



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE



Leighton Park
School

STANDARD INSPECTION 2010

P4 – ‘Curricular provision is excellent. A broad curriculum, with new subjects introduced since the previous inspection, provides a range of stimulating opportunities for pupils of all ages according to their interests, while ensuring that the requisite areas of learning are covered.’

P5 – ‘Extra-curricular provision is also excellent. A busy programme of lessons is complemented by three daily activity slots.’

P7 – ‘The excellent personal development of the pupils is a strength of the school.’

P8 – ‘The pastoral procedures and the support and guidance of staff are important factors in the school’s success. The quality of pastoral care is excellent.’

P8 – ‘Relationships between pupils are excellent, many pupils referring to the atmosphere within the school as being “like one family.”’

P11 – ‘The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent.’

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Leighton Park School

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|---------------------------|--|------------|--|
| Full Name of School | Leighton Park School | | |
| DfE Number | 870/6001 | | |
| Registered Charity Number | 309144 | | |
| Address | Leighton Park School Shinfield Road Reading Berkshire RG2 7ED | | |
| Telephone Number | 01189 879 600 | | |
| Fax Number | 01189 879 625 | | |
| Email Address | info@leightonpark.com | | |
| Head | Mr John Dunston | | |
| Chair of Governors | Mr Paul High | | |
| Age Range | 11 to 18 | | |
| Total Number of Pupils | 501 | | |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (317 boys; 184 girls) | | |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: | 364 | Capacity for flexi-boarding: 12 |
| Number of Boarders | Total: | 137 | |
| | Full: | 93 | Weekly: 44 |
| Inspection dates | 09 Nov 2010 to 10 Nov 2010 06 Dec 2010 to 08 Dec 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 November 2004.

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 1 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 November 2008 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 Leighton Park, founded in 1890, is a day and boarding school set in extensive parkland outside Reading. Originally founded for the education of boys, it has been fully co-educational since 1994. Although few of the current pupils are from Quaker families, its Quaker roots are fundamental to its ethos, and the school guards these values carefully in its everyday practice. The school is owned by the Leighton Park Trust, whose trustees are also the directors of the company and the governors of the school. Of the maximum of twenty governors, twelve will always be Quakers. The school aims to reflect that of God in everyone, observing Quaker values and concerns in all its operations. It promotes a strong sense of a community rooted in sound values, mutual respect and self discipline, within which pupils can enjoy achieving to the best of their ability and prepare to play an effective role in a rapidly changing world.
- 1.2 The school introduced the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IB) in 2009 as an option at sixth form. Music technology and textiles have been introduced and pupils in Year 7 now study Mandarin. Since the previous inspection there has been considerable investment in improved teaching facilities and information and communications technology (ICT). The senior management has been restructured and become the school leadership group.
- 1.3 There are currently 501 pupils aged between 11 and 18, approximately a fifth from overseas, so that the school community reflects an international outlook. Most are from professional families. Just over a quarter of pupils board; all day pupils are integrated in the school's houses and described as day boarders. Fifty-three pupils receive support for English as an additional language (EAL) and 145 are identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), receiving support within school. Two pupils are funded by the local authority and have statements of special educational needs. The ability profile of the school to GCSE is above the national average. In the sixth form the ability profile is also above the national average, although with a wider spread of abilities. Year group sizes have varied over time, with a different range of abilities in each cohort, although results in public examinations consistently show attainment above the average for maintained schools.
- 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 table.

| School | NC name |
|---------|---------|
| Year 7 | Year 7 |
| Year 8 | Year 8 |
| Year 9 | Year 9 |
| Year 10 | Year 10 |
| Year 11 | Year 11 |
| Lower 6 | Year 12 |
| Upper 6 | Year 13 |

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Leighton Park pupils are well educated in line with the school's aims. At GCSE and A level, they reach standards that are above the average seen in maintained schools nationally, indicating that pupils make good progress relative to their ability. Good provision for those with LDD or EAL further supports this. Pupils are articulate; they discuss intelligently, manipulate numbers well, show a good understanding of scientific concepts, are confident in using ICT and enthusiastically participate in physical activity. Creativity is strongly developed as seen in striking art work on display and good levels of achievement in music and drama. Pupils are generally co-operative and interested learners, although their punctuality is sometimes erratic and at times inattentive behaviour and chatter impede learning. When given the opportunity, they show the ability to think for themselves and form independent judgements. Sixth-form students show a mature and well-organised approach to their studies. Pupils relish the wide range of activities offered and a number achieve good success in team and individual sports.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent and the school fully achieves its aims in this respect. Pupils develop a keen awareness of a non-material dimension of life. The practice of silences at points in the day encourages thoughtfulness in the pupils and a sensitive awareness of others. By the time they reach the sixth form, pupils are self-aware and self-confident. Pupils have a strong sense of morality and of social responsibility; their excellent demeanour and willingness to take responsibility helps to make the school a very civilised community in which the various cultures represented are enjoyed as contributing to its richness. Pupils are proud of their school and enjoy being part of it; in conversation many said how much they value the Quaker ethos.
- 2.3 The school is well governed. Governors support the school's Quaker foundation and their own business practice reflects Quaker values. Leadership and management are good with areas of excellence. The school has responded well to recommendations in the previous report. Significant investment in ICT has improved facilities considerably. The senior leadership sets an excellent example. It has been restructured and roles clarified, enabling better monitoring of departments, although some inconsistencies noted in the previous report remain. Some weaknesses in recruitment procedures identified at the initial visit were remedied by the time of the team visit. Responses both from pupils and from parents to the pre-inspection questionnaires showed a very high degree of satisfaction with the school.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 2.4 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:
- ensure that an enhanced criminal record check is requested before or as soon as possible after a person's appointment [Part 4, paragraph 19(2)(c), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors];
 - ensure that the central staffing register is accurately completed as regards staff appointed before 1st May 2007 [Part 4, paragraph 22(4), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors].
- 2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified one of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report. However, the following requirements remain unresolved, and therefore the school must:
- ensure that an enhanced criminal record check is requested before or as soon as possible after a person's appointment [Part 4, paragraph 19(2)(c), under Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors].

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the excellent practice observed in some departments is shared widely to ensure overall consistency of practice, expectations and standards.
 2. Ensure that pupils are engaged and attentive throughout all lessons by encouraging a range of different teaching strategies appropriate to their needs.
 3. Ensure the strengthening of the role of middle management in monitoring departments and in the development plan in line with the school's aims.

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 overall achievement of the pupils is good and the school is successful in helping pupils to achieve to the best of their ability, in line with the school's aims. They express themselves well orally and in writing; for example, an enthusiastic creative writing group has produced a book of short stories on Quaker themes. Pupils are able to apply mathematics to their work across the curriculum, show a good understanding of scientific concepts and thoroughly enjoy the many opportunities for sport and creative self expression. Art work on display is imaginative with excellent observational skills. Textiles is a popular addition to the curriculum and pupils showed ingenuity in making papier maché dinosaurs. The pupils' pleasure in the class concerts observed and the senior choir rehearsal for two forthcoming concerts showed how much music enriches school life.
- 3.2 Pupils participate in the Mathematics Challenge and Science Olympiad with good success. Many take music examinations, reaching a good standard. High quality drama productions are a popular extension to school life. The school's debating team was runner up in the area English Speaking Union competition. Teams compete successfully in Young Enterprise competitions each year. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme is popular, large numbers completing the bronze stage and some going on to silver and gold. There have been notable sporting achievements, with students gaining national, county and local success in individual sports as well as in a variety of team sports.
- 3.3 Attainment is good. Between 2007 and 2009, the results at GCSE and A level were consistently above the national average for maintained schools. Results in 2010 indicate a significant improvement. The first entries for the IB will be in 2011. All pupils, including those with LDD or EAL, make good progress, better than that for students of similar ability in maintained schools. Virtually all students go on to higher education, choosing a wide range of paths including entry to highly competitive art colleges, and to demanding courses at university.
- 3.4 Pupils are generally cooperative and interested learners although their punctuality is erratic and at times inattentive behaviour and chatter impede learning. At other times a happy buzz in lessons observed indicated their absorption in their work. The confident response to rigorous questioning in some subjects, for example German, ancient history and physics, demonstrated good ability to draw on prior learning. Older students, especially those studying for the IB, showed very good ability to think for themselves and to make connections across subjects. Notes are well organised and pupils take pride in the presentation of their work.

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

- 3.5 Curricular provision is excellent. A broad curriculum, with new subjects introduced since the previous inspection, provides a range of stimulating opportunities for pupils of all ages according to their interests, while ensuring that the requisite areas of learning are covered. Plans are in hand for a new music school in the near future and in the longer term for a sports hall. Pupils with identified LDD speak very highly of the Independent Learning Centre, which provides much-valued support to enable

them to fulfil their potential. Pupils with EAL also receive appreciated and highly effective support within school. The recent additions of Mandarin and the IB reflect the school's international outlook. The 'Beliefs and Values' lessons for Year 7 provides an excellent introduction to the school's Quaker ethos as pupils begin their school career. In older years, these compulsory lessons ensure an excellent understanding of other faiths and ethical issues. The very well structured 'Your Life' programme ensures that pupils are well educated in personal, social, health and citizenship issues. Good careers guidance is provided at appropriate stages. Well-planned trips enhance pupils' education. Year 8 pupils had found a recent trip to a Hindu temple fascinating. The history and English departments combine for a French battlefields trip, language learning is supported by trips to European countries and a cross-curricular trip to The Hague is planned as part of the school's participation in the Comenius programme.

- 3.6 Extra-curricular provision is also excellent. A busy programme of lessons is complemented by three daily activity slots. Day boarders are welcomed for breakfast or to stay to supper to enable their full participation in all the school has to offer. Activities are very wide ranging, providing academic, ecological, cultural and sporting clubs. Graduate residents play a good part in helping to operate these activities. During the inspection, younger pupils were seen thoroughly enjoying evening swimming and football sessions. A girls' football activity has been created at the request of pupils. Sports are very popular and many opportunities are taken for girls and boys to play in competitive fixtures against other schools. The orchestra and the senior choir, open to all from Year 9 to Year 13, are very well supported, as are drama productions.
- 3.7 Several musicians are involved with music outside school, and the music department plays a part in the school's outreach programme by supporting music in a local special school. The choir also takes part triennially in a major concert with other Quaker schools, the most recent being Verdi's 'Requiem'. Pupils in Year 10 are able to undertake work experience with a number of local businesses. Many groups in the local community use the school's facilities in the evening and at weekends. The school recently hosted the BBC Politics show, providing pupils with an excellent opportunity to discover more about government. Mindful of its Quaker ethos, the school is involved in major projects in Malawi and Uganda. During the inspection, sixth-form students presented a most moving Collect, as assemblies are called, showing what they had achieved for a school in Uganda during the autumn half term and inspiring others to follow their example.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.8 The overall standard of teaching is good, effectively promoting the pupils' progress and supporting the aims of the school. Two-thirds of lessons observed were rated as good and there were some examples of excellence. Some teachers are very good at using the assessment data provided to monitor progress and set appropriate targets for the pupils. Regular formal assessment tasks ensure that teachers have the necessary information to check learning and help them plan for further progress. For the most part, teachers with good subject knowledge set a range of challenging tasks in a lively and interesting way. Lessons are well planned and almost always lesson objectives are explained clearly to the class before a starter activity, which usefully revises previous learning. While there was some very sensitive support given to pupils with LDD or EAL, not all teachers are skilful at providing tasks suitable for the wide range of ability represented in their classes. As a result,

weaker pupils sometimes lose focus. The management of behaviour is generally good, although some teachers were less skilful than others at creating a relaxed yet disciplined classroom atmosphere. The teachers' expectations of pupils are somewhat inconsistent. When lessons were less successful, a lack of rigour, unclear explanations and undemanding tasks limited learning. In the best lessons, excellent exposition, swift pace and probing questioning reinforced knowledge and ensured rapid progress. In these lessons, activities were challenging and often accompanied by laughter in a pleasant and purposeful atmosphere which encouraged independent thought.

- 3.9 Teachers set prep conscientiously, the tasks usually extending learning. Occasionally, however, prep tasks lack challenge and contribute little to learning. When prep was set late in the lesson, pupils had no opportunity to ask for clarification and some did not understand expectations. In many lessons observed teachers made good use of the generous provision of ICT, providing a variety of tasks and enhancing learning by effective use of material sourced from the internet. In some lessons pupils were set to work independently using subject-specific software, which allowed pupils to work at a pace appropriate to their ability. However, when supervision was not adequate, some pupils made wild guesses in order to move through a subject game rapidly rather than using it to check and reinforce knowledge. The overall quality of assessment is good. Work scrutiny revealed inconsistencies of practice in how work is assessed, with some marking being of limited use to pupils. In other cases, careful and thorough annotation with precise advice for future improvement was provided. This, and the teachers' readiness to provide individual guidance, is much appreciated by pupils. They said that they find being on first name terms with their teachers makes them feel more confident to approach them for extra help, which is always willingly given.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The excellent personal development of the pupils is a strength of the school. The school fully lives up to its aims of promoting a strong sense of a community rooted in sound values and mutual respect, within which pupils develop into mature individuals ready to play an effective part in a rapidly changing world. By the time they reach Year 13, pupils are thoughtful, considerate and tolerant individuals with well-developed self-awareness and self-confidence. Pupils leave the school well equipped to lead responsible adult lives and with a strong set of values, derived from the school's Quaker ethos.
- 4.2 Pupils speak appreciatively of the time for private reflection created in the daily Collects and weekly Meetings for Worship. These ensure that pupils have a well-developed sense of a spiritual dimension of existence and of values beyond the purely material. Discussions in a sixth-form philosophy class showed a mature willingness to engage with ethical dilemmas. Pupils learn to understand and respect other faiths. They speak appreciatively of the part Quakerism plays in shaping school life; in discussion they said with conviction, "We like Quakers."
- 4.3 The school's Collects, often led by pupils, are used as excellent opportunities for consideration of moral issues; in one observed, a Year 11 pupil spoke with striking emotional maturity about her sense of God's unconditional love and of how difficult yet essential it is to seek forgiveness for mistakes. The pupils' behaviour shows that they have a firm understanding of right and wrong. Sixth-form prefects take their responsibilities seriously and their juniors look to them for support and help. Fair trade is strongly supported as a moral imperative.
- 4.4 Pupils have very well developed social skills, enhanced by the all-age house structures. They enjoy each other's company and treat each other with respect. The lunch time meal is a very civilised break in the day. Movement around the school is calm and without noisy boisterousness. The striking large sculptures in natural materials created by pupils around the grounds demonstrate their awareness of the beauty of their environment and of their responsibilities to maintain it. Discussions with pupils revealed that they have a good understanding of political structures and of the social issues affecting society. In a sixth form geography lesson students intelligently discussed inequalities of global development. Involvement in the school's 'ReachOut' programme enables pupils to move from intellectual awareness to practical action. Considerable amounts have been raised for many good causes including Help for Heroes, emergency disaster appeals and to support the Bujagali Trust and a school in Uganda with which they are linked. These experiences not only help others but enhance the pupils' understanding of significant global issues.
- 4.5 Pupils enjoy the rich cultural mix represented in the school. Overseas students are swiftly integrated into the school and bring a valued different perspective to discussions. Art work draws imaginatively on diverse cultural traditions. The many different cultures and backgrounds exist in harmony within the school as pupils learn, in accordance with the school's ethos, to see that of God in everyone.

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

- 4.6 The school makes excellent provision for the welfare, health and safety of its pupils in line with its commitment to creating a strong sense of a community rooted in sound values, mutual respect and self-discipline. The pastoral procedures and the support and guidance of staff are important factors in the school's success. The quality of pastoral care is excellent. In interviews, in responses to questionnaires and in informal discussion, pupils are clear: they feel valued, respected and very well cared for. Sixth-formers said, "There is massive support in school," and, as did younger pupils, said they felt they could talk to anyone if they were worried about something. Relationships between staff and pupils are open and informal and, with few exceptions, the pupils respond well to this informality and recognize the boundaries imposed by different roles in school. Relationships between pupils are excellent, many pupils referring to the atmosphere within the school as being "like one family."
- 4.7 The code of conduct is clear and accepted by pupils as fair; staff are very good at ensuring pupils understand the reasons for expectations. The school has in place rigorous policies to deter bullying in the school and in the boarding houses. In interviews, pupils were clear about bullying in school: "There is none," is a common response. The school implements its policies on behaviour appropriately and takes immediate and strong action, reflecting its commitment to providing excellent care for its pupils, as shown by its firm response to an incident that occurred during the inspection.
- 4.8 When pupils were asked at interview whether they felt safe the response was an immediate and somewhat quizzical "Of course!" Safeguarding policies are very good and rigorously implemented. Records of concerns are kept appropriately, and all staff are suitably trained in matters of welfare, guidance and child protection. In interview pupils were aware of the identity of the child protection officer, who is usefully named in the Year 7 'Beliefs and Values' notebooks. During checks carried out at the time of the initial visit, it was found that a small number of staff started work before all legally required checks had been completed, although by the time of the inspectors' final visit all staff and governors had been subject to enhanced CRB clearances, as required. The school recognises that in future checks must be completed before staff start work, and took prompt steps to remedy the error identified in the central staffing register during the initial visit. This now meets requirements.
- 4.9 Procedures for guarding against risk of fire are good. Fire risk assessments are in place and a log of fire practices is kept. A sensible first aid policy is in place, with clear protocols established for dealing with giving of medications, accidents, emergencies and illness. There is a very good health centre on the premises and all treatment is carefully recorded, parents being appropriately notified. The school is aware of its legal responsibility to improve access for those with disabilities. An accessibility plan has been written, complying with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Admission and attendance registers are efficiently administered and absences are followed up promptly. Food in the school is excellent with a wide range of choice. Healthy, appetising and wholesome food is enjoyed in a most congenial setting which helps make meal times pleasant social occasions. Pupils participate enthusiastically in physical exercise lessons and in the plentiful extra-curricular activities. They show an excellent understanding of the need for a healthy lifestyle.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.10 The quality of boarding education is excellent and a strength of the school. The house structure combines boys and girls, boarders and day boarders in each house, so that each one represents a microcosm of the school and provides a real sense of community. Day boarders feel very much a part of their houses and enjoy time spent within them. International students are thoroughly integrated and the school uses the opportunities presented by the traditions of different cultures to extend the pupils' understanding and pleasure in the diversity of the school community.
- 4.11 Boarding houses are well maintained, spacious and comfortable. Care is taken to ensure the pupils' right to privacy, and personal space is treated with respect. There is ample provision for relaxation and for boarders to cook snacks in the evening. Recommendations in the most recent Ofsted report concerning medical protocols and the oversight of key records have been successfully implemented. House staff are deployed effectively. They are highly regarded by pupils who in interview expressed their gratitude for the care they receive and for the time which staff willingly give them.
- 4.12 The excellent boarding environment encourages pupils to mix together across age groups, to become tolerant and understanding of each other and to enjoy the conviviality of communal living. The highly entertaining rehearsals for house pantomimes inspectors observed showed this enjoyment in action. The warmth of relationships and a happy sense of boarding life were apparent in a house Collect when prizes were awarded for a fancy dress competition and all joined in singing happy birthday to a boy on his birthday. A wide variety of activities is available throughout the week and at weekends for all. Boarders are encouraged to join in but are also able to take time to relax or visit friends. Boarding also allows pupils to take responsibility and develop leadership skills. Sixth-formers play an active part in the management of houses. For example, heads of houses and prefects help with prep and overseeing bedtime routines. Year 10 pupils help to supervise prep for the youngest pupils. Some day boarders told inspectors that they find the boarding ethos very helpful in helping them to balance their academic work with their social lives. Younger pupils praise their seniors for their approachability and helpfulness.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good. The governing body takes very seriously the prime responsibility of its memorandum of association to ensure that the school remains true to its Quaker values and works hard to this end. Governors have a wide range of skills which they use for the good of the school. The structure and constitution of the governing body, where there must always be a majority of Quakers, ensure a combination of Quaker principles with good business practice.
- 5.2 Governors meet at the school twice a term, with sub-committees meeting termly. Some governors visit the school informally on a more frequent basis. Governors are kept well informed by reports from the head and bursar. Sub-committees for education, business and health and safety report to the main governing body so that all governors are provided with the information they need to meet their legal duties for oversight of the school. Some governors have undertaken training in child protection and safe recruitment issues, for which they have special responsibility. These policies are reviewed annually by governors. However, the school's recruitment procedures did not meet all requirements at the time of the initial visit, although matters have now been put right. Wise governance has ensured the school's financial security and allowed continuing investment in facilities and in ICT, with well founded plans for continued improvement of teaching accommodation.
- 5.3 Governors take careful time in meetings to consider issues presented to them. While their determination to ensure thorough understanding and to govern in a principled manner guards against hasty decisions, it has at times blurred the lines between governance and management. On occasion, discussion of sensitive issues has been protracted, creating difficulties for school management.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the school are good and in some respects excellent. The school responded well to the recommendations in the previous report concerning the clarification of responsibilities for senior leaders, creating a more effective structure. This has enabled considerable progress to be made in implementing the further recommendations made at that time concerning ICT and monitoring. As it prepares for a long-serving head to retire, the school has put good transition arrangements into place to ensure the smooth continuity of the school's everyday working while the incoming head will have the freedom to create new structures as he feels appropriate.
- 5.5 Safeguarding procedures are rigorously implemented. The school now has very thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of all staff and has ensured that all staff and governors have enhanced CRB checks. When errors were identified in the course of the initial visit, the school immediately took action to remedy the matter. Excellent measures are being put in place by the recently created human resources department to ensure that the administrative failings identified at the time of the initial inspection cannot occur in future.
- 5.6 There is a good school development plan, covering all areas of school life. However, not all heads of department are familiar with this and not all departmental plans link with the overall school priorities. In response to the previous inspection, a

system for more rigorous monitoring of departments has been created, intended to ensure greater consistency of standards. Whilst this has met with a degree of success, some inconsistencies still exist. Practice in the classroom does not always reflect the procedures indicated in departmental handbooks. Not all departmental handbooks reflect the school's very clear ethos in their aims. Handbooks vary considerably in usefulness, the best proving very good guidance and analysis of academic successes and priorities. Some heads of department make effective use of the considerable amounts of useful data they are now given to monitor pupil progress.

- 5.7 The senior leadership team reflects carefully on its work and evaluates its successes and future priorities very well. Its excellent vision and commitment to school improvement has resulted in the successful introduction of the IB as an option for sixth form as well as new subjects for younger pupils. The generous provision of ICT facilities is enhancing teaching in a number of areas. The team is led with a combination of sensitivity, humour, determination and passionate commitment to providing the best for pupils. Its success is strongly demonstrated in the pupils' academic progress and excellent personal development. The sensitive and wholehearted way in which members of the leadership team live out the school's ethos of respecting and valuing each individual impacts positively on the everyday experiences of the pupils. This excellent senior leadership ensures that the pupils' time at Leighton Park exerts a long-lasting influence on their lives.

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

- 5.8 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. The overwhelming majority of parents feel satisfied with the information they receive concerning their child's progress. A regular system of parents' meetings is in place and grade sheets and reports are sent home on six occasions each year. These are of very good quality, commenting on a pupil's strengths and weaknesses as well as providing course information. As pupils move up through the school, reports increasingly offer advice as to how progress might be made towards target examination grades. An exceptionally informative website provides another means of easy communication with parents and ensures that all required policies and more are easily available. The school's termly newsletter, "The Park", is attractively presented. It effectively celebrates achievement, informs parents and fosters a sense of community. A further annual report is also sent to parents and communicates the financial activities of the school in an open way, in line with the Quaker commitment to integrity. Responses to questionnaires demonstrate that most parents feel there is good communication with the school and that concerns are usually dealt with promptly. The school has a good complaints policy, which it implements in accordance with its published procedures; there have been no formal complaints this academic year.
- 5.9 Parents have very good opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. The Parent Teacher Association is very active and organises regular events which provide opportunities for the community to meet socially and to support the charitable ethos of the school. The organisation also raises funds to support activities in school. The 'Friends of LP Music' establishes a further supportive parental link. An information evening on Quakerism was significant in deepening parents' awareness of the school's underpinning ethos. Many opportunities for parents to involve themselves in the life of the school are provided by concerts, plays, sports fixtures and the monthly Sunday Meeting.

- 5.10 The vast majority of parents expressed great satisfaction with the education and support provided for their children, including the provision for boarders. Equally high is the parents' satisfaction with the pastoral care provided by the school, with the range of extra-curricular activities on offer and with the attitudes and views that are promoted. A very small number were unhappy with the information provided about their children's progress but inspectors found no grounds to support such concerns. One parent commented on the questionnaire, "I can say without reservation that LP changed the course of our children's lives. They are lucky and we are grateful."

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 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

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| Mrs Colette Culligan | Reporting Inspector |
| Mr Andrew Gist | Director of IB, HMC school |
| Mr Andrew Ward | Head of Sixth Form, HMC school |
| Mrs Susan Hooker | Head of Careers, HMC school |
| Mr Clive Thorpe | Head of Middle School, HMC school |



Leighton Park
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