



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST BEDE'S SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Bede's School

Full Name of School	St Bede's School		
DfE Number	845/6006		
Registered Charity Number	278950		
Address	St Bede's School The Dicker Upper Dicker Hailsham East Sussex BN27 3QH		
Telephone Number	01323 843252		
Fax Number	01323 442628		
Email Address	enquiries@stbedesschool.org		
Headmaster	Dr Richard Maloney		
Chairman of Governors	Major General Anthony Meier		
Age Range	13 to 19		
Total Number of Pupils	875		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (517 boys; 358 girls;)		
Numbers by Age	13 to 19:	875	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	561	Capacity for flexi-boarding: N/A
Number of Boarders	Total:	314	
	Full:	280	Weekly: 34
Inspection dates	12th to 13th October 2010 8th to 10th November 2010		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in September 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1st September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

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

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain 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 and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in June 2010 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will 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.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Bede's Senior School is a co-educational boarding school for pupils aged from thirteen to eighteen. It was founded in 1978, and is set in 120 acres in the village of Upper Dicker near Hailsham in East Sussex. The preparatory school is located seven miles away in Eastbourne. The schools are part of the St Bede's School Trust and all members of the board are also governors of the school. There are 875 pupils in the senior school of whom 517 are boys and 358 are girls with 344 pupils in the sixth form. There are 314 boarders of whom 34 are weekly boarders. Day students travel from across Sussex and boarding students from throughout the United Kingdom and many countries around the world. The headmaster of the senior school is also the Chief Executive of the Trust and was appointed to both posts in 2009.
- 1.2 The core aim of the school is to prepare pupils to lead a full and worthwhile life in the wider world as well rounded, confident and balanced members of their communities. The school is academically non-selective and strives to provide an outstanding education for all young people whilst placing a premium on spiritual values within a non-denominational context. Since the last inspection in 2004, the school has carried out a number of major building works in addition to extensive refurbishments. Two new boarding houses were opened in 2007 and two more are currently under construction.
- 1.3 Pupils are entered for GCSE and A-level examinations; the school also enters pupils for IGCSE examinations in mathematics and, since 2009, English literature and English as a first language. A number of vocational qualifications are also offered. Standardised tests show the ability profile of the school is slightly above the national average. The range of abilities is fairly wide with the majority of pupils demonstrating ability in the average and above average bandings. The school has identified 332 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom fifteen have statements. The number of pupils receiving specialist support from the school is 140. The number of pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL) is 144 of whom 107 receive support.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Senior School

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

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of education provided for the pupils of St Bede's is good with some outstanding features. The school is close to achieving its aim of providing an outstanding education in a non-selective co-educational environment. The overall quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good. The good quality of teaching and the excellent personalised curriculum allow pupils to develop their interests, talents and skills in the areas which will realise their potential. The co-curricular provision is very strong with an exceptional range of activities. Pupils overall make good progress. Pupils with EAL and LDD make good and often excellent progress. The overall standard of marking and assessment lacks rigour. There are no agreed policies or standardisation of practice. Pupils' attitudes to learning are good and often outstanding. The majority of pupils are enthusiastic and keen to learn.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good with some outstanding features. Their talents and interests are nurtured and encouraged resulting in high self-esteem and confidence. All members of the community are valued and the friendly and inclusive philosophy allows pupils of all ages and cultural backgrounds to mix well. The strong and caring pastoral structure provides a safe and secure environment for pupils to thrive but a newly introduced structure for PSHE delivery is not fully effective across all tutor groups. Relationships between all members of the community are good. Measures to promote good conduct are in place and there are good policies and procedures with regard to welfare, health and safety and anti-bullying. The boarding experience for pupils makes a significant contribution to the personal development of both boarders and day pupils.
- 2.3 The quality of governance, leadership and management is good and reflects a shared vision for the future of the school. Planning is thorough and a new management structure with new job descriptions are providing increased support for academic and pastoral staff, and enables them to engage in effective self-evaluation and target setting. In all respects the governors now discharge their responsibilities fully although in the past they were not always diligent in monitoring procedures followed by the senior leadership team. Close attention is given to areas of child protection and all regulatory checks are now rigorously applied during recruitment of staff. The school has good links with parents.
- 2.4 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires show that parents and pupils are very pleased with the education and support provided by the school. A small number of pupils did not think teachers treated pupils fairly. The inspection team did not find any evidence to support this, but did find the reward system was not clearly understood by all pupils. Pupils and parents expressed concern about the quality of food served and the inspection team supported their view that the choice of food was not always satisfactory. A small number of parents indicated that the school did not always respond quickly to their concerns and they did not feel involved in school life. The school has addressed these issues.

2.(b) Action points**(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

2.5 At the time of the initial visit, the school did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it was required to:

- implement all appropriate safeguarding arrangements and ensure that regard is had to the DfE Guidance *Health and Safety: Responsibilities and Powers* [Part 3, paragraph 11, under Welfare, health and safety].

2.6 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Develop and implement consistently throughout the school an effective assessment and marking strategy.
2. Improve the quality of food for all pupils.
3. Reappraise further the working of the school timetable in order to ensure more productive use of time in the school day.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills are good overall with some outstanding features. Pupils are well educated and the school is close to achieving its aim to provide an outstanding education and to realise the academic potential of every pupil in every subject. GCSE performance has been above the national average for maintained schools and IGCSE results have been higher than the average worldwide results. A-level results have been above the national average for maintained schools and broadly similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. The pupils are successful in their achievements in vocational qualifications including BTEC, NVQ and City and Guilds. Nationally standardised measures of progress indicate that pupil's progress is above the average for pupils of similar ability. However, the achievement of the more able boys in the last three years of public examinations is not as high as that of the more able girls. Standardised measures used to predict progress indicate that in some subject areas boys are capable of achieving the highest grades in GCSE but are sometimes failing to do so. The leadership team are aware of this and are monitoring these boys more closely. Pupils with EAL and LDD make good and often excellent progress. Pupils achieve excellent levels of attainment in national competitions and awards especially in the creative subjects of art, music, dance and drama and in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. There has been notable national success in a range of sports.
- 3.2 Pupils have good levels of knowledge and understanding which generally promote their education across all subjects. Competent numeracy and literacy skills were observed and a good volume of work is being produced. The comparative analysis of war poetry in an English lesson demonstrated their width of reading and literary understanding when making links with visual stimuli. Oral skills are good and pupils are articulate across all subjects. In a Year 13 history lesson, all pupils, including those with EAL, participated fully in a discussion about the impact of the Second World War in China and were keen to challenge the teacher's views with perceptive questioning. Numerical competency and good scientific methodology were observed across a range of lessons and pupils are accomplished in the use and application of information and communication technology (ICT). A Year 12 geography lesson concluded with pupils using presentation programmes to assist with delivering their findings on separatism, and in a Year 10 Italian lesson a vocabulary programme was well used on a tablet computer. Practical skills across all subjects are good as seen in product design in design and technology and proficient sauce-making in home economics. Skills are of an exceptional standard in most creative subjects as demonstrated in both art and ceramic lessons where the pupil's passion for their subjects leads to outstanding coursework.
- 3.3 Throughout the school, pupil's attitudes to learning are good and often outstanding. The majority of pupils are keen to learn and respond enthusiastically to the breadth and challenge of the curriculum and engage in it well. They enjoy their learning especially when they are allowed to work independently. They work well together in pairs and in groups demonstrating excellent team work in sporting activities. Concentration levels are positive and the pupils are self-motivated. Pupils have respect for the views of teachers and are comfortable enough to challenge them with their own opinions.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

- 3.4 The curriculum provision of the school is outstanding and is suitable for all ages, abilities and needs of pupils. The over-riding ethos of the curriculum is that pupils should have a personalised programme of education and be allowed to develop their talents and skills in the areas in which they are interested and likely to be successful. This policy is in line with the overall aims of the school to tailor the education to the pupil to maximise their achievement and personal development so that all will have the opportunity to shine.
- 3.5 The curriculum offers an extensive number of courses. The core curriculum in Year 9 gives pupils the opportunity to acquire skills in speaking and listening, numeracy, literacy and ICT and to acquire knowledge in the key subjects of the National Curriculum. The recent restructuring of the curriculum in Year 9 has resulted in an improvement to the balance, as recommended in the last report. In Years 10 and 11, the number of compulsory subjects consists of English, mathematics and science. A wide range of options are available for study at GCSE and IGCSE. The provision for foreign language study is excellent, with six languages on offer. In Years 12 and 13 the choice of 43 A-level courses continues to provide excellent opportunities for pupils to be successful in their areas of strength and interest and includes courses such as accountancy and film studies. The commitment to vocational courses is strong and includes BTEC courses, NVQ in horse care and riding, and the City and Guilds Professional Chef's course. Pre-university studies in English literature and politics provide challenging options and a pre sixth-form course is particularly beneficial to EAL students to prepare them for the English examination system. Access to suitable periods of physical education is available on the timetable and in the activity period. Creative, expressive and practical subjects are well represented. A dedicated tutor period each week provides suitable access to PSHE topics, including the study of citizenship and careers education. The size of the school site, combined with the structure of the school day and the working of the timetable, often results in some time being wasted but the leadership team are reappraising this issue to aid pupil learning.
- 3.6 The curriculum is enriched by an extensive and varied range of outstanding extra-curricular activities. The programme invites pupils to select activities from over two hundred on offer each week. These include a wide variety of sports and games, dance, music and drama. Pupils who have a particular interest are well catered for in activities such as horse riding, farming and car restoration. Pupils participate in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme and pupils in Year 9 attend an outward bound course in the Peak District. Links with the local community are many. Local schools are encouraged to use the facilities and the school has entered into a formal partnership with a school in Eastbourne. Two specialised dance programmes aim to provide dance training to local children of different experiences and abilities. The trust currently offers a full scholarship to a pupil from a village in Uganda and pupils have the opportunity to work in the village community in Kabubu during the holidays. The EAL department organises its own programme of extra-curricular events for the boarders.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.7 Teaching is good and is effective in promoting good progress. It provides appropriate support to allow most pupils, including those with LDD and EAL, to discover their true academic potential and work towards their full personal development, which is a central aim of the school.
- 3.8 Throughout the school, classes are small which allows for individual attention. Teachers know their pupils well and they consistently work to foster their confidence, understanding and commitment. Features of the good lessons observed were good subject knowledge, rigorous planning, an understanding of pupils' prior learning, good use of resources and extremely well-matched tasks and activities. Pupils made good progress because the teaching had appropriate pace and offered a variety of activities and approaches which allowed the pupils to engage in discussion and gave them time for reflection and analysis. Pupils enjoyed well-chosen practical activities in science, music and drama, which supported their more theoretical learning. Teaching of creative subjects is of a very high standard. In Year 11 art, varied teaching methods facilitated imaginative and inspirational work. Development of skills is good, as witnessed in a Year 13 games session where the pupils sharpened their movement and reaction skills through a series of progressively more complicated drills.
- 3.9 Strategies to encourage independent learning are promoted in the best lessons by carefully chosen activities that encourage maximum participation by pupils and allow them to evaluate their own ideas and understanding. Occasionally, pupils are led gradually through the learning process. This ensures effective understanding and the acquisition of basic skills, but limits their ability to learn independently of their teachers. Mathematics and English offer students the opportunity to take GCSE early. The learning support department produces helpful advice on how best to support pupils with LDD and many teachers are mindful of this.
- 3.10 Many subjects make good use of interactive whiteboards and similar audio-visual resources, but sometimes the full potential of the technology is not fully realised. The overall standard of marking and assessment lacks rigour. The best marking is thorough with detailed comments and good oral feedback in lessons. A significant proportion, however, is perfunctory with little indication as to how the pupils' work could be improved. Additionally, agreed marking policies and standardisation of practice are lacking. In interviews, pupils stated they were confused as to what constituted good marks when comparing identical work with other pupils. In some learning activities in the classroom teachers did not always assess pupil's needs well and adjust their lesson accordingly. The school is, however, making good use of standardised measures of ability to monitor pupil's progress through their school years.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is good with some outstanding features. The core aim of the school is to prepare pupils to lead a full and worthwhile life in the wider world as well-rounded, confident and balanced members of their communities, and they achieve this well. Pupils have high self-esteem. All success is recognised and pupils show appreciation for each other's challenges, triumphs and accomplishments. They are given opportunities for reflection, especially in chapel and assembly, and achieve good spiritual development in a non-denominational context. There was a thought-provoking message in the chapel about the loss of friends and the sacrifices of others, and a Year 10 history lesson dealt sensitively with the devastation caused by war. This allowed pupils time to think deeply about the issues. Uplifting music, outstanding art and thoughtful poetry contribute to appreciation of the world around them. A Year 9 ethics lesson provided pupils with the opportunity to examine their own beliefs.
- 4.2 Pupils' moral development is good. They understand the difference between right and wrong and the need for rules and they have a keen sense of fairness, being confident to speak out if an issue needs to be raised. They understand the need for sanctions in school and the importance of self discipline. Although there are limited opportunities available for responsibility lower down the school, more senior pupils undertake many valued responsibilities, such as those of head of house and prefect. The prefects work closely with the headmaster and senior staff and provide good links between the pupils and the staff. Pupils behave in a sensible manner around school and in lessons observed they showed respect for their teachers and for each other.
- 4.3 Pupils' social development is outstanding. This is a friendly and happy school where pupils of all ages mix well, show a tolerance of each other's abilities and enjoy the international dimension and inclusive philosophy of the community. The boarding environment makes a significant contribution to the social environment. The boarding houses are used well by both day and boarding pupils during registration, relaxation times and tutor periods. Pupils state they are readily welcomed into the school and friendships are quickly formed. Relationships between pupils of all nationalities and beliefs are harmonious. They participate actively in PSHE programmes and areas of study that introduce them to the workings of democracy and public institutions. Pupils throughout the school work hard for charity and show concern for those less fortunate than themselves. Each house has its own fund-raising events, for example, the twenty-four hour trampolining and their involvement in raising money for the Uganda charity.
- 4.4 Pupil's knowledge and understanding of their own culture, and the cultures of others is good. Through their everyday involvement with pupils from differing backgrounds they develop an understanding of their traditions and celebrations, especially in the boarding environment. The school does not formally celebrate many festivals of different faiths in line with its ethos of maintaining a non-denominational atmosphere but there is good recognition given to the different festivals in the curriculum to help aid their understanding. Opportunities are provided to visit other cultural centres and trips abroad to places such as Iceland, Berlin and Barbados, add to their experiences.

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

- 4.5 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good throughout the school. The pastoral care provided for the pupils is a strength and has some excellent features. The vertical house system is excellent in overseeing the students' pastoral welfare, and a very effective 'year head' system focuses on academic improvement. Together these provide a strong and caring support structure which focuses on enabling the individual to flourish in all areas of school life which is an important aim of the school. The two systems benefit from dedicated tutors and boarding staff who know their pupils well. Extra support is provided by the LDD and EAL departments and the school counsellor and nursing staff who are always willing to listen and offer advice. Pupils across the school feel there is always someone they can talk to and they report in the pupil questionnaires that they feel safe and secure and well looked after as individuals. The school has recently introduced a newly structured tutorial system to support pupils and to deliver a programme of personal, social and health education. The programme, however, is still in its infancy and the implementation is not as thorough for some groups as it is for others
- 4.6 Relationships amongst pupils and between pupils and staff are good. The pupils have a friendly relationship with their teachers and share humour and an easy rapport with them around the school. Measures to promote good conduct and discipline are in place but the use of the reward system is less thoroughly understood by the pupils. In their questionnaires a small number of pupils did not think teachers treated pupils equally or were fair in the way they gave rewards and punishments. Although the inspection team found no evidence to support this, they did find that the reward system was unclear to pupils they interviewed.
- 4.7 There are good policies and procedures for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of the pupils. There is a clear and effective child protection policy and all procedures are in place to protect against bullying. All staff and governors have participated in the school's recent safeguarding training which included safer recruitment and internet safety. Every adult working or living within the school is subject to an enhanced Criminal Records Bureau disclosure check. Safe recruitment procedures ensure that all the required checks on prospective employees are made, and they are correctly entered on the central register. The school employs a full-time health and safety manager and arrangements to ensure health and safety are highly effective. Detailed risk assessments are adhered to and these are regularly reviewed. Day pupils and boarders benefit from comfortable medical facilities in their houses and a medical centre run by a health care professional. Health records are well maintained, and medicines are stored and distributed safely. The school now has a three-year disability plan in operation, which was a recommendation in the previous report. Access to buildings and to toilets for those with disabilities is good.
- 4.8 Facilities for serving food are satisfactory. In the pupils' and parents' questionnaires, concerns were raised about the quality and choice of food served. Evidence found during the inspection supported the views of pupils and parents that the choice and quality of food is not always satisfactory especially for boarders and for those pupils with special food requirements. There is an effective healthy living programme promoted through the curriculum and the pupils have good access to extensive grounds and facilities for exercise and sporting activities. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored for the previous three years.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.9 The boarding experience for pupils is good and contributes significantly to the school's aims of placing boarding at the heart of the school and providing an inclusive community. Pupils have good relationships with each other and with the staff, who create a safe, relaxed and happy atmosphere. Boarding facilities for girls are excellent. The new boarding houses are comfortable and spacious. Provision for boys is less satisfactory, although new accommodation is in the process of being built. Boy's rooms, although recently refurbished, are often restricted in space and lack a similar quality of facilities. The quality of food was considered to be a matter of concern by a number of boarders in the pupil questionnaire and the school is aware of the need to ensure that meals are sufficient in quality and choice, especially in the evenings and at weekends. Boarders have many good informal and formal opportunities to discuss their concerns.
- 4.10 The school site provides excellent opportunities for a range of activities in the evening and at weekends, but boarders commented on a lack of activity available for them that did not involve sport. There is an extensive range of activities available in the activity programme at the end of the school day which are open to all and fully meet the needs of boarders as well as day pupils. Access to nearby towns offer opportunities for trips at weekends for shopping, cultural events and recreation. Visits further afield are generously included in the school term.
- 4.11 The school is addressing all the recommendations set out in the most recent boarding inspection conducted by Ofsted especially those concerning the quality of accommodation with the new building project. The school's disciplinary practice is now more consistent with its policy and they have improved the 'Boarder's Board' to provide formal opportunities for concerns to be expressed. A formal appraisal programme of boarding staff by senior members of staff has also begun.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good and is successful in its aim to provide high-quality resources and facilities for the teachers, pupils and employees of the school. The governors offer a breadth of experience and skill, and are committed to promoting the school's ethos and raising standards. They meet regularly and, with two sub-committees responsible for finance and development, have good oversight of financial planning and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. Two very detailed strategic planning documents have been produced to aid educational progress and the improvement of site and facilities, and their development is closely monitored. This has rectified a shortcoming in the last report that school development planning did not cover all aspects of the school. An excellent governors' handbook, a compulsory induction process and an increase in training in education, health and safety and safeguarding of children, has resulted in a more focused and thoughtful approach to governance.
- 5.2 The chairman of governors maintains an excellent working relationship with the headmaster, providing both support and constructive advice on a regular basis. All governors have the opportunity to participate in both formal and informal visits to the school to gain greater understanding of all aspects of school life. These include academic departments, boarding houses and the role of support staff. They are kept well informed of the daily life of the school through regular detailed reports given by the headmaster. Governors are always involved in the appointment of key staff, and a more formal appraisal process for the headmaster is being developed. Policies are regularly reviewed and monitored. Governors are now diligent in managing the procedures of senior management in areas of child protection but this has not always been the case in the past.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.3 The leadership and management of the school are good and are committed in their aim to provide an outstanding education in a non-selective co-educational environment for young people. The school is well led by a large and recently restructured management team with a clear vision for the future, and the energy and enthusiasm to make the changes they feel will further improve the quality of pupils' education and personal development. The headmaster is very aware of the need to retain the underlying ethos of the school whilst aiming to improve the structures to allow the school to flourish. New management roles and job descriptions have been successfully introduced and more support provided for academic and pastoral staff. Lines of communication at all levels are very efficient from frequent meetings and briefings through to daily email messages. A new management information system has improved communication and the use of data for tracking pupils' progress.
- 5.4 The roles of middle managers are clear and a high level of autonomy is given to them in decision making within their own departments. Areas of responsibility for support staff have been clarified as recommended in the last report. The headmaster involves key staff in self-evaluation and target setting. A three-year strategic plan with senior leaders responsible for analysing, planning and leading work has been formulated. A more robust system of annual performance management has been introduced and linked to development planning. Good

systems are in place for recruiting high-quality staff who are dedicated to the welfare and academic success of the pupils and who give generously of their time. There is a growing culture of staff training which is provided on a regular basis.

- 5.5 Close attention has now been given to areas of child protection and safeguarding. The new headmaster has made sure that all procedures for safeguarding children are secure and strictly adhered to. The school has now rectified previous shortcomings. The school carries out the correct arrangements for ensuring all staff are suitable to work with children as recommended in the previous report. The administration and support staff are highly efficient and effective in their roles and are appreciated by pupils and parents for their kindness.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.6 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is good. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were extremely positive and the majority of parents were very pleased with the academic and pastoral provision on offer for their children. Parents were enthusiastic about the outstanding extra-curricular activities programme and the promotion of worthwhile social skills and behaviour throughout the school.
- 5.7 The annual year book gives a vivid picture of school life. The recently launched fortnightly e-news letter invites parents to contact the school if they require information. It lists events, performances and diary dates for parents. The news letter from the headmaster, published four times a year, keeps parents abreast of news, achievements and developments. There is also an extensive school calendar published every year, and the parental handbook is detailed about the life of the school and its procedures. Since the last inspection a website of high quality has greatly improved communication, and provides parents with relevant information and policy documents.
- 5.8 Two full reports each year and two assessment grade reports are informative on pupils' achievement and progress. Many subjects give specific guidance on what pupils need to do to improve, but this good practice is not seen across all subjects. The school has, however, reviewed and improved the format, style and content of reports to parents as recommended in the previous inspection report. Parents are invited to attend an annual parents' evening to discuss academic progress and pastoral issues, and they are encouraged to speak to their child's tutor, house tutor or a member of the leadership team to discuss informally any concerns they may have. The new tutorial system has been introduced to ensure closer links between home and school and encourages parents to contact their child's tutor at any time. There is a clear complaints policy and the headmaster deals effectively with any concerns that are made formally in writing.
- 5.9 In the parental questionnaire, a small number of parents said they did not feel that the school responded quickly enough to their concerns. The new procedures recently established by the new tutorial system and improved access via email are helping to address this problem. A small number of parents also said they did not feel involved in school life. The Inspection team found that the parents are encouraged to attend a wide variety of events but also realised that the boarding nature of the school and distances involved for travel may prevent many from doing so on a regular basis. There is the newly formed Friend's of St Bede's parent organisation which has been set up with the objective of encouraging parents to become more involved in the school.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Maureen Bradley	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Gwen Randall	Team Inspector, Former Head HMC
Mr Alan Bougeard	Team Inspector, Head of Middle School HMC
Mr Julian Hornsey	Team Inspector, Head of Department
Mrs Suzanne Thomas-Webb	Team Inspector, Deputy Head HMC
Mrs Helen Wainwright	Team Inspector, Deputy Head SHMIS