



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ACS COBHAM INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ACS Cobham International School

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|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| Full Name of School | ACS Cobham International School | | |
| DfE Number | 936/6529 | | |
| Address | ACS Cobham International School Heywood Portsmouth Road Cobham Surrey KT11 1BL | | |
| Telephone Number | 01932 867251 | | |
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| Head | Mr Antony Eysele | | |
| Chairman of Governors | Mr David Thomas | | |
| Age Range | 2 to 19 | | |
| Total Number of Pupils | 1461 | | |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (798 boys; 663 girls) | | |
| Numbers by Age | 2-6 (inc. EYFS): | 131 | 10-14: 426 |
| | 6-10: | 328 | 14-18: 576 |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: | 1376 | |
| Number of Boarders | Total: | 85 | |
| | Full: | 61 | Weekly: 24 |
| Head of EYFS Setting | Ms Jane Kullmann | | |
| EYFS Gender | Boys and Girls | | |
| Inspection Dates | 06 Oct 2015 to 09 Oct 2015 | | |

PREFACE

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

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

The previous ISI intermediate boarding inspection was in September 2012 and the previous ISI standard inspection was in November 2011.

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

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

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

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is**

'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade. Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons over one and a half days of the visit, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff, and with the chairman and the managing director of ACS, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

| | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Mr Martin Bussey | Reporting Inspector |
| Mr Kenneth Adams | Team Inspector (Head of Academic Studies, GSA school) |
| Mr Paul Bevis | Team Inspector (Head, ISA school) |
| Mrs Kerry Cooke | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school) |
| Mr Ian Daniel | Team Inspector (Head, ISA school) |
| Mr Andrew Edwards | Team Inspector (Head, ISA school) |
| Mrs Alison Edwards | Team Inspector (Former Director of Studies, IAPS school) |
| Mrs Evelyn Gibbs | Team Inspector (Head of Pre-Prep, ISA school) |
| Mr Stephen Greenish | Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school) |
| Miss Francesca May | Team Inspector (Director of Studies, ISA school) |
| Mr Nicholas Park | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, IAPS school) |
| Miss Jo Parry | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school) |
| Mr Steven Pearce | Team Inspector (Head of Department, Society of Heads school) |
| Mr Stephen Pugh | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school) |
| Mrs Catherine Sams | Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school) |
| Mrs Sally Cunliffe | Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding |
| Miss Mary Regan | Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years |

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 ACS Cobham International School in Surrey is a co-educational day and boarding school. It opened in 1975 and is one of four ACS international schools, three in England and one in Qatar. It provides education predominantly for students whose families have relocated to the UK from abroad due to their employment. The student community is transient, with the average stay being of three to four years; students regularly enter and leave the school during the academic year, including in Grades 11 and 12. The school recognises that a fundamental expectation of its parents is that their children will be successful at their next stage of education, wherever in the world this may be. The school's educational programme is predominantly American-based, to match the previous experience of many of the students. The school has taken exemption from the learning and development requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). It is governed by the board of directors of ACS, a commercial enterprise, in common with the other schools in the group.
- 1.2 The school aims, through learning, to inspire all to make a difference. Its core values are a commitment to engaging in the community, driving positive change, promoting excellence through learning and enriching the international experience for students. It seeks to achieve this aim and these values by promoting a high standard of scholarship, responsibility, and citizenship in a supportive, international community by implementing a student-centred approach to instruction, following an inquiry-based and inter-disciplinary curriculum. It seeks to identify teamwork, motivation, and the collaboration of students, teachers, staff and parents as key factors in achieving success.
- 1.3 The school comprises four divisions, each of which is under the administration of a principal. Early Childhood educates children aged 2 to 6 years, and includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS); Lower School students are aged 6 to 10 years; Middle School students are aged 10 to 14 years; and High School students are aged 14 to 18 years. There are 1461 students in the school, 798 boys and 663 girls. Of these, 85 are boarders, all of High School age, of whom 61 are full boarders and 24 are weekly boarders. The boarding accommodation is housed in a building known as the Dormitory.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, the school has transformed the former cafetorium into a purpose-built dining room and a separate theatre complex with performing arts facilities, and developed the gymnasium. Offices, roads, signage and extra security arrangements have been added, in addition to a new nature trail and outdoor learning areas. These include a vegetable garden overseen by students. Staff changes include the new role of academic principal, two co-ordinators for the Highly Able Learner (HAL) programme; heads of year in the High School and a health and safety manager.
- 1.5 Around a third of students are from North America, with the remainder originating from 72 different countries. Around half of the students speak English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 173 receive specialist support for their English. The school has identified 217 students as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), to whom it provides specialist learning support. No student has a statement of special educational needs or an education, health and care plan. Students have a wide range of abilities and backgrounds, and follow individual programmes of study designed to reflect this.

- 1.6 The American school grade nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school, except in Early Childhood. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Childhood

| School | NC name |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Flopsy Bunnies | Nursery (ages 2 to 3) |
| Scramblers Nursery | Nursery (ages 3 to 4) |
| Pre-Kindergarten | Reception |
| Kindergarten | Year 1 |

Lower School

| School | NC name |
|---------------|----------------|
| Grade 1 | Year 2 |
| Grade 2 | Year 3 |
| Grade 3 | Year 4 |
| Grade 4 | Year 5 |

Middle School

| School | NC name |
|---------------|----------------|
| Grade 5 | Year 6 |
| Grade 6 | Year 7 |
| Grade 7 | Year 8 |
| Grade 8 | Year 9 |

High School

| School | NC name |
|---------------|----------------|
| Grade 9 | Year 10 |
| Grade 10 | Year 11 |
| Grade 11 | Year 12 |
| Grade 12 | Year 13 |

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the students' achievement is excellent. A notable contributory factor is the stimulus of a high quality curriculum that places equal emphasis on developing key learning dispositions in parallel with knowledge, subject skills and understanding. The success of this provision is seen in the high levels of co-operation, creativity, application and independence which characterise the learning of many students throughout the school. Students with SEND or EAL achieve at levels equal to their peers. The highly able achieve well, particularly when working in subjects in grades above their age. Additional stimulus is not consistently provided in all subject areas. The gifted and talented excel in creative subjects, performance and sport. Good teaching frequently provides high levels of challenge and varied tasks but some lacks sufficient stimulus to capitalise on the students' strong learning skills, which limits progress. The previous inspection recommendation to increase the sharing of good practice has been met. Increased collaboration has resulted in excellent progress in many areas of the school, including Early Childhood. The use of assessment systems in Early Childhood does not always result in suitable levels of challenge for the most able. Progress in the High School is good, particularly considering the transient nature of the school population.
- 2.2 The students' personal development is excellent throughout the school. They respond highly effectively to the school's international ethos and show strong cultural development, particularly tolerance, an interest in the culture of others and strong core values that encompass democracy and fairness. Students are emotionally mature and develop excellent relationships amongst themselves and with staff. This is promoted by excellent pastoral care. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, a minority of students disagreed with the statement that the school enables them to voice their opinions and receive a response. Inspectors found that the school has effective systems to ascertain students' views but that there are inconsistencies in the way that it communicates its response to students, a view with which the school concurs. There are good procedures to safeguard students. Some amendment was necessary to existing policy during the inspection to reflect fully the school's context, particularly its boarding provision. Other arrangements to ensure students' welfare, health and safety are confident and secure, including those in Early Childhood. Checks on new staff are highly efficient and are now recorded comprehensively. Boarding makes an excellent contribution to the students' personal development. The recommendation of the previous boarding inspection has been met.
- 2.3 Excellent governance supports the school's ethos and provides high quality staff and material resources. Careful strategic planning enables successful capital building projects. The board of ACS maintains a good overall oversight of areas where it has legal responsibilities. Leadership and management are excellent. In many areas, good progress has been made since the previous inspection, meeting the recommendations. For example, monitoring by managers, including in the EYFS, has resulted in improving standards of teaching. Sophisticated systems of assessment enable the mapping of students' progress against international norms. Such developments have resulted in the students' excellent achievement and personal development. Progress in Early Childhood has been excellent and the school has created a strong, individual curriculum after taking exemption from the

learning and development requirements of the EYFS. The school benefits from excellent links with parents. Those who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires showed strong satisfaction with the education provided by the school.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2015.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Improve assessment procedures throughout Early Childhood and ensure that there is always adequate challenge for the highly able.
2. Ensure that all teaching from the Lower School onwards makes full use of the students' highly developed skills in, and attitudes to, learning.
3. Improve the communication of the school's response to views expressed formally by students.
4. Ensure that all policies suitably reflect the school's individual context.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the students' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school successfully fulfils its aims overall. High levels of co-operation, creativity, application and independence characterise most learning throughout the school and these characteristics are highly developed in many students. This fulfils the school's intention to develop key learning dispositions in parallel with knowledge, subject skills and understanding.
- 3.3 All children in Early Childhood, including those with SEND or EAL, are highly articulate and, from the youngest age, enjoy contributing their ideas through class conversations. Their physical skills are excellent, developed through play, dance and much time in the outdoor learning areas. Children successfully work with numbers. All are learning letter sounds, and older children can spell simple words. By the end of Early Childhood children write words independently and the highly able are beginning to write sentences. All enjoy stories and older children enjoy reading. All children are active, creative learners with highly developed social skills. They have excellent concentration and can focus for a long time on a range of activities. They make decisions about their own learning and choose activities. Children work highly successfully individually and co-operatively.
- 3.4 Students in the Lower School, and many in the Middle School, achieve excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. They demonstrate highly advanced speaking, reading and writing skills for their age. Their numeracy and scientific skills develop well in accordance with the school's curriculum planning, and they can apply these effectively in other subjects. Some creative writing in the Middle School lacks depth. Students are well prepared for the next stage of education in an international setting. In the High School, students' achievement is good in most areas, and excellent in some, including modern foreign languages (MFL), art, music, and the performing arts. All students are adept users of information and communication technology (ICT), including art and music software, and use tablet computers within class effectively, for example to research facts in the target MFL.
- 3.5 Those students with SEND achieve in line with their peers due to strong support from the resource department. The significant proportion of students with EAL make excellent progress in response to the school's carefully organised and benchmarked provision, whilst continuing to pursue their studies in their mother tongue. These levels of progress are facilitated by the school's excellent all-round care. Those students identified by the HAL programme make good progress in response to curricular provision from Middle School onwards, which enables study in individual subjects at grades in advance of their age. The impact of the programme on outcomes in other teaching is not consistently evident.
- 3.6 Students are successful in a wide range of extra-curricular activities, particularly sport, where their physical development is strong. The school enables excellent achievement by gifted and talented students. Individuals participate at national level in football, both in Britain and abroad, and at regional level in cross-country running, rugby, tennis and swimming. The school has, for four consecutive years, won a trophy for the highest aggregate scores achieved across a number of sports by any international school in Europe and North Africa. Students achieve well in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (DofE) scheme. They perform with success in regional and

national drama and music competitions. A team won a recent national business challenge competition, where all other competitors were from universities.

- 3.7 Students' attainment in Early Childhood, and in the Lower and Middle Schools, cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm. On the evidence available from standardised tests using norms for other international schools, and from the students' performance in lessons and other work, it is judged to be excellent. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that these students make excellent progress.
- 3.8 The following analysis for the High School uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in the International Baccalaureate (IB) have been above the worldwide average and in line with UK averages. Results in 2015 show improvement; for example, the proportion of subjects where a high point score was achieved rose to 38 per cent. Students consistently gain places at universities throughout the world, predominantly in the USA and the UK. Many of these have demanding entry requirements, reflecting the students' success in the IB and American Advanced Placement (AP) examinations. These levels of attainment, considered alongside the students' responses in interviews, their written work and their work in lessons, indicate good progress.
- 3.9 Learning in the Lower School is characterised by great calm and focus as a result of the effective social curriculum. These attributes are also evident in older students, although some in the Middle School lose focus when insufficiently challenged. Students in the High School show intense concentration and drive their own learning. The inquiry-based curriculum also effectively promotes their intellectual interest. These highly positive attitudes to learning ensure that students throughout the school make excellent progress, including when teaching is insufficiently challenging.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 Since the previous inspection, the school has implemented a new and stimulating curriculum in Early Childhood. This fully meets the needs of the children from an international background and makes full use of exemption from the EYFS learning and development requirements. A strong focus on the development of the whole child results in personal, social, emotional, physical and intellectual development being of prime importance. Good use is made of the extensive outdoor learning environment. The curriculum is enhanced by dance and movement classes. French is taught from the age of three, and older children benefit from teaching in art, music and physical education (PE) by specialists. Suitable provision for those with SEND or EAL ensures that all children become confident, independent, happy and inquisitive learners. There is a varied range of off-site trips, for example to a local farm to pick pumpkins. Visits to the police, the fire brigade and a mobile farm contribute further to the exciting curriculum.
- 3.12 The broad and balanced curriculum from the Lower School onwards makes suitable provision for the ages, abilities and needs of all students. It supports the school's core value of enriching the students' international experience. The school's inquiry-based, inter-disciplinary approach enables the students to develop the skills to become life-long learners wherever they are in the world. Although each division is

an entity, a whole-school curriculum, particularly systematic in its approach to teaching language, develops confident learners. The curriculum supplies an excellent coverage of skills in numeracy, speaking, listening and literacy. It places emotional and personal development at its core, as key elements of learning dispositions.

- 3.13 In the Lower School, the science, mathematics, English, technology and languages programmes cover the requisite areas of learning. Teaching in social studies, which includes geography and history, promotes a good understanding of British values and institutions, and presents a balanced coverage of political issues. In the Middle School, increased language options are provided, including Mandarin. An enrichment programme encourages students from Early Childhood to Grade 10 to embrace their mother tongue whilst they learn new languages.
- 3.14 The curriculum in the High School is characterised by an excellent range of subjects as part of the IB and AP courses and the American College Preparatory Programme. The school has modified the amount of time allocated to IB subjects since the previous inspection to align more closely with the recommended teaching time. Almost all students are able to pursue their preferred options. Students appreciate the valuable careers guidance that they receive to make appropriate subject choices from Grade 9 onwards, which supports worldwide university applications. The entire process is personalised and targeted at individuals' needs.
- 3.15 Each subject area produces programmes of study which outline key learning objectives, assessment and resources. The appointment of an academic principal since the previous inspection has enabled regular and careful monitoring of the curriculum, and there is good continuity of approach between divisions. The school has begun preparation to benchmark its work against the American common core standards.
- 3.16 Curricular provision for students with SEND or EAL is highly effective; excellent systems identify and support individual needs. Students benefit from excellent support from specialist teachers who know them well. They can access the full curriculum. In some subjects, the HAL programme enables students to be taught in a group suitable to their ability in advance of their age. Advanced resources and curriculum enrichment have begun to be developed for students on this programme. Talented students are provided with excellent opportunities to develop their strengths.
- 3.17 An excellent physical, social, health and economic education programme is taught as 'people skills' in the Lower School and later in health lessons that are linked to PE. The new performing arts centre has enhanced music and performing arts throughout the school. The interactive learning centre allows students to engage effectively in Model United Nations (MUN) and live international debates. The core social values of democracy, the rule of law, liberty, mutual respect and tolerance for others are covered within an international context.
- 3.18 Links with the community are strong. Students' families and others are encouraged to make use of the excellent sports facilities and are involved in theatre projects, such as the recent production of *Oliver*. Charity enterprises support a local food bank and projects in Nepal, India and Syria, increasing students' social awareness.
- 3.19 The response of students and parents to the pre-inspection questionnaires showed strong satisfaction with curricular provision and the broad range of extra-curricular activities. There is an excellent variety of clubs and activities during the lunch break

and after school, including the DofE programme. In the Middle School and High School, students are encouraged to work towards a sports leader award. Excellent facilities allow all students to enjoy sporting, outdoor, academic and arts-based activities. External providers offer specialist and traditional sports, dance and drama sessions. A wide range of orchestras, ensembles and choirs is available. Lower School students enjoy arts and craft clubs and make excellent use of the extensive grounds.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.20 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.21 Teaching successfully supports the aims of the school to enable progress, which is frequently excellent. It is particularly effective in developing independence in the students' approaches to learning, self-reflection, and the acquisition of creative and critical skills. High quality teaching recognises students as individuals throughout the school; a student-centred approach fosters mutual respect. When teaching strategies allow, students are enabled to collaborate extremely well and are highly supportive of each other. Younger students explore challenging aspects of personal relationships, and feel that their opinions are valued when discussing books they read during morning 'homeroom' sessions.
- 3.22 Teachers in Early Childhood are very well qualified and highly skilled. They engage and motivate children in well-chosen activities. Planning is comprehensive and mostly takes into account the differing needs of the children. However, their ability levels are not always fully considered so that, on a few occasions, there is insufficient challenge for the highly able. This is linked to some inconsistencies in the use of assessment information. The division has identified the need to reconsider current assessment procedures and is working to introduce greater standardisation. Teaching approaches are varied and make learning fun. Teachers are knowledgeable and use the outdoor learning environment exceptionally well to create imaginative learning activities. Resources are of a high quality and are used effectively to promote children's learning.
- 3.23 In line with the previous inspection recommendation, teaching has benefited from greater collaboration between subject areas across the divisions, enabling excellent progress in many areas. Detailed planning is evident in most lessons; learning objectives are derived from clear schemes of work and communicated to students. Learning activities are often creative and challenging, engaging the students and encouraging them to apply themselves and take pride in their progress. In a small proportion of teaching, particularly in the Lower School, teachers do not make full use of the students' highly developed skills and attitudes to learning. Homework is set effectively. Teachers have strong subject knowledge, which they use to foster a spirit of critical enquiry. The pace of most teaching is good and it engages students' interest. Teaching promotes strongly an ethos of equality, respect and tolerance.
- 3.24 The support for students with SEND or EAL provided within the dedicated learning support department is outstanding. Intervention to help students with SEND in class is strong in the Lower School but less consistent higher up the school. Help for students with EAL is provided more consistently. Those on the HAL programme benefit from following tailored programmes of study in the Middle School in mathematics and MFL. In the High School, students work at grades above their age but suitable individual challenge is less consistently provided in other subjects.

- 3.25 Most marking is regular and follows departmental policies. It includes comments to enable students to know what they need to do to improve, to assess their progress and to target areas for development. In a few cases, marking does not provide feedback on how to improve. Students are informed regularly of the results of sophisticated assessment schemes, used to plot their progress. This motivates them; and the recent provision of this information online has enhanced their learning.
- 3.26 Detailed information from assessment schemes is often used effectively to plan for the needs of individuals and groups of learners. Systems in use up to Grade 10 provide realistic benchmarks of students' performance and track their progress in reading, mathematics and use of language. They also show whole-school improvements, such as that in response to a recent focus on literacy. The recent introduction of schemes in Grades 11 and 12 related to examination courses is proving equally effective.
- 3.27 Teaching exploits the many high quality resources available, including digital technology. A one-to-one scheme for the use of tablet computers is used effectively to provide opportunities for all students to extend their learning opportunities, and to apply their knowledge and develop their skills as best suits them. This can be seen in the highly effective collection and manipulation of data in some subjects. Teachers make good use of available intranet facilities, applications and virtual learning platforms to support students inside and outside the classroom, including the electronic submission of work.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the students is excellent.
- 4.2 The spiritual development of students is excellent. The school actively promotes excellent levels of personal development in students and ensures a secure grasp of the values underpinning life in modern British society. Students embrace the values of the whole school in response to its aim to create a supportive, international community. Their strongly developed self-confidence enables them to face challenges positively and constructively. Their self-esteem is strengthened by the value the school places on them as individuals, its celebration of their skills and talents, and the encouragement they are given to share their gifts with others. Through the wide variety of cultural and philosophical experiences they are given, students develop a good appreciation of non-material aspects of life. Candid discussions amongst High School students about success and failure showed a high level of emotional maturity.
- 4.3 Children in Early Childhood have highly developed social skills and make a positive contribution to the school community. They arrive confidently and settle quickly into their routine. They show respect for their friends and play co-operatively, taking turns and sharing. Children enjoy positive relationships with their peers and adults. In outdoor walks, children show an understanding of respect for nature. They demonstrate the ability to make decisions, for example when they choose an activity with which to start the day. Children have a keen sense of right and wrong. They thoroughly enjoy the cultural diversity of the school community. They participate in international events and celebrations, enjoying the shared music and food. Children are extremely happy at school, and their transitions within the division, and to the next stage of education, are managed well.
- 4.4 The moral development of students is excellent. Students from the Lower School onwards have a strong sense of right and wrong, supported by an excellent health programme and the school's core values. Focus on the social elements of attitudes to learning contributes strongly to a clear understanding of appropriate behaviour. Younger students produce 'Apology for Actions' booklets, and study rights and responsibilities. Lower School students were prompt in identifying that their incorrect answer had been heard as correct in a competitive class game. Through 'homeroom' sessions, students develop a clear understanding and respect for the rule of law, and how it is applied in English society. Students' moral and ethical awareness leads them to champion the rights of prisoners of conscience and those of transgender individuals.
- 4.5 Students develop excellent social skills. These are further developed through opportunities to take on leadership roles, such as those in the student councils for the Middle School and High School, the Dormitory and advisory groups. Students interact confidently with each other. High School drama students discussed issues relating to love with integrity. Students respect others, for example showing full awareness of peers with hearing impairment when engaging in class discussion. Students use their individual skills to make a positive contribution to the whole community and beyond. All are involved in raising funds for charitable causes. Younger students enjoy events such as an international fair and an initiative developing understanding, caring and kindness for others, to help those less fortunate than themselves. High School students demonstrate their commitment to

others in excellent charity work, such as fund raising and practical projects. These include the disaster group, a long standing, student-led organisation that highlights current global issues to the whole community and suggests ways in which the school can assist. Other projects include work in Morocco and Namibia.

- 4.6 Students' cultural development is excellent. They benefit from their experience of a wide range of nationalities, principles and faiths. This enables them to develop a strong cultural awareness, alongside their many performance experiences. Supporting this philosophy, there are many opportunities for residential visits both nationally and internationally and a wide range of activities for boarders to give them experience of British life. Students celebrate their numerous nationalities through flag-raising ceremonies. Grade 1 students enjoyed giving their morning greeting in a Ghanaian language. Country representative groups bring together students, staff and parents from individual nations to inform the wider community.
- 4.7 Within an international context, the school embraces core values of democracy, individual rights and understanding of different beliefs. Students demonstrate their understanding of these values in the MUN. Lower School students study British history and enjoy visits to places such as Hampton Court Palace. Middle School students learn about public institutions through the social studies curriculum, and in the High School there are numerous excursions to relevant places such as the Houses of Parliament and Buckingham Palace. By the time they leave the school, at whatever age, the students' highly developed social skills and emotional maturity mean that they are ready to face future challenges.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The school's aim to inspire all to make a difference is supported by the provision of high quality pastoral care, the nurturing of self-esteem and the encouragement of students to take an appropriate level of responsibility for their actions. Students remark on the high quality of care they receive.
- 4.10 In Early Childhood a key person for each child effectively ensures that his or her needs are well met. Children develop positive relationships and learn the importance of good behaviour. They also develop a clear understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. School counsellors provide valuable additional support to children and their families when issues of self-esteem and anxiety are identified. Children feel safe and secure at school and trust the adults who care for them.
- 4.11 Since the previous inspection, a revised pastoral structure in the High School and consolidation of existing good practice in other divisions have provided a practical, thorough and consistent framework for care. Within this, each student's progress and well-being are monitored regularly and supported to excellent effect. Meetings of the student support team bring together senior managers and those working directly with a student to facilitate effective interventions or provision.
- 4.12 Excellent relationships between staff and students prevail throughout all the divisions. Students appreciate the support they receive and the engagement of staff in their care. This ethos is mirrored in the way High School students are viewed as role models and support students in other divisions. Students have excellent relationships with one another in response to the school's values and expectations.

- 4.13 School lunches are nutritious, with an appropriate choice of dishes provided. Free milk is available for all students throughout the day. Monitoring by staff ensures that packed lunches brought by Lower School students maintain the school's ethos of healthy eating. Students take full advantage of the extensive exercise opportunities offered by the school, both within and outside the curriculum.
- 4.14 Staff are highly aware of the pastoral needs of students with SEND or EAL. Detailed individual learning and healthcare plans are communicated effectively and implemented to enable all students to access the school's provision. The school has a suitable plan to improve access for those with SEND.
- 4.15 The school is highly successful in promoting positive behaviour, self-discipline, responsibility for one's own actions and kindness. Guidance is clear and, as a result, students move around the school in a purposeful and calm way. In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of students felt that the use of rewards and sanctions is inconsistent. Inspection evidence, including scrutiny of records and interviews with students, shows that these are given in accordance with the school's policies and recorded methodically. In addition, a small minority of students felt that the school does not deal effectively with any bullying. Inspection evidence did not support this view. Inspectors found that there are effective measures to guard against bullying. Records show that all incidents of bullying are carefully handled, with due concern for all parties involved, and sanctions are employed as indicated in student documentation. There is no evidence of any cyber-bullying.
- 4.16 In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of students expressed dissatisfaction with the opportunities provided for them to voice their opinions and receive a response. Inspectors found that the school has suitable structures to ascertain the views of students through various councils in different divisions. Formal methods to gain students' opinions are well developed but the school agrees that there are inconsistencies in the way that its response is communicated to students.

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

- 4.17 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.18 The school has good arrangements for safeguarding and these are implemented effectively. This includes Early Childhood, where regular attendance is promoted. Strong links are maintained with local agencies for children in need and those at risk. Induction training is comprehensive. Training for all staff is well organised. It is supported by readily available online documentation, and includes the prevention of extremism. Staff say that they find these resources helpful in supporting their training. Designated staff are clearly identified and they receive regular inter-agency training. The safeguarding policy, as published at the outset of the inspection, is designed to serve all schools in the ACS group. The policy required amendment to meet requirements, particularly in making sufficiently clear reference to the school's context. It now reflects the school's boarding and EYFS provision more clearly. Staff show a clear understanding of appropriate reporting arrangements.
- 4.19 Registration is regular, methodical and recorded electronically. The unauthorised absence of any students is followed up efficiently. The school maintains and stores an appropriate admission register.

- 4.20 Arrangements for health and safety are good. Some minor deficiencies in provision in Early Childhood and elsewhere were identified during the inspection and promptly remedied. Arrangements for policy making and the oversight of implementation have recently been revised. New staff understand their roles well. Any day students who feel unwell are cared for by school nurses in an adequate medical centre. The first-aid policy provides well for emergencies. Appropriate numbers of staff are qualified in first aid, including paediatric first aid in the Early Childhood division. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of any students with SEND.
- 4.21 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are thorough and checks are recorded effectively and centrally. Scrutiny by external consultants in areas such as fire and electrical testing is methodical and is reviewed by senior managers. Required improvements, for example those identified in fire risk assessments, are implemented effectively. Regular evacuation drills are held and the outcomes recorded, stored and analysed. Assessments of risk are thorough, particularly in Early Childhood, and are supported by an appropriate policy to determine their content. These include suitable assessments of risk for trips. Access to the school is controlled efficiently and securely; related risks are assessed and guarded against.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.22 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.23 Outcomes for boarders are excellent. The school nurtures, encourages and supports every boarder, in line with its stated boarding principles and practice. Boarders enjoy being part of an international community and their personal development is strongly promoted by their boarding experience. They make many positive contributions to the life of the school. Boarders organise events to raise money for various charities, notably overseas organisations that support the development of children.
- 4.24 The pro-active Dormitory council has democratically elected student officers. It is one of several effective conduits for boarders' views, which are shared regularly. Any suggestions are listened to, and responses are fed back orally and also in minutes posted on house notice boards. Changes are implemented where possible. The weekend activities programme has been refined in response to boarders' suggestions. Boarders can take on responsibility through a committee that runs an extensive programme for those new to boarding, and as trained peer supporters. Boarders thrive through support that focuses on their individual academic and emotional needs. Those with SEND or EAL are given excellent support by both resident non-teaching staff and teachers who undertake evening duties. Relationships between staff and boarders are excellent. Boarders are well known by the house staff and speak highly of the care they are given.
- 4.25 The quality of boarding provision and care is excellent. Boarders consider the boarding house to be a 'home away from home'. They receive high quality care from well-trained staff. Boarders are confident in knowing that there is always someone to whom they can turn for help. In addition to house staff, there is a school counsellor and a newly appointed independent listener. The well-structured induction programme for new boarders helps them to settle quickly. The detailed handbook provides plentiful necessary information. A weekend of welcome events enables the boarders to integrate with each other, allowing them to feel at ease in their new surroundings.

- 4.26 The standard of boarding accommodation is excellent. The mixed boarding house, with suitably separate sleeping accommodation for boys and girls, provides spacious and well-equipped living spaces. The majority of boarders share double rooms with en-suite facilities, which afford suitable privacy. A small number of single rooms are reserved for older students. There are communal social areas where boys and girls can mix and additional spaces where they can be separate. All areas are spacious, well furnished and equipped with leisure resources. Kitchen areas enable the boarders to prepare snacks and these facilities enhance social occasions when boarders enjoy cooking together. The daily laundry system is efficient and older boarders learn to do their own laundry. In response to the questionnaire, a small minority of boarders commented that they feel their belongings are not secure. Inspection findings did not support this view. All boarders have a suitable lockable space, should they wish to use it. Passports and pocket money are carefully secured by house staff. Additionally, bedroom doors can be locked.
- 4.27 After school and at weekends, boarders have suitable opportunities for free time and relaxation. They appreciate the many recreational areas within the campus, which enable them to maintain a high level of fitness. The activities programme provides a wide range of opportunities to develop boarders' interests. A recently introduced residential life programme combines leadership skills, workshops and presentations. Boarders speak highly of the programme so far and see it as a valuable tool in contributing to the development of key life skills. The weekend activities are varied and some are optional. They range from cultural visits to those of a more adventurous nature, and boarders report that they are enjoyable as well as educational.
- 4.28 Medical provision is good. The medical centre operates during the school day and is staffed by qualified nurses. There are suitable facilities to accommodate boarders who are unwell during the school day, after which they can be cared for in the boarding house by appropriately trained house staff. Medical staff communicate effectively with house staff and parents to ensure continuity of care at all times. Record keeping and confidentiality are secure. Appointments with a local doctor and access to other health professionals can be arranged. Measures to ensure the boarders' health and safety are good. Unannounced fire drills outside the school day are standard practice and records are accurately maintained. Electrical checks are completed annually.
- 4.29 Boarders enjoy well-balanced menus with healthy options and good variety. Regular themed dinners are a feature and boarders are encouraged to contribute ideas for these. Special dietary needs are catered for. Kitchens are hygienic and the dining room is spacious and comfortable. The majority of the small number of boarders who responded to the questionnaire were not satisfied with the availability of snacks and drinking water. Inspection findings did not support this view. Snacks are available after school and prep, and supplies of food, including fruit, are freely available in the common room. Drinking water fountains are positioned on corridors. Boarders can make regular contact with family and friends. Each bedroom has an incoming landline telephone, and personal mobile telephones and electronic devices make communication easy.
- 4.30 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are good. Boarders are well cared for and feel safe. Access to the boarding house is secure, visitors are suitably supervised and risk assessments are regularly reviewed. Suitable staff recruitment procedures are implemented. At the start of the inspection the boarding provision was not fully reflected in the safeguarding policy and procedures. By the end of the

inspection this had been remedied. Boarding staff receive regular training in safeguarding and are confident in responding, in accordance with procedures, should a concern arise about a boarder. Those boarders with positions of responsibility receive a basic level of safeguarding training. Numbers for appropriate helplines are displayed. Boarders know how to report a concern and are confident that any such matters will be dealt with positively. House staff ensure excellent behaviour. The sanctions system is operated fairly; rules are clear and easily understood. Bullying incidents, including cyber-bullying, are rare in boarding. Should they arise, boarders are confident that they are dealt with quickly and effectively. Access to the internet is suitably controlled and monitored by the school.

- 4.31 The leadership and management of boarding are excellent. Senior leaders have effective oversight of the boarding provision. Standards are monitored carefully and with due awareness of regulatory requirements in most areas. Documentation is maintained and stored appropriately. The school is committed to improving boarding. Regular reviews of its policies, provision and practice are held which result in effective development planning. This enables the school to meet its aim to provide a boarding experience that offers a wide range of stimulating and challenging opportunities for each individual to develop fully, and to gain confidence and a sense of self-esteem. The recommendation from the previous boarding inspection with regard to information on staff duty rotas has been met. Senior boarding staff provide excellent leadership and management. House staff meet regularly to discuss the needs of the boarders. All have clear job descriptions, and procedures for training and appraisal are effective. This results in highly effective fulfilment of their roles, which are clearly understood. Resident academic tutors are attached to the house and this further enhances the support for boarders. The communication between pastoral and academic staff is highly successful in encouraging boarders to fulfil their potential at all levels. The overwhelming majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire were strongly satisfied with the school's provision for boarding.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The board of ACS includes a good balance of non-executive directors, who provide effective guidance, and others with clearly defined roles to oversee all four schools in the group. Governance is informed by strong commitment to the international ethos of the school, its boarding provision and its aim to secure the all-round development of students. Suitable oversight is provided for the EYFS; the directors recognise that the setting constitutes most of the Early Childhood division of the school. Key decisions, notably to take exemption from the EYFS learning and development requirements, have enabled closer integration with the ethos of the other divisions. The board includes a strong range of experience and skills, including in international and British education. This enables effective monitoring overall of the school's provision in a global context, and of the local regulatory requirements.
- 5.3 The board has high expectations of the level of education provided by the school and ensures that these are met. Centralised policy making and implementation in areas such as finance, and welfare, health and safety, including staff recruitment, ensure excellent support for the school. The centralised approach provides well for standardisation of procedure across all schools in the group. At times, this approach reduces the clarity of some policies providing guidance to parents and those outside the school because the school's distinctive context is not fully represented.
- 5.4 Executive directors are closely involved with the life of the school, aided by the presence of the head office on the school site. Effective use is made of this accessibility to ensure effective communication and regular visits by directors to the school. Senior staff attend relevant board meetings and contribute to the development of the group as a whole, as well as to strategic planning for the school. The success of this planning is exemplified by recent building developments and the provision of generous human and material resources. The board ensures the regular appraisal of senior staff, and recent developments in this area have begun to be extended to this group. These elements support the students' excellent personal development and achievement. Training for all board members is systematic and thorough.
- 5.5 The board reviews health and safety arrangements regularly. Monitoring of welfare arrangements includes an appropriate annual review by the board of safeguarding policy and procedures. Review of welfare, health and safety is generally good although a few deficiencies have been overlooked. New arrangements for monitoring on the board's behalf provide a good foundation to amend this. Checks on newly recruited staff are carried out with efficiency and are now recorded comprehensively on the single central register of appointments.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 Senior leadership shows a confident vision of what students may achieve in an international context. This ensures that students are successfully encouraged to develop values that promote respect for others and democracy. The school keeps to the fore its aim to provide a student-centred approach to instruction and achieves this in its all-round care for students' well-being. It is particularly successful in realising the aspiration for teamwork, motivation, and collaboration of students, teachers, staff, and parents to be key factors in achieving success. Leaders are aware of the school's strengths and areas for development. It plans effectively to consolidate and strengthen its provision. Planning to meet the previous inspection recommendations to provide more regular and rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning, and of the students' progress, has been successful. Monitoring at middle management level includes strong pastoral oversight, and monitoring of teaching has improved since the previous inspection in most areas, although it does not yet ensure consistency in marking or that teaching capitalises fully on the students' learning skills.
- 5.8 Leadership, both at whole-school and divisional levels, promotes students' academic and social development successfully and celebrates individual success. Students are well prepared for smooth transition into other international schools when family circumstances dictate, or to higher divisions of the school. The development of online resources for welfare, health and safety since the previous inspection has been highly successful, particularly in supporting the suitable training provided to staff in this area. It also enables effective monitoring in these areas, although some policies required adjustment during the inspection. Overall, the school's provision consolidates the students' excellent levels of personal development.
- 5.9 In Early Childhood management is strong; it has a clear vision for the future development of the setting and is highly effective in its role. Development planning is comprehensive and systems for self-evaluation are rigorous. The current focus on developing a more effective assessment system throughout the setting has been well thought out. The safeguarding of children is carefully promoted in a secure and stimulating environment and risk assessment is thorough. Team leaders and all staff meet regularly to monitor educational programmes, and an excellent performance evaluation system is in operation. All staff are very well supported and supervision meetings are productive, with minutes taken. Opportunities for the professional development of staff are excellent. Since the previous inspection, great progress has been made. The previous inspection recommendation to improve monitoring to ensure that operational policies are regularly reviewed and that procedures and plans work well has been successfully addressed. The school promotes core social values and equality. The EYFS elements of Early Childhood continue to meet the criteria for exemption.
- 5.10 Strategic planning throughout the school is good and reflects careful self-evaluation. This has resulted in considerable development of buildings and resources since the previous inspection, as well as successful changes to management structures. A notably successful element is the construction of action plans for the individual divisions, which reflect parents' opinions. Some initiatives, such as the HAL programme, are not yet fully effective. Effective budgeting ensures that all the

divisions, and other areas of school life, such as boarding, are provided with plentiful human and material resources. The facilities for Early Childhood are outstanding.

- 5.11 The school appoints staff of good quality, both teaching and non-teaching. Procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are methodical and secure. These are now comprehensively reflected in the single central register of appointments.
- 5.12 The appraisal and development of staff are excellent. All roles in the school have accurate and clear job descriptions. These reflect the school's high expectations of its staff. The school has recently introduced a highly structured and effective appraisal system to monitor the work of individual teachers. In this, trained middle and senior managers act as observers and evaluators, gathering and synthesising information, often from unannounced observations of teaching, which is used to support and challenge staff and to plan professional development. Comprehensive data on students' performance in response to teaching can be analysed as an integral part of the system and used to set targets. In addition, Middle School and High School students have an annual opportunity to evaluate their teachers. This initiative has been well received and its success reflects the school's flexibility and measured approach. The school also benefits greatly from the allocation of weekly, dedicated 'collaborative time', which can be utilised for departmental planning and for whole-school requirements, including cross-divisional meetings.
- 5.13 The school's view that collaboration with non-teaching staff is a factor in achieving success for students informs all areas of its activities. This includes the contributions of the predominantly non-teaching staff who work in boarding, the grounds staff who maintain the extensive grounds and playing fields, and many more. They understand that their roles support the students' achievement and personal development, and they show correspondingly high levels of commitment in their work.
- 5.14 The school benefits from excellent links with parents and guardians. Parents' responses to the questionnaire indicated strong satisfaction with the school's provision and care. Parents are highly pleased with communication from the school. A particular strength is the weekly newsletter, which covers all aspects of school life. Parents can access this and relevant handbooks through the intranet. The school's informative guide for the parents of new students is particularly useful for families arriving from abroad. All the required documentation is provided to parents of current and prospective students. This is supported by a wide range of meetings that keep parents fully informed. These include parent-teacher conferences twice a year, including in Early Childhood, and 'open house' and information evenings to provide insight into the curriculum at the start of the year. The school has a suitable complaints procedure that is implemented effectively.
- 5.15 The parent-teacher conferences make full use of the comprehensive data generated on student attainment and progress, and the discussions are monitored through written feedback from teachers to senior managers. Parents also benefit from an online system that enables them to continually monitor their children's performance, and this is evolving to include more extensive commentary from teachers. Reports which contain detailed information on attainment, progress and effort are issued twice each year, along with half-termly grading. In addition, parents are able to contact staff directly by email and can make appointments throughout the year, facilitating a prompt response to queries.

- 5.16 In Early Childhood, an 'open door' policy enables frequent informal meetings. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress, and these arrangements ensure that suitable interventions take place for children who need them. Parents volunteer to support in class and on outside visits. They read stories to children. Celebrations of the cultural diversity of the school are always very well supported by parents.
- 5.17 The Parent School Organisation is very active and, together with other parent support groups, serves as a conduit for communication between the school and parents. A country representative group reflects the international nature of the school and aids the integration of new families into the community. Parents contribute through activities such as an ICT induction session to help other parents make optimal use of school communications. Parents are actively encouraged to take advantage of a very wide range of opportunities to participate in the life of the school. They can take part in drama productions, attend concerts and careers counselling, and support scouts and sports teams. Families can use the sports centre, and parents play an active role in organising social events such as graduation balls. Parents consider that much is done to integrate them into the community.

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