

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Durham School

Full Name of the School	<b>Durham School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>840/6000</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1023407</b>
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Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Alasdair MacConachie</b>
Age Range	<b>11 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009</b>

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

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Durham School is a day and boarding school for boys and girls from eleven to eighteen years of age. It traces its foundation at least to Cardinal Langley's re-founding of the cathedral schools in 1414 and may date as far back as the monastic settlement on Lindisfarne that came to Durham over 900 years ago. It moved to its present location overlooking the World Heritage site of Durham Cathedral in 1844. Originally a boys' school, it first admitted girls to the sixth form in 1985 and became fully co-educational in 1998. The current headmaster was appointed in April 2009. In 2006, Bow, a nearby co-educational preparatory day school, was renamed Bow, Durham School and fully incorporated into Durham School to provide continuity of education for pupils from three to eighteen. Durham School has recently undergone a major programme of development and improvement, including the extension and updating of information and communication technology (ICT) facilities, the provision of an all-weather games area and additional facilities for girls.
- 1.2 The school aims to educate all pupils so that they achieve the best academic results of which they are capable, develop their talents and self-confidence, and are equipped with skills for future life. It also seeks to provide opportunities for extra-curricular achievement, to treat each pupil with respect and on an equal footing, and through a close partnership with parents and carers, to safeguard the well being of each pupil.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection the school had 474 pupils: 335 boys and 139 girls. In total, 333 pupils, 232 boys and 101 girls, were in Years 7 to 11, and 141 pupils, 103 boys and 38 girls, were in the sixth form. Nearly a quarter of the pupils were boarders. The Lower School comprises Years 7 and 8, whilst the Middle School comprises Years 9 to 11. Overall numbers have risen since the last inspection. Of the entrants at eleven, about half are from Bow, Durham School, the majority of the rest coming from maintained primary schools. The entrants at thirteen and sixteen come from a range of maintained and independent schools.
- 1.4 The pupils come from a variety of ethnic and economic backgrounds, and parents are predominately professional or self-employed. Many day and weekly boarding pupils live within or close to Durham City, but others travel from as far as Sunderland, Newcastle or Darlington. A significant proportion of full-time boarders come from overseas, including a growing number whose parents are serving with HM Forces abroad. Currently, 150 pupils receive means-tested assistance, and 105 pupils benefit from non means-tested admissions scholarships towards fees.
- 1.5 Entry at the ages of eleven and thirteen is dependent on the candidate's performance in the school's own entrance and scholarship examinations. Entry to the sixth form is subject to meeting criteria linked to GCSE grades. Standardised tests taken by successive Year 7 and Year 9 groups indicate that the average ability of the pupils in Years 7 to 11 is above the national average, and in line with the national average in the sixth form. However, the range of ability of the pupils in all year groups is wide. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their achievements at GCSE will be above the national average and at A level in line with the national average for all maintained schools.
- 1.6 At the time of the inspection, the school had seventeen pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), fifteen of whom were receiving support with their English. The school had no pupil with a statement of special educational needs; however, seventy-two pupils were on the school's learning support register, of whom thirty-seven were receiving specialist learning support.

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Lower Remove	Year 7
Upper Remove	Year 8
Shell	Year 9
Lower Fifth	Year 10
Upper Fifth	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

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

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The school provides a good quality educational experience that is successful in promoting pupils' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human, social and physical development. It is fully consistent with the school's aims to educate all pupils so that they achieve the best academic results of which they are capable, to provide opportunities for extra-curricular achievement and to develop each pupil's personal talents. The school has also established a wide range of extra-curricular opportunities, both on and off site, that promote learning and personal achievement.
- 2.2 The curriculum is broad and balanced, and is well suited to the interests and aptitudes of all pupils. The acquisition of skills in numeracy, listening and speaking is strongly promoted through a suitable range of subjects. The breadth of study is good in science, the three sciences being taught separately, and in languages, with French, German, Spanish and Latin being offered. Provision for creative, artistic and physical development in Years 7 to 9 is also good. However, setting in Years 7 to 9 restricts the range of subjects available to some pupils. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum concentrates on public examinations but the inclusion of religious studies (RS) and games in the core subjects, together with flexibility of timetabling for GCSE options, ensures that suitable breadth and balance are maintained for most pupils. All pupils are required to study French, other languages being offered only as options, and there is no provision for three separate sciences at GCSE. At AS and A level, pupils choose freely from a good range of subjects. The breadth and depth of pupils' educational experience are effectively maintained in Years 12 and 13. Games remain compulsory and all pupils are encouraged to participate fully in the extra-curricular activities programme. The school is currently undertaking a major review of the curriculum to ensure that it meets the needs of all its pupils. It has recently restructured the school day, providing regular tutor time and dedicated activity sessions. The well-structured and organised personal, health and social education (PHSE) programme, encompassing a wide range of pastoral topics, is delivered effectively by tutors within the house system.
- 2.3 A wide and well-supported extra-curricular programme complements the taught curriculum. The school emphasises, in line with its aims, the importance it gives to this part of its educational provision. Sport is at the centre of the programme, with numerous team opportunities on offer for pupils of all ages and abilities. Music and drama are also very well provided for. Pupils benefit from a wide range of clubs, visits and residential trips, a few linked to academic subjects but most of more general interest. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DoE), Young Enterprise, World Challenge Expeditions (WCE) and Combined Cadet Force (CCF) enable pupils to explore new interests, and to engage in activities that promote personal development and team work.
- 2.4 Good opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss GCSE and A-level choices, but there is no structured whole-school careers education programme. Year 13 pupils commented on the excellent advice and assistance they had received when preparing their university applications. The school, recognising the importance of effective careers education for all pupils, has recently appointed a head of careers to develop and oversee a whole-school programme, to include work experience.
- 2.5 The curriculum is planned effectively to meet the needs of most pupils, thus providing equality of access and opportunity. Pupils identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), or EAL, receive excellent support from, and are closely monitored by, the learning support co-ordinator. Individual School Action Plans, which define pupils' difficulties and give helpful advice about strategies to assist them, are made available to all

staff, ensuring that the needs of these pupils are effectively met in all areas of school life. The school has identified those pupils who are gifted and talented but provision for them, though good in some areas of the curriculum, lacks consistency overall.

- 2.6 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.7 The quality of pupils' learning and achievements is good. Throughout the school they take pride in their work and achievements, and show enthusiasm for their learning. In lessons and activities, pupils sustain concentration and respond positively to the expectations of their teachers. In this, the school is successful in achieving its aims to develop each pupil's personal talents.
- 2.8 At all stages, pupils are articulate, and are able to think and act both creatively and critically. They are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding, which facilitates effective learning and progress. Pupils show good recall of knowledge acquired in previous lessons and an ability to apply their skills effectively in a range of situations.
- 2.9 Standards of oracy, literacy and numeracy are good throughout the school. Pupils listen attentively, discuss thoughtfully and write fluently. They have the confidence to advance theories and predictions which are then debated sensitively by others, as when seeking to explain the mixing of gases in a chemistry lesson. They develop a good understanding of the topics they are studying and apply their knowledge effectively.
- 2.10 Numeracy skills are well developed, and pupils apply them effectively in subjects beyond mathematics, for instance in economics and science. Pupils develop a wide range of ICT skills in Years 7 to 9 and, when given the opportunity, make good use of them, such as when using sophisticated software for composition in music.
- 2.11 The good quality of teaching throughout the school ensures that no significant differences in relative attainment are apparent between different curriculum areas or stages of education, and the achievement of boys and girls is similar.
- 2.12 Performance at GCSE and A level has improved since the last inspection. Results in GCSE examinations are in line with pupils' ability and above the national average for maintained schools. Over the last three years, the proportion of A\* or A grades has exceeded one third, with the best results being achieved in 2009. A-level results achieved consistently year-on-year are also in line with pupils' ability, and with the national average for maintained schools. The proportion of A levels graded A or B exceeded one half in 2008 and 2009.
- 2.13 The school's tracking system, which has recently been modified, is used effectively to monitor progress through the school. Nationally standardised measurements indicate that progress from Year 7 to GCSE and from GCSE to A level is in line with expectation.
- 2.14 Pupils of all ages are skilled at note taking and, when given the opportunity, study independently. As they progress through the school, they develop effective strategies for managing their work and time. Pupils study and work very effectively in groups and pairs, showing, in line with the school's strong sense of community, a sensitivity for the ideas and opinions of others.
- 2.15 Pupils settle quickly to their lessons and activities, and most show high levels of perseverance. They show commitment to, and enjoyment of, their lessons, participating willingly in discussion and debate. Excellent relationships amongst pupils, and between pupils and staff, contribute very effectively to good learning and achievement.

- 2.16 Since the last inspection, success in a wide range of activities has been achieved. Each year individual pupils and teams have gained recognition at regional, county and national level in sporting competitions. Levels of achievement in competitive team sports are particularly high. A significant number of pupils enjoy success in the mathematics challenges, DoE, WCE and CCF. They also participate very successfully in music and drama activities. Pupils, staff and parents are proud of these achievements, which are given considerable recognition within the school.

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

- 2.17 Overall, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding. They are nurtured and supported by the caring ethos and concern for the development of the individual which permeate school life. In this, the school is successful in fulfilling its aims to develop personal confidence, and to treat each pupil equally and with respect.
- 2.18 Pupils of all ages have a strongly developed spiritual awareness. They show a sense of identity and purpose, and high levels of self-worth and personal insight through their words, behaviour, and the trusting and relaxed relationships they have with the whole school community. The school offers pupils many opportunities to explore their own spirituality and the way different values and beliefs affect their own and others' lives, such as in assembly, and in RS and PHSE lessons. Pupils were observed in lessons comparing with interest Christian, Jewish and Muslim symbols. The 'hot potato' activity provides an excellent forum for pupils to explore fundamental questions about their purpose in life. The confirmation programme and creative initiatives, such as a link to ideas for personal prayer on the school website, provide good opportunities for pupils to develop their own faith. The chapel, a memorial to past pupils who lost their lives in war, holds a prominent position in the school, reflected in the words of one Year 7 pupil: "it makes the school what it is". Spirituality is well developed through assemblies and the Friday service, which are greatly enhanced by pupils' involvement, most notably through music. The chaplain provides and promotes strong spiritual leadership.
- 2.19 Pupils respond positively to the many opportunities the school provides for them to develop an awareness of ethical and moral issues, and to exercise moral judgement. In lessons, notably but not exclusively in religious studies, in form time and informally throughout school life, they are encouraged to respond to such issues. For example, a Year 10 lesson on a poem set in Africa challenged pupils to reflect on apartheid and segregation. Pupils have a strong moral sense, and they learn to make responsible and reasoned judgements on moral and ethical issues. The civilised atmosphere on the campus and the very strong sense of community created in the houses have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour. In interviews, pupils revealed their maturity when discussing school rules, rewards and sanctions, showing a clear understanding of the importance of consideration for others and self-discipline. The senior and house monitors systems provide a highly effective means of giving responsibility to older pupils. They take their duties seriously and are excellent role models for younger pupils. School councils, and the DoE, CCF, WCE and sport provide further channels for pupils to take responsibility for others.
- 2.20 Socially, pupils develop into confident and well-rounded young people, keen to play a full and active part in the life of the school and the wider community. Relationships throughout the school are outstanding, with a strong ethos of mutual respect. Social development is promoted effectively through the wide ranging extra-curricular and sporting programmes, and through numerous house and inter-house activities. Pupils are encouraged to act as guides on open days and work closely with staff on whole-school projects, such as creating an anti-cyber bullying policy. The school expects pupils to think beyond themselves and many do this through charity work, often house based, and through the service element of the

DoE scheme. Recent successful events have included The Great North Run, with pupils and staff raising significant sums for cystic fibrosis, and a house competition, 'design a hoodie', in aid of pupils' chosen charity. In discussion and through their actions, pupils demonstrate a strong loyalty to the school and, in particular, to their house. The PHSE programme gives pupils a sound understanding of what it means to be a citizen.

- 2.21 Pupils show a good level of cultural awareness. Lessons in a range of subjects deal sensitively with issues of cultural diversity, as do assemblies. Regular excursions abroad, ranging from sports tours in Australia to language trips in Germany and music tours in Spain, deepen pupils' understanding and appreciation of other cultures and traditions. Pupils also acquire a greater appreciation of their own culture through language awareness days with themed lunches, theatre trips and visits to museums, and through extra-curricular activities such as drama, choir and orchestra. The boarding community is highly successful in bringing together pupils of different cultures whose presence greatly enriches the school, celebrating collectively events such as Chinese New Year.
- 2.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.23 Teaching is of a consistently good quality and enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, to make sound progress relative to their ability, and to develop and use new skills. Pupils with LDD or EAL are very well catered for through the support they receive, both from the learning support department and from their teachers.
- 2.24 Much good teaching, a significant proportion of which is excellent, fosters in pupils a desire to learn, together with an ability to apply themselves creatively and intellectually to their studies. It encourages them to think and reason for themselves, and to work effectively both individually and in groups. Teaching makes a marked contribution to pupils' good level of achievement and to their success in public examinations. In some subjects, pupils benefit greatly from a varied and innovative approach, where discussion and experimentation are encouraged. This was seen to good effect in an economics lesson, where small groups of pupils used a card sorting 'mystery' exercise to reach conclusions about a real life situation. Physical effort is successfully promoted through skilled teaching by specialist and other staff, both in games lessons and in extra-curricular activities.
- 2.25 Most teaching is well planned, with clear learning objectives. It employs a suitable range of strategies. Teachers know the pupils very well and are able to focus lessons appropriately on their needs, aptitudes and prior attainments. They are provided with detailed information regarding the needs of those pupils with LDD but there is some variation in the way the information is interpreted and used. Sound management of class time allows for pupils to progress, and this was seen to good effect in the sequencing of skills practices in games.
- 2.26 Teachers show an excellent knowledge and understanding of their subjects. Some lessons, for example in religious studies and geography, were greatly enhanced by teachers' confident and effective use of technology. A range of good quality resources, including interactive white boards, is available in most areas of the school and contributes to the variety of teaching. The dispersal of fiction books to the English department and the setting up of departmental libraries in response to the last inspection report have served to reduce rather than increase pupils' opportunities for text related research, access to these libraries often being limited.

- 2.27 The mutual respect and ease of relationships between pupils and their teachers are central to pupils' educational experience. This encourages good behaviour and creates an atmosphere in which pupils can enjoy their studies, and feel confident to express and share ideas.
- 2.28 Teaching throughout the school includes regular assessment within lessons and, where appropriate, through tests and written work. The best marking, in line with the school's marking and assessment for learning policies, is thorough and detailed. It provides constructive comments to support pupils' learning, and is closely related to clearly defined subject specific criteria that are known and understood by the pupils. This good practice is not yet widespread, and lack of thorough monitoring of marking leads to inconsistencies across and within departments. However, scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection found significant recent improvements in the quality of marking, with closer adherence to school policy.
- 2.29 The school has a considerable amount of assessment data on the performance of pupils, based on regular testing, the results of nationally standardised tests and public examination performance. This data is extensively used by senior management, and to an increasing extent by all staff, to monitor pupils' progress and to set regular targets for individuals. Through the recently introduced monitoring system, under performance is quickly identified and clear strategies put in place to provide extra support and closer monitoring. Evaluation of pupil performance is also carried out against national norms on the publication of GCSE and A-level results. The school has in place effective arrangements for pupils' performance to be related to its own aims.
- 2.30 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

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

- 3.1 The school provides outstanding pastoral care, support and guidance for its pupils, and is effective in ensuring their welfare, health and safety. The quality of pastoral care has developed further from the already good standard reported on at the last inspection. The school achieves its aim to develop personal confidence, and to treat each pupil equally and with respect. Pupils of all ages feel valued, listened to and cared for. Parents are appreciative of the high standard of pastoral care provided, and the positive impact this has on their children's personal development and academic progress.
- 3.2 Pastoral care is initially the responsibility of form tutors, working within a very strong house system. They meet their tutees frequently and deal with most pastoral matters, liaising with housemasters and housemistresses, and other staff when necessary. Tutors are also responsible for delivering the comprehensive PHSE programme to their tutees, adapting it to meet their needs. At the time of the inspection, topics being covered included drugs, sex education and litter. Through frequent contact, tutors get to know their tutees well and have a clear oversight of every aspect of their school lives. Pupils spoke highly of their tutors, and their housemasters and mistresses, particularly of the good rapport they have with them, and were in no doubt that they have numerous avenues of support should the need arise. The pastoral system is closely monitored on a regular, informal basis by senior staff to ensure the application of relevant policies and agreed procedures. Roles are well defined and lines of communication clear, enabling any issues that arise to be dealt with quickly. Regular pastoral meetings ensure a consistent approach across the houses and the effective sharing of information amongst house staff. Pupils also play an active role in the success of the pastoral system through the 'buddy' scheme for new pupils, the evolving peer support system and various pupil councils. The junior council is currently devising an unofficial guide to the school, building on its involvement in the 'buddy' scheme. The senior prefects and school and house monitors who work closely with the deputy head (pastoral) provide invaluable pastoral support for younger pupils.
- 3.3 The quality of relationships between pupils and staff, both teaching and support, and amongst pupils themselves is outstanding. They are based on a foundation of trust and mutual respect. The relaxed and friendly manner in which pupils and staff mix permeates every aspect of school life, making a significant contribution to the very strong sense of community and house spirit that are at the heart of the school.
- 3.4 High standards of behaviour are expected and achieved, and there is a clear system in place for staff to deal with disciplinary issues should they arise. Any serious disciplinary matters are dealt with promptly and effectively. Pupils are aware of the school rules, and there is a clearly defined, graduated set of sanctions that pupils regard as fair and generally justly applied. The rewards system, which recognises excellence, acts as an effective spur to hard work and achievement, particularly in the younger year groups. The school has a detailed and comprehensive policy to safeguard against bullying and, although rare, such cases are dealt with swiftly and sensitively.
- 3.5 Effective child protection measures are securely in place and all staff receive relevant training. Recruitment checks for all staff are carried out comprehensively. Medical arrangements, including those for boarders, are of a high quality, with good provision for pupils who are taken ill, and suitable numbers of staff are qualified in first aid.

- 3.6 Health and safety arrangements are thorough, and clearly laid down in school policies and procedures. The school pays due regard to statutory obligations. Measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are comprehensive, and all necessary risk assessments are in place. Registration is conducted correctly and admissions procedures are appropriate. Pupils are well supervised during all activities, the arrangements being appropriate to the age of those involved.
- 3.7 A healthy lifestyle is promoted, both through the provision of a good range of suitably nutritious food at breakfast, lunch and supper, and through the significant number of sporting activities available to all pupils. An excellent discussion on diet and exercise was observed in a tutorial session, stressing the importance of healthy living.
- 3.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

### **The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community**

- 3.9 The school has developed an effective partnership with parents and a number of worthwhile links with both the local and the wider community. Parents are appreciative of the excellent links maintained between themselves and the school, and the frequent contact is both welcomed and valued. The questionnaire, completed by a good proportion of parents before the inspection, showed a high level of satisfaction and confidence in the school's academic work, and in the pastoral care their children receive. They appreciate the strong house system and the high quality extra-curricular programme. A small number of parents expressed concern about the GCSE science curriculum and the range of options available at both GCSE and A level, issues which are currently being addressed by the school.
- 3.10 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in school activities. They regularly support sports fixtures, plays and concerts, as well as providing expertise and training for pupils in areas such as theatre lighting. The parents' association, The Friends of Durham School, is active, and stimulates interest and support for the school, whilst organising highly successful fundraising events to provide high quality resources. The Old Dunelmians provide an extensive social network as well as support for the school, particularly in the area of sport.
- 3.11 High quality information about the school including a monthly 'e-letter', a calendar of events, and the clear and easily accessible website, keeps parents well informed about every stage of their children's education. Academic diaries provide an effective and well-used means of communication between home and school, especially for those pupils joining in Year 7. Parents are satisfied with the school's reporting system, which provides a combination of formal parents' evenings and written reports. The reports are generally constructive and informative, with clearly defined target and effort grades. A growing number of meetings and a parents' forum provide opportunities for parents to discuss issues such as university applications, and also more general topics.
- 3.12 The school's system for dealing with parental concerns is effective. The majority of parents who responded to the questionnaire felt the school handles their concerns promptly and with care. They see the tutors and houseparents as their key points of contact and commented on the swiftness of response to routine enquiries. The school is an open and welcoming community.
- 3.13 The school has established a number of worthwhile links with the local and wider community. A well-established partnership with local primary schools involves both staff and pupils in an annual activities day. Durham Cathedral plays an important part in the life of the school, with the local community invited to attend the many services and concerts held

there, including the highly regarded Christmas carol concert. The school's facilities, including the swimming pool, are made available whenever possible to local groups and clubs. An effective link of a charitable and educational nature also exists with a group in Peru who recently visited the school and gave a moving display of traditional dance.

- 3.14 Positive steps are taken to increase the pupils' awareness of the needs of others and they respond with enthusiasm, as demonstrated through the excellent charity work. Pupils are encouraged to raise funds for causes close to their hearts, for example through making a stand against poverty. Many older pupils undertake regular voluntary work in the community through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.
- 3.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.16 The overall quality of boarding is good. Boarding provides pupils with a secure environment in which they enjoy a very high quality of pastoral care and good opportunities for leisure. They develop independence and self-discipline, and have the confidence to manage their own lives.
- 3.17 Pupils speak highly of the supportive attitude of all the house staff and the concern they show for the needs of the individual. Housemasters and housemistresses are a friendly presence and are well respected. A strong sense of community exists in the houses, with older pupils reinforcing the caring ethos of the school in the exercise of responsibility for those younger than themselves.
- 3.18 The school offers boarders a satisfactory range of activities outside of school time. In addition to the many opportunities enjoyed by day pupils, the boarders are offered a range of trips, for example to the cinema or go-karting, and activities on site such as baking. Boarders commented that they enjoy the relaxed atmosphere on Sundays, particularly the flexible eating arrangements. The quality of the accommodation ranges from satisfactory to good. The girls' house, which has recently been refurbished, is well equipped, with a very homely feeling, whereas in the boys' houses, facilities are more limited and the decoration is somewhat tired. As the school has recognised, increasing boarding numbers is putting pressure on space in the boys' houses.
- 3.19 Staff cover in the boarding houses is good, as is provision for boarders who are taken ill. Statutory requirements regarding child protection, and the recommendations of the last Ofsted report, including the appointment of a head of boarding, have all been met.

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The school is well governed. The governors work hard to ensure that it retains its traditional ethos and fulfils its aims. They have a clear understanding of their strategic role, delegating executive responsibilities appropriately to the headmaster. Together with the headmaster they have drawn up a detailed five-year strategic plan.
- 4.2 The structure and management arrangements related to the governing body have been recently reviewed to ensure that the governors have an efficient oversight of all areas of school life, thereby enabling them to respond to the present and anticipated needs of pupils, and to support the school effectively through its current stage of development and significant management change. The governors recognise succession planning as pivotal to the ongoing success of the school, and new governors are being appointed to ensure that the board includes a suitable range of expertise and interests. Induction procedures and appropriate governor training are being introduced.
- 4.3 The governors are kept well informed about the work of the school through regular written reports and the attendance of some senior members of staff at board and sub-committee meetings. Under current arrangements, the finance and general purpose, and the education sub-committees are central to both the financial planning process and to whole-school development planning, enhanced by regular communication with the headmaster and the newly appointed bursar.
- 4.4 Board members are acutely aware of their legal and other responsibilities; they regularly review all statutory policies and ensure their compliance. Those with professional expertise in particular areas, for example business, industry and education, put their skill to good use in support of the school. The governors value the opportunities they have to meet staff and pupils, formally and informally.

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

- 4.5 Clear direction and leadership ensure that high standards of educational provision are successfully promoted, in line with the school's ethos. Care for the pupils centred on the houses, improvement in academic standards, the extension of boarding and fulfilment of the school's aims are the major priorities. Senior staff are well aware of the school's strengths, and the areas in need of development and closer monitoring. At the time of the inspection, the school was in a period of transition following the appointment of the new headmaster, with major changes in the management structure, including the creation of the role of head of boarding. New systems of monitoring have been introduced to facilitate a greater consistency of approach across all areas of school life. Senior and middle management roles are well defined and lines of communication are clear, particularly in the area of pastoral care.
- 4.6 Those with management responsibilities are effective in analysing the school's needs, setting priorities and planning to meet these needs. However, departmental development planning is not yet always closely linked to whole-school planning.
- 4.7 Management at all levels is effective in drawing up and implementing appropriate procedures and policies. Some of these are new and, where the new systems have been embraced fully, their positive benefit is already evident. The checking and reviewing of their effectiveness by senior management are thorough, but in some areas monitoring by middle management

still lacks rigour. Insufficient monitoring of academic procedures leads to inconsistencies, both across and within departments, in certain aspects of teaching and marking.

- 4.8 The recruitment and retention of high quality, hard working staff are well managed. Appropriate checks for suitability to work with children are carried out comprehensively on all staff. The school subscribes to the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). Induction procedures for new staff and NQTs are excellent, and appropriate records are kept. Staff are extensively involved in the extra-curricular programme and in the house system, contributing significantly to their success. The annual professional development review is valued by staff and is effective in identifying staff training and other needs.
- 4.9 Financial resources are carefully managed, and all areas of the school are well supplied with materials that support teaching and learning. The school campus, with its chapel, wide range of historic and modern buildings, and extensive grounds, is maintained to a good standard. Many areas are enhanced by displays of pupils' achievements and activities.
- 4.10 The administration of the school is effective and efficient. The support staff display a high degree of commitment and consideration, both to the school community and to its visitors. They are greatly valued and make a considerable contribution to the life and work of the school.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS**

### **Overall Conclusions**

- 5.1 Durham School is successful in fulfilling its aims. Through clear and forward looking leadership and governance, it achieves its aims and serves its pupils and their parents well. The outstanding pastoral care, centred on an excellent house system, the commitment of all the staff and the caring ethos of the school are reflected in the high quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves. The good quality educational experience provided for the pupils, including the broad extra-curricular programme, together with good teaching, ensures that most achieve the best academic results of which they are capable and develop their personal talents, although support for the most able lacks consistency. As they progress through the school, pupils develop strong self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence. They have high moral standards, a respect for themselves and others, and an awareness and appreciation of cultural and social diversity. New systems of monitoring have been introduced to facilitate a greater consistency of approach across all areas of school life, but those related to academic procedures are not yet fully effective. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss GCSE and A-level choices, and university applications, but there is no structured whole-school careers education programme. The excellent partnership the school has with its parents ensures that each pupil's well being is safeguarded.
- 5.2 Under new leadership the school has improved in many areas since the last inspection and has responded well to its recommendations, and to those of the Ofsted boarding inspection. The improvements in ICT provision have been beneficial to both pupils and staff. The appointment of a head of boarding to oversee all aspects of boarding is intended to ensure that the school provides the best educational experience and the highest standards of care for its current and future boarders. The school's leadership and management are very aware of what they now need to do to take the school forward, and that includes the introduction of a structured whole-school careers programme.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 The school has many strengths but should take the following steps for further development and improvement:
1. extend the monitoring of academic procedures in order to achieve greater consistency across and within departments, especially with regard to marking and assessment;
  2. introduce a structured whole-school careers programme to ensure that pupils of all ages are fully prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## **6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the sanatorium. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### **List of Inspectors**

Miss Jane Hamilton	Reporting Inspector
Miss Jane Corlett	Vice Principal, HMC school
Mr Robert Court	Headmaster, HMC school
Miss Francesca May	Director of Studies, HMC school
Dr Ian Selmes	Staff Tutor, HMC school
Mr John Sykes	Director of Studies, HMC school