



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

MERCHANT TAYLORS' BOYS' SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Merchant Taylors' Boys' School

Full Name of School	Merchant Taylors' Boys' School
DfE Number	343/6129
Registered Charity Number	526681
Address	Merchant Taylors' Boys' School Liverpool Road Crosby Liverpool Merseyside L23 0QP England
Telephone Number	0151 9283308
Fax Number	0151 9499300
Email Address	info@merchanttaylor.com
Headmaster	Mr David Cook
Chair of Governors	Professor Peter Batey
Age Range	7 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	727
Gender of Pupils	Boys
Numbers by Age	7-11: 149 11-18: 578
Inspection Dates	08 Mar 2016 to 11 Mar 2016

PREFACE

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

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

The previous ISI standard inspection was in March 2010.

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

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

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

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for children aged under two), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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 governors. They observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Dr Stephen Grounds	Reporting Inspector
Mr Jim Turner	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Andrew Cleary	Team Inspector (Director of Music, HMC school)
Mr Matthew Judd	Team Inspector (Second Master, HMC school)
Mr Tom Keenan	Team Inspector (Head of Sixth Form, HMC school)
Mr Richard Palmer	Team Inspector (Head, SOH school)
Mr Richard Robson	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	2
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	8
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	9
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	10
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	11
(a) The quality of governance	11
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	11

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Merchant Taylors' Boys' School is an independent, non-denominational, day school for boys aged 7 to 18 situated in Crosby, just north of Liverpool. It is part of a family of schools comprising Stanfield, a four to seven co-educational section, and seven to eleven girls' school, Merchant Taylors' Girls' School and Merchant Taylors' Boys' School. The school has a junior section for boys aged seven to eleven, and a senior section for eleven to eighteen year olds. The school was established in 1620 and was the sixth school built by the London-based company. The school shares a governing body across all the schools. The junior school has a separate head who reports to the headmaster of the senior school.
- 1.2 The mission of both the junior and the senior school is the rigorous pursuit of excellence, inside and outside the classroom combined with a passionate concern for each individual.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, the school has opened a new joint-schools' sports centre, improved access to information and communication technology (ICT), and appointed a head of e-learning and a head of pupil progress.
- 1.4 The catchment area is wide, ranging from Aigburth in south Liverpool to the north of the city towards Southport, with some pupils coming from as far as Wigan and St Helens. Pupils are above average ability, with about one in five of those in the senior school being well above average. At the time of the inspection there were 149 pupils in the junior school and 578 in the senior school, including 172 in the sixth form. Pupils are predominantly of white British origin, with a small number of pupils of Chinese or Asian origin.
- 1.5 There are 80 pupils requiring support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but the school has no pupils with an education, health and care (EHC) plan or a statement of special educational needs. The majority of the pupils with SEND have dyslexia or dyspraxia. In addition there are 45 pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) of whom four have special support in different ways.
- 1.6 Pupils are from a wide range of socio-economic groups. It is the school's philosophy to attract the very best pupils, regardless of their background. Currently about six per cent of senior pupils benefit from the school's assisted places scheme.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good. All pupils, across the school, including those with SEND and EAL, make at least good progress. In examinations, pupils' success is good compared with pupils of similar ability. Their use of English and mathematics in lessons is good and in other subjects pupils display good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. Highly motivated and enthusiastic, pupils respond well to academic rigour. In collaborative work and discussions they participate readily and are respectful of the views of others. They respond well to the challenges of investigative work. Pupils' use of ICT in learning, the subject of a recommendation at the previous inspection, is not yet extensive. Pupils show creativity in art, drama and music. All gain places at the university of their choice. Throughout the school, pupils' achievements in extra-curricular activities are excellent. The breadth of the extra-curricular and enrichment offering is also a strength of the school. The academic curriculum has been enhanced and extended since the previous inspection and is now excellent. Learning support for those with SEND and EAL is very good and much appreciated by parents. Teaching is good. Pupils' benefit from much specialist subject teaching. In a minority of senior school lessons the teaching was over-directed. In these lessons pupils' learning and the meeting of individual needs was inhibited.
- 2.2 The personal development of pupils is excellent. By the time they leave school pupils are true to themselves, courteous and articulate. They are self-confident with no hint of arrogance. They have a purposeful sense of what they want to do next and are ready to meet the challenges of adult life. Pupils benefit from excellent systems of pastoral support, including careers guidance, and from careful procedures for safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety. They benefit, too, from what is a welcoming and friendly community.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent. The governing body has considerable professional expertise. It has a close insight into the work of the school, so as to provide support and challenge and effective monitoring. It is well focused on the education provision and welfare, health and safety. The governing body works in tandem with the school's excellent leadership and management. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, are committed and hardworking. Teaching staff work within a model of considerable autonomy. Whilst this is welcomed by teachers and facilitates much excellent teaching, the effectiveness of such autonomy is less evident in senior school marking which was the subject of a previous recommendation. Links with parents are strong: in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, there was overwhelming satisfaction with the school's pastoral and academic provision.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. In the senior school, clarify the requirements for marking in order to help pupils know what to do to improve.
 2. Enable pupils to make better use of ICT in their learning.
 3. Ensure that all staff use a range of teaching methods to meet the individual needs of all pupils throughout the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is good.
- 3.2 This supports the school's aim to enable pupils to reach the highest possible levels of personal achievement and academic attainment, inside and outside the classroom. The questionnaires indicate that all but a very small number of pupils and parents are satisfied with the progress pupils make.
- 3.3 In the junior school, pupils' skills in speaking, listening, reading, writing and mathematics are good. In other subjects they display good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding, and in science, especially in investigative work, their capability is excellent. ICT capability is sound and Year 5 pupils are able to carry out simple coding exercises. Pupils approach creative tasks effectively and with enthusiasm.
- 3.4 This pattern of achievement extends into the senior school and the sixth form. Pupils are articulate writers and speakers. They argue coherently. In collaborative work and discussions they participate readily and are respectful of the views of others. They demonstrate a high level of knowledge and understanding in language, literature and of creativity in art, drama and music. They are skilled in the use of software, but they have limited opportunities within lessons to use ICT to enhance their work. Progress in all the games, exercise and physical education activities observed was excellent. Expertise in mathematics and physics is demonstrated by pupils' successes in National Challenge events. Such events indicate independence of thought and intellectual curiosity, features that the previous report recommended strengthening. In the sixth form, pupils achieve a good mastery of the demands of the specifications they follow. All pupils gain places at the university of their choice.
- 3.5 Throughout the school, pupils' achievements in extra-curricular activities are excellent and reflect the wide range of their interests as well of the breadth of the extra-curricular offerings. There is a high level of participation. Many pupils participate successfully in the combined cadet force (CCF) and Duke of Edinburgh (DofE) Award Scheme. They achieve well at county and regional level in a wide range of sports and notably in swimming. High levels of performance are achieved in music and drama, with examples such as the recent concert at Liverpool Philharmonic Hall and the current theatre production: *Our Day Out*.
- 3.6 Attainment in the junior school cannot be measured against national norms, but results of other standardised tests together with a scrutiny of work and lesson observations indicate that pupils' attainment in English and mathematics is judged to be above age-related expectations. In the senior school, the following analysis uses the national data for the years 2012 to 2014, these being the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been above the national average for boys in maintained schools and similar to the national average for boys in maintained selective schools. Results in A-level examinations are above the national average for boys in maintained selective schools.
- 3.7 This level of attainment, as judged in the junior school from the standardised measures of progress that are available and inspection evidence, indicates that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils with similar

abilities. The level of attainment at GCSE and standardised measures of progress that are available indicate that pupils make progress that is good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities. The level of attainment at A-level and standardised measures of progress that are available indicate that pupils make progress that is also good in relation to the average for pupils of similar abilities.

- 3.8 As a result of the support they receive, pupils with SEND and EAL make as much progress as their peers. Gifted and talented pupils make better progress in school lessons than their peers and benefit from and succeed in a wide range of additional subjects and activities.
- 3.9 Pupils throughout the school have a very positive attitude to learning. They settle to work quickly, apply themselves well and enjoy their learning. They have good organisational skills with many taking initiative for their own learning. Pupils are intellectually curious, self-motivated, and have high aspirations, both inside and outside the classroom.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 Parents are overwhelmingly appreciative of the opportunities available for their children. A strong feature is the emphasis on teaching by subject specialists, where possible, in both parts of the school. The needs of all pupils are met and the support for those with special needs is greatly acknowledged by the parents concerned.
- 3.12 The junior school academic curriculum is challenging, broad and enriching and considerably exceeds the regulatory requirements. Pupils benefit from a wide range of subjects which include modern foreign languages. Strong features are the opportunities for investigative and problem solving approaches, most notably in science, history and mathematics. ICT develops the pupils' skills in programming and information retrieval, but usage in learning is limited. There is a wide-ranging and effective personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme to meet pupils' needs.
- 3.13 The senior school curriculum is equally effective, providing pupils with a broad, well-balanced and challenging set of opportunities, and which is appropriate for all ages, abilities and needs. Latin is taught to all in Years 7 and 8 and Greek is available in Year 9. The timetable includes significant enrichment additions such as the gifted, talented and extension (GTX) initiative, and a comprehensive PSHE programme which covers health and welfare, friends and relationships, as well as fundamental British values. The school ensures a balanced presentation of political views with special arrangements for the checking of outside speakers. The post-16 curriculum offers pupils an excellent range of subjects.
- 3.14 The school has significantly improved its academic curriculum since the previous inspection. In Years 7 and 8 a curriculum has been established which successfully focuses pupils on the academic and skills needed for success higher up in the school and beyond. In Years 10 and 11, pupils experience a 'World Tomorrow Today' programme, in which all pupils take a series of modules to support their development of a broad range of cognitive and practical skills. Pupils also have more choice at this level with the introduction of computer science, religious studies and philosophy. Post-16 the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), philosophy, and government and politics have been added.

- 3.15 Pupils across the school with SEND and EAL are provided with appropriate support, including specialist lessons. The provision is strong and is successfully organised to minimise disruption to the basic curriculum.
- 3.16 Extra-curricular opportunities are excellent. Able, gifted and talented pupils are particularly well catered for with a wide range of courses, competitions and performances which allow them opportunities to further extend their knowledge and skills. In the junior school there are over forty clubs on offer. The school successfully encourages all pupils to take part in the wide selection of cultural and sporting activities. Pupils value these opportunities not just in terms of enjoyment, but also in the chances they provide to represent the school, and to take on leadership and management roles. Pupils benefit from the wide range of trips that are on offer within Britain and overseas. There are over 200 music lessons per week.
- 3.17 Pupils benefit from the school's close links with the local community. Local links provide many fund-raising opportunities for pupils to consider those less fortunate than themselves. Sixth formers support local projects such as the December Rotary Floats, and act as volunteers in local schools, nurseries, care homes and hospitals.
- 3.18 Pupils in the school are well supported with an extensive careers programme in which they receive individual support and guidance, access to work experience and a significant array of talks, workshops, and conferences to assist them in preparing for each key decision point in their school career and for making applications to universities. This supports the school in meeting one of its subsidiary aims.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.19 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.20 Teaching reflects the overall aims of the school and in the lessons observed much was good or excellent. The majority of lessons are well planned, proceed at an appropriate pace, and make good use of time with the adoption of a variety of tasks to enable the pupils to stay focused. In this way pupils' progress is assured. Teachers' subject knowledge is strong. In the best lessons the skilful use of teaching methods generates an enthusiasm in pupils and promotes a very good level of pupil engagement. Pupils respond to the interest provided by a mix of theory and practice in subjects like science and design technology. In these lessons, teaching provides for achievement of different ability groups and appropriate challenge for the more able pupils. Pupils respond extremely positively to the opportunity for collaborative work. In a Year 12 economics lesson, for example, pupils worked well to support each other in developing their understanding of aggregate supply and demand interaction.
- 3.21 However, in the senior school a minority of lessons were over-directed and lacked a vibrancy of teaching approach to foster pupils' interest or independent thinking. Whilst teaching in these lessons provided the knowledge required, it was less interactive and provided limited opportunities for pupils to contribute. Such teaching was also weaker in providing appropriate tasks and activities to meet the needs of individual pupils so that learning was restricted and the overall achievement of many pupils in the lesson was reduced.
- 3.22 In response to one of the recommendations in the previous inspection, the school has made improvements to ICT and its management. The improvements so far have concentrated on teachers' skills, the use of portable technology, and a virtual

learning environment (VLE) has been initiated. However, insufficient opportunities are as yet, given to pupils to use ICT as a tool for learning in lessons.

- 3.23 Pupils with SEND and EAL are well supported by weekly support sessions tailored to age and need. Staff mentors are allocated to individual pupils and this system of mentoring works well.
- 3.24 Teaching strongly promotes tolerance and respect and is non-partisan in the coverage of political issues. For example, in the presentation of free speech in a junior PSHE lesson, pupils fully grasped the difference between free speech and abuse. In a senior debate, pupils showed a sophisticated understanding of the handling of a balance of opinion in the discussion of ethical issues. In these activities and in subject lessons relationships are excellent between teachers and pupils. Praise and encouragement are used appropriately to foster application and to develop more in-depth understanding.
- 3.25 At all levels teachers are well informed by the data recording pupils' attainment and progress. In the junior school the data allows teachers to provide individual pupils with necessary support. Monitoring is excellent. In the senior school a new system is in place for tracking pupils and good use of this is made by form tutors acting in their pastoral role. The overall progress made by pupils is evaluated and the colour-coded recording system is a strong feature: it helps staff, parents and pupils know whether pupils are reaching their potential. The assessment grids introduced in Year 7 and Year 8 provide a clear framework for self-assessment and constructive feedback.
- 3.26 Marking in the junior school is clearly focused with appropriate targets being identified for improvement. In the senior school the quality of marking and assessment of written work, the subject of a previous recommendation, is uneven. Offsetting this, pupils report that teachers give good oral feedback

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 excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. It reflects the school's subsidiary aims of ensuring mutual respect, encouraging leadership and a respect for others, and promoting British values, an appreciation of world diversity and a sense of service.
- 4.3 Pupils have a strong sense of spiritual awareness. This is evident in their well-developed sense of self-worth and the way they thrive within a happy and supportive environment. They are confident and clearly grow in self-awareness as they progress through the school. They benefit from the opportunity to explore spiritual aspects of life and to share an understanding of different faiths and cultures. They are respectful of these. The pupils' spiritual dimension was much in evidence through artwork on display throughout the school and through pupils' involvement in music.
- 4.4 Pupils develop an exceptionally strong moral awareness and a sense of honesty, fairness and of right and wrong. They understand and respect the civil and criminal law of England. Pupils value the PHSE programme which compels them to explore a wide range of issues such as drug abuse, e-safety, bullying, human rights and combatting discrimination. Older pupils are able to discuss with sensitivity issues relating to subjects such as mental health and sexual relationships. Pupils are courteous and kind and show respect for those who teach and care for them. Pupils' self-discipline and calm purpose are evident through excellent behaviour both in class and as they make their way around the school.
- 4.5 Pupils demonstrate excellent social awareness. They are fine ambassadors for the school. Pupils express their views effectively and confidently in a variety of school council, house events and pupil forum meetings. Senior pupils conduct themselves with maturity and are excellent role models. The sixth form prefect mentoring system of Year 7 pupils contributes significantly to the excellent pastoral welfare system and pupils of all ages mix well. Pupils appreciate the opportunities for leadership and to take on responsibility and they enjoy taking an active role in the school community. The debating society and school council enable pupils to explore issues relating to aspects of democracy and British and global society. The ethos of the CCF develops integrity, loyalty and respect for others as core British values. Within this British context, pupils show a good understanding of public institutions and services in England.
- 4.6 Junior pupils volunteer on the school council and in a range of in-school activities. Older pupils make use of the school's DofE, community service and school council charity programmes to volunteer and contribute to a wide range of local community activities and also to raise awareness and undertake fundraising for local and current charitable causes. Current examples are the Crosby Lighthouse project and the Southport Offshore lifeboat.
- 4.7 The pupils' cultural development is enhanced and demonstrated by the good relationships and interaction of pupils within the ethnically diverse community. Through the school's strength in the expressive arts, through overseas visits and links with schools locally and in Tanzania, and through living and learning with pupils

from other countries they have a good understanding of both their own cultural heritage and that of others.

- 4.8 The ability to be self-reflective and ambitious is something that runs as a constant throughout a pupil's time at school with a view to developing skills of integrity, compassion and resilience. By the time they leave school pupils are articulate and confident. They have a purposeful sense of what they want to do next and are ready to meet the challenges of adult life.

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

- 4.9 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 Relationships between staff and pupils are harmonious and positively intentioned. Throughout the school, members of staff with pastoral responsibilities work successfully as a team. Tutor time is used productively to monitor pupils' progress, give praise and provide advice to track pupils' development. The monitoring of pupils' welfare is managed diligently and staff use many opportunities, both formally and informally, to share information about any pupil who may be causing concern. Detailed policies and record-keeping underline the deep sense of commitment to supporting the pupils in a holistic manner.
- 4.11 The school has high behavioural expectations of its pupils which are well articulated and positive behaviour is rewarded. In the questionnaire, a significant minority of pupils felt that teachers were not always fair in the way rewards and sanctions are given. Scrutiny of associated documentation and discussions with pupils demonstrated that teachers were fair in their application of the rewards and sanctions system. Equally a small minority of pupils responding to the questionnaire said that bullying was not handled well. Inspectors pursued this aspect in considerable detail interviewing pupils and staff, and scrutinising bullying records as well as a recent detailed whole school bullying survey. In all the discussions with pupils those interviewed readily acknowledged that when it occurs, bullying is dealt with swiftly and carefully. Inspectors concluded that anti-bullying procedures and online safety are taken seriously. Incidents or allegations about bullying raised by pupils or parents are dealt with appropriately in line with school policy.
- 4.12 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through exercise and their food choices. The opportunities for exercise are legion. Advice on healthy eating is provided through the PSHE programme. The school's catering provision is good and improving in line with the pupils' requests for more substantial offerings.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.14 The school employs effective methods to seek and listen to the views of pupils. The school council is a vibrant institution. The school uses surveys to discern pupils' views, and pupils' views on teachers are sought as part of the staff appraisal system. A box for depositing anonymous concerns is well used. In the questionnaire, a minority of pupils stated that they did not feel that the school made sufficient attempts to listen to their views, but the evidence reported here does not support this view.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.16 The safeguarding arrangements have regard to official guidance and reflect the government's strategy on, and make arrangements to prevent extremism and radicalisation. The school exercises its duty of care in these matters scrupulously, linking readily with outside agencies as necessary. It has good working links with the Sefton authority. The school maintains very good records of its contacts and interventions.
- 4.17 The school operates safe recruitment procedures and ensures that all necessary checks are made well before a teacher or a volunteer begins work. The centralised register of appointments is properly maintained.
- 4.18 All staff have been trained in child protection either at a whole school event or as part of induction to the school. Records of these training events are kept. Those with lead responsibility for safeguarding have recent higher level training.
- 4.19 All necessary measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards using internal personnel and outside professionals. Evacuation procedures are regularly practised and efficiently recorded. The hygiene of the kitchen is annually checked and is of a high standard. The work of the governing body in proactive attention to health and safety in general and, currently and in particular, to site safety is exemplary. Qualified medical staff maintain a well-equipped sick bay and keeps impeccable records of accidents. More generally, thorough risk assessments are carried out in a format which meets national guidelines.
- 4.20 The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and stored. Sixth-form signing out arrangements are thorough and absences are followed up.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The arrangement of a single board has, over time, been helpful in supporting the links between the four schools. The board determines the central strategy of the school, provides informed guidance and sets the financial parameters for the staffing and accommodation. It oversees an interlocking strategic plan across the four schools. Governors are both outward and forward looking.
- 5.3 Governors are appointed from a comprehensive range of appropriate professional backgrounds. Each is linked to a policy or aspect area such as the junior school, child protection, or welfare, health and safety. This gives the board a close insight into the work of the school, so as to provide support, challenge and effective monitoring.
- 5.4 The board works through a system of appropriate sub-committees which it constantly adapts to increase its overall effectiveness. A recent change to education monitoring is the adoption of a committee of three governors and school heads to monitor more effectively challenge the school's core activity of teaching and learning.
- 5.5 Governors discharge their duties to ensure compliance with regulations, particularly safeguarding and welfare, health and safety, with diligence and care. The board has a comprehensive training programme and all governors have recently attended *Prevent* training. The child protection policy and its implementation are reviewed regularly. Child protection is a standing item for full governors' meetings.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management throughout the school, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.7 At a high and overarching level there is a vibrant executive committee working across all the Merchant Taylors' Schools consisting of their most senior managers. The executive committee successfully maintains the central place within planning of the schools' combined strategic aims set by the governing body. At these fortnightly meetings, it co-opts specialist staff once per term to report back on specific areas, on policy and operations, such as the roll out of the VLE.
- 5.8 In the boys' school, the senior managers consistently uphold the aims of the school and offer strong leadership in all areas. They provide positive and reflective educational direction and have a constructive working relationship with the governing body. The senior managers have clearly defined roles and co-operate effectively as a team. They are a visible presence across the school and engage readily with all members of the community. They are open and transparent in their willingness to respond to reasonable requests and constructive criticism from pupils, parents and staff. Priorities for each member of the senior management team (SMT) are set at an annual day conference. The meeting suitably links them to the overall

strategic statement for the school. It ensures that they are specific, measurable, realistic and trackable.

- 5.9 The leadership and management of the junior school are excellent. Teaching is monitored on a regular basis and subject co-ordinators have dedicated time to do this. Support is then provided through team teaching and observational opportunities. There is very clear direction and appropriate measures are taken to provide improvement.
- 5.10 The SMT provides excellent support for heads of department in the senior school. As an example, the school has successfully developed a new appraisal process, which includes the gathering of the views of pupils on the quality of teaching they receive. This powerful initiative has rejuvenated this aspect of staff management and support. In addition, the SMT ensures that departmental planning is closely linked to the Merchant Taylors' Schools' strategic aims as well as ensuring delivery against school targets and departmental priorities. In addition, care is given to ensure that all departments give sufficient coverage to the pupils' personal development and understanding of British values. This action successfully addresses a recommendation of the previous inspection.
- 5.11 At the classroom level teachers are well supported by their heads of department. Classroom teachers say that they enjoy and appreciate being able to be part of initiatives such as the learning and teaching committee, a group which has enjoyed considerable success in, for example, developing and implementing the new senior skills based curricula.
- 5.12 Staff are afforded a relatively high degree of autonomy by the SMT and departmental managers. This allows them to make their own decisions in judging how to plan to teach their subject and to meet the needs of their own classes. This professional autonomy is greatly valued by the staff. There are appropriate checks and balances in place through lesson observations by the departmental heads and the SMT, and the use of pupil questionnaires. The effectiveness of such autonomy is less clear in the setting and marking of written work, and in the over-directed lessons observed.
- 5.13 The school is successful in recruiting, developing, supporting and motivating high quality staff and ensuring that staff are suitably trained in safeguarding and welfare, health and safety, including the *Prevent* strategy. The school is diligent in the checks it makes of staff and governor suitability. Such checks are made well before the individual's starting date, and clear records of the outcomes of checks are maintained. The school exercises a real commitment to staff development. Junior school teachers see appraisal as being part of development because of the clear and constructive feedback they say they receive. In the senior school, a well planned programme of staff development has been recently introduced. In the summer term there are a number of internally organised and focused staff development days that take place off-site. Current examples of topics are: pastoral issues for form tutors, support for departmental heads and ICT and computing development. The school recognises the need to invest in its staff and resourcing is allocated appropriately for this. A large number of staff are receiving or have received significant assistance to undertake masters' degree studies, and use their emerging knowledge to run in-service sessions within the school.
- 5.14 From questionnaire returns, in addition to the school's own regular surveys of parents, it is clear that parents are extremely satisfied with educational standards

and support their children receive and the excellent and efficient communication with the school. For example, a weekly bulletin is sent to parents and a recent survey into the usefulness of this was most positive. The overwhelming majority of parents acknowledge that the school handles any concerns they may have with care. Any formal complaints have been dealt with in accordance with published procedures and appropriate records maintained. Almost all parents would recommend the school to a prospective parent.

- 5.15 The school encourages parents to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children. There is an extensive programme of parent evenings for the discussion of pupils' progress. These evenings are considered by parents to be very useful and generally to work well. Plans are in hand to place data on pupils' attainment and progress on the school intranet in order to provide parents with access to up-to-date information on their son's work. The school also holds frequent information meetings in which matters of educational or pastoral interest are presented, frequently by outside experts. A recent topic was that of e-safety. An active parent-teacher association exists to encourage friendly relations between parents and school. It supports pupils' education by helping with careers choices from those active in business and the community. Current and prospective parents, carers and guardians are provided with all of the information required by the regulations. Progress reports are issued regularly, contain appropriate feedback and are clear in helping parents understand their sons' attitudes to learning as well as attainment and progress. Considerable additional educational articles and internet links are published on the school website.

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