facilities provided by the common rooms. The international element among the pupils brings an interesting cultural dimension to the boarding community. Those from abroad generally integrate well.
- 3.23 A clearly defined routine is in place for evenings with school activities, prep, supper, relaxation and bed. The boarders were observed to be academically focused and working hard during prep time. Weekends are affected by Saturday morning school, and boarding staff organise varied activities, though these do not always attract sufficient interest to go ahead.

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The governors' contribution to the school is outstanding. They oversee the quality of education provided by the school with a good deal of expertise, and take great care to ensure that the mission of the school is successfully fulfilled. Since the last inspection an imaginative, pragmatic and sensitive approach has enabled the school to move forward within a competitive local educational environment.
- 4.2 The governing body represents a wide range of expertise which includes that from education, law, finance, accountancy and organised religion. It operates through three committees, development and estates, finance and general purposes and education and staffing. They provide effective oversight of the school's finances and staffing and have a good insight into the school's educational provision and progress. The governing body is effective in discharging its responsibilities in relation to welfare, health and safety of the pupils, and child protection. School policies are reviewed regularly.
- 4.3 The chairman is in close contact with the headmaster, meeting him on a regular basis to discuss school matters. He has a thorough knowledge of the school and provides a marked commitment to its continued success. There is a high attendance at governors' meetings and several governors regularly attend school concerts, plays and sporting events. The chairman's annual 'away day' for governors and senior staff helps to affirm and refresh the strategic direction of the school and clarify governors' individual responsibilities as guardians of the pupils' welfare. The detailed reports on the school's work and progress presented by the headmaster at governors' meetings keep them up to date with the school's strengths and areas for development, whilst governors' minutes provide detailed information on its work and plans.
- 4.4 Excellent relationships exist between the governors and the senior staff of the school, and the support and advice governors can provide, because of their expertise, are appreciated by the senior management as well as by other members of staff.

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

- 4.5 The headmaster provides outstanding leadership, commitment and strategic direction to the school. He is well supported by the good work of the deputy head and assistant deputy head. The staff are committed to the school's mission and along with the senior management team contribute effectively to pupils' academic achievement, strong personal development and the school's outstanding provision for pastoral care. The educational direction of the school is purposeful and vigorous and well in line with the school's aims and distinctive ethos. A well-thought-out and revised strategic plan has been implemented and is making good progress.
- 4.6 The roles of senior management are well defined and through their work they have an understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. Subject leadership and management are of good quality, and work well with the school's many dedicated, talented and highly committed teaching and support staff. Most of those with management responsibilities are effective in analysing needs, setting priorities, planning and putting decisions into practice. However, housemasters carry considerable responsibility for running teams of nine tutors and overseeing both the academic and pastoral welfare of 70 pupils. This means that they cannot always have the close oversight of those staff for whom they are

responsible and which is a factor in the unevenness of the monitoring and tracking of pupils' progress and the provision for pupils of different ability.

- 4.7 The carefully thought out school development plan has well-chosen areas for educational improvement within the school and it is regularly evaluated. Staff participate in its formulation. A new longer-term plan of future needs, the outcome of discussions with the governors, maps out an exciting building strategy which is closely linked to the school's educational requirements. The nature of the school's buildings is such that the quality of classroom accommodation across the school is uneven and the plan has rightly targeted this significant area. Time scales and expected costs of bringing all the classrooms up to a similar standard are considered within the plan, which is backed by the establishment by governors of 'The Foundation', the measures designed to raise appropriate funds for the developments.
- 4.8 Teaching and supply staff are carefully checked before appointment and all have appropriate Criminal Records Bureau checks. The same applies to the governing body. The school has adopted the national scheme for newly qualified teachers but has none at present. Induction arrangements for new teachers and newly qualified teachers are good. New teachers are helped to settle into school quickly through helpful induction policies. The school's well-structured procedures and policies become well known to them, as they are to the rest of the staff and pupils, and this contributes to the school's smooth running.
- 4.9 Appraisals of all staff are conducted every two years and help to enhance their performance. Lesson observation and book trawls are carried out. The headmaster is appraised by the chairman of the board of governors on an annual basis. The system works well. It ensures that the headmaster knows how well his plans for the development of the school are working, and that senior management has a clear picture of the strengths and areas for development required among the staff. From the point of view of teachers, the system helps them to understand how well they are performing their tasks. Staff receive valuable in-house training in areas of general application such as child protection, and many attend external courses for subject-specific training. They have insufficient training in areas such as effective questioning of pupils and providing work suited to pupils of different abilities within the same class.
- 4.10 Resources to support teaching and learning are well managed within tight budgets to meet the aims of the school. The budget process involves open consultation with staff, especially in the area of staff salaries. Departmental finances are well managed and budget holders receive regular, up-to-date and helpful information about their accounts.
- 4.11 Communication within the school is a source of strength and the improved approach to positive marketing has contributed notably to this advancement within and beyond the school. The work of the school is strongly supported by the efficient and effective work of the administrative staff and they contribute significantly to the smooth running of the school. The school is clean and tidy and is well cared for.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.13 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school provides a good educational experience for its pupils which is consistent with its aims to help them enjoy their education and to nurture their individual interests and talents. The broad and balanced curriculum is better than at the time of the last inspection. Pupils achieve good standards in public examinations and make good progress in relation to their abilities. Those with LDD and EAL also perform well, as was reported at the last inspection, and there is little difference in the performance of boys and girls, especially in national examinations. Several pupils reach high standards in extra-curricular activities. Pupils develop outstanding qualities in relation to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural life. This is stronger than at the time of the last report and fulfils the school's aims to develop compassionate and decent human beings with a mature awareness of the spiritual and ethical life. The overall quality of teaching is good with a significant number of outstanding lessons. The procedures for assessment and marking pupils' work are good. The quality of care for pupils is outstanding and the provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is also a strength of the school. The school has outstanding links with parents and with the community. Parents are very supportive of the school and appreciate the frequent communications they receive about the school's work and their children's progress. The quality of the boarding experience is good. The quality of governance is outstanding. Along with the senior management team, governors have devised an important plan to help the school continue to improve. The headmaster provides outstanding leadership, commitment and strategic direction to the school and is well supported by the good work of the senior managers. The staff are committed to the school's mission, and have a good understanding of its procedures and policies. They enjoy a good range of in-service training, which often deals with subject matter but does not give enough time to helping them develop the best ways of dealing with pupils of different abilities within lessons.
- 5.2 Since the previous inspection the school has made significant steps forward in several areas such as leadership, quality of teaching and curricular provision. As yet it has to tackle other recommendations: to make more use of the library; and make ICT more available as a learning resource in the classroom.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 To continue the progress already made the school needs to:
1. ensure that teachers receive the appropriate INSET that will give them the skills to successfully challenge, and appropriately support, pupils of different abilities in their lessons;
  2. continue with the strategic plan to improve the quality of accommodation throughout the school;
  3. meet the recommendations of the previous inspection by encouraging greater use of the library and ICT as a means of helping pupils develop the skills of research, interpretation and analysis.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> November 2009. 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.
- 6.2 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by one Ofsted inspector over three days.

### List of Inspectors

Mr Terry Dillon	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Dorothy MacGinty	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Paula Maher	Head of Department, HMC school
Mr Jay Piggot	Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Granville Sykes	Director of Studies, HMC school
Mr Stéphane Talleux	Head of Department, GSA school