



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

## **LONGRIDGE TOWERS SCHOOL STANDARD INSPECTION**

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## Longridge Towers School

Full Name of School	<b>Longridge Towers School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>929/6001</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>513534</b>		
Address	<b>Longridge Towers School Berwick-upon-Tweed Northumberland TD15 2XQ</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>01289 307584</b>		
Fax Number	<b>01289 302581</b>		
Email Address	<b>enquiries@lts.org.uk</b>		
Headmaster	<b>Mr Timothy Manning</b>		
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr John Smithson, previously Mr Ian G McCreath</b>		
Age Range	<b>4 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>267</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (145 boys; 122 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-3 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>75</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>7</b>	11-18: <b>185</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>245</b>	Capacity for flexi-boarding: <b>15</b>
Number of Boarders	Total:	<b>22</b>	
	Full:	<b>18</b>	Weekly: <b>4</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Shelagh Phillips</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>15 Feb 2011 to 16 Feb 2011</b>		
	<b>16 Mar 2011 to 18 Mar 2011</b>		

## 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 February 2005.

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.

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

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 September 2011 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 Longridge Towers School is a co-educational school for pupils aged from 4 to 18, set in an eighty-acre estate three miles West of Berwick-upon-Tweed. The main house was built in the 1870s and later used as a school, as accommodation for troops and as a hotel, before becoming for thirty years an Ursuline convent and school. The estate was then sold to the charitable trust that now owns it and, in 1983, a new non-denominational school was founded. Longridge Towers School is now managed by a board of twelve governors. The Junior Department, a largely autonomous unit for pupils aged 4 to 11, is housed in two buildings in the grounds separate from the main house, which accommodates the Senior School, boarding and administration.
- 1.2 Day pupils come from North Northumberland, and the Eastern and Central Scottish Borders, mostly from professional, business and farming backgrounds. Some boarders are from HM forces families, and some come from China and Zimbabwe. From Year 5 upwards, a number of pupils from Holy Island attend the school as occasional boarders. The school is non-selective, although pupils are normally assessed on entry for diagnostic or setting purposes. The average ability is above the average ability nationally, except in the sixth form where it is in line with the national average.
- 1.3 The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) consists of a single Reception class for children aged 4 to 5, and is housed together with Years 1 to 3. Years 4 to 6 are based in another building, where pupils continue to be taught largely by class teachers, but with increasing specialist teaching as they get older. Altogether, the Junior Department has 82 pupils. The Senior School consists of 136 pupils in Years 7 to 11, and a sixth form with 49 pupils. Up to a third of pupils in Year 11 leave after their GCSE examinations, usually for further education elsewhere, and a small number join the school in the sixth form.
- 1.4 At present, the school has 37 pupils on its list of those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and none of these has a statement of special educational needs. In total, 22 of these pupils receive extra one-to-one support. Nine pupils have English as an additional language (EAL) and where necessary receive extra support outside normal lessons. The school has identified 26 pupils as being gifted and talented.
- 1.5 The school aims are: to provide opportunities for all pupils to achieve their potential, broaden their experience and become effective lifelong learners; to educate the whole person in a happy community where pupils feel valued, safe and supported; to provide a broad and balanced curriculum which meets the needs of all, so that pupils can achieve excellence academically, artistically, creatively, physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially; to encourage mutual respect, independence, consideration for others, a sense of self-worth and personal responsibility; to provide high quality teaching focused on promoting each pupil's learning; and to give equal opportunities to all, and foster effective relationships with pupils, parents and other professional bodies.
- 1.6 Most areas of the school have changed significantly since the previous inspection, including considerable improvements to resources and facilities.

- 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 for Years 1 to 13 and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

***Junior Department***

School	NC name
J 1	Year 1
J 2	Year 2
J 3	Year 3
J 4	Year 4
J 5	Year 5
J 6	Year 6

***Senior School***

School	NC name
1	Year 7
2	Year 8
3	Year 9
4	Year 10
5	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 The school meets well its aims to educate the whole person. Academic achievement in the Senior School is good relative to the pupils' ability up to GCSE, and in the sixth form it is in line with their ability. In the Junior Department, including the EYFS, achievement is good for pupils of all abilities. The excellent curriculum throughout the school is broad and appropriate to the pupils' needs. The enrichment programme of activities is excellent and popular, giving pupils opportunities to show a range of skills and achievement in sport, music and much else. Committed and effective teaching and coaching are a major contribution to the pupils' success. The quality of pupils' learning is good, in both sections of the school but, in the Senior School, a lack of ambition is sometimes apparent, reflecting low expectations of some teaching. Marking is not consistently helpful in supporting improvement and progress.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is outstanding throughout the school, supported by excellent pastoral arrangements and the caring approach of form teachers and tutors. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, as are those amongst the pupils themselves, often across the age range. The provision of boarding and the level of care provided are also excellent. In both the pupils' and parents' pre-inspection questionnaires, high praise was given to the quality of care, in particular the pupils' confidence that staff show concern for them as individuals, and to the attitudes promoted by the school. Welfare provision is secure and a priority for all staff, suitably supported by fully implemented policies, including those for safeguarding pupils.
- 2.3 Leadership by the school's senior management is outstanding, excellently supported by an experienced and clearly focused governing body. Management across the school at all levels is good. Pastoral care is particularly well organised and the school is well run. In recent years, both the structure and style of management have changed, with greater devolvement of responsibility and a significant increase in monitoring, review and appraisal, as well as a more inclusive approach to planning. The benefits of this are already showing in the pupils' performance and well-being, and in a strongly committed staff team in each section of the school. Parents, too, showed in their questionnaire their appreciation of the progress being made by the school and by their children. Only about the provision of learning support were there significant concerns, with which the inspectors agree and of which the school is aware. The Junior Department, in particular the EYFS, has limited provision for information and communication technology (ICT). Attention has been paid to those areas noted as weaknesses in the previous report.

## **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 met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Strengthen the overall quality of marking and target setting, to bring the standard of all up to the best.
2. Ensure that learning support within the classroom, for pupils with LDD and for the most able pupils, is consistent across all teaching.
3. In the Senior School, strengthen the monitoring of standards of teaching and learning in each subject by heads of department.
4. Ensure that teachers in the Senior School raise their expectation of pupils and regularly share varieties of good practice in the classroom.
5. In the EYFS, ensure sufficient provision of ICT to enable children to develop effective skills.

### **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 pupils in both the Junior Department and in the Senior School is good, and in accordance with the aims of the school that pupils should be able to achieve their full potential across all areas of the curriculum. The quality of pupils' learning throughout the school is good.
- 3.2 Most pupils achieve well. For example, in the Junior Department, a lower ability group in English showed a good knowledge of new vocabulary in using adjectives to make writing more interesting. Creative pieces of art and design are displayed prominently around the school. Pupils in the Senior School quickly assimilated inventive ways to create patterns with a template in art. Sixth-form pupils expressed their ideas clearly in discussion of an Ibsen play. Pupils of all ages use ICT confidently. In the pupils' written work, ICT is used effectively for research across the Senior School curriculum, for example in geography and the sciences; in a product design project, pupils displayed a range of graphic and presentation skills.
- 3.3 In the Junior Department, literacy and numeracy skills are generally good, the result of much focus. The pupils are articulate, and communicate confidently with each other and their teachers. The quality of language used is good. In the Senior School, literacy skills are mostly good. Numeracy skills are satisfactory. Understanding and use of graphs and statistics support work in other subjects, but some pupils show less confidence in their use of numbers, turning too readily to their calculators for unchecked answers to simple computations.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve success and recognition in a number of extra-curricular activities. Sport is extremely popular, and representative teams compete successfully with schools and clubs. For example, members of the senior girls' hockey team participate in a county league and were recent county winners. Pupils have gained regional representative honours in rugby, hockey and athletics. A high proportion of pupils play a musical instrument and the school operates many groups and choirs. A successful and well-attended school production of *Annie* was staged at a local theatre. Pupils are involved in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) scheme and several are currently working towards gold level.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. National tests at the age of 7 show that pupils achieve excellent results in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools, and those at the age of 11 show that they attain good results. Results at GCSE are good and those at A level are in line with national average for maintained secondary schools. These levels of attainment indicate good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability up to GCSE. Following the departure of up to a third of pupils after GCSEs, often those who are more able, progress to A level is satisfactory. The proportion of higher grades at A level has varied considerably in recent years from a quarter to over a half of all grades. Most sixth-form leavers go on to university, usually to their first choice.
- 3.6 Pupils are attentive and show well-developed listening skills. Behaviour, with the exception of punctuality in the Senior School, is impeccable, and collaborative teamwork and peer support are frequent in classes, across a range of subjects and across the school. That pupils are keen to learn is clear, although this is tempered

by a lack of ambition at times in the Senior School. An offer of tasks of varying challenge in a science lesson led to the great majority of pupils selecting the easiest option.

- 3.7 Presentation and organisation of work are variable. In the sixth form, note taking is sometimes designated as a homework task, leading to a disjointed sequence of material. At times, over-reliance on printed worksheets restricts opportunities for extended writing. In some subjects, the quantity and quality of notes in exercise books are good, covering a wide variety of tasks and assignments.
- 3.8 Independent learning is firmly in place in the Junior Department; a Year 4 'War Book' project gave scope for initiative, when a pupil asked her grandmother about her wartime experiences. Greater emphasis on this in the Senior School is beginning to show in pupils' work, for example in the Extended Project Qualification for sixth-form pupils.

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

- 3.9 The curriculum in both the Junior Department and in the Senior School is excellent. It covers all the required areas of learning, is suitable for all ages and abilities, and supports the school's aims to provide a positive learning environment across a broad range. In addition, the recently developed enrichment programme offers a wide range of popular extra-curricular activities, made possible by the extra commitment of staff together with some outside help.
- 3.10 In the Junior Department, French and music are taught by specialists from Reception upwards, and design technology and home economics are taught as discrete subjects from Year 4. Most pupils in the Junior Department learn a musical instrument, and the department has its own choir and orchestra that perform regularly in informal concerts. The enrichment activities available at the end of the day include taking part in the popular Adventure Service Challenge programme and, for more able pupils, the opportunity to learn Latin. The availability of activities, and access to and use of ICT, have increased considerably since the previous inspection, although ICT remains rather limited in the Junior Department. The new woodland learning environment has provided an exciting extension to younger pupils' learning. A regular programme of educational visits around the North East and Scottish Borders further enhances the curriculum.
- 3.11 In the Senior School, a greater emphasis has recently been placed on independent learning. The curriculum is broad and well suited to most pupils' needs; the range of subject options at GCSE and A level is good. At times, however, the school finds it hard to accommodate the subject choices of some pupils. The range of extra-curricular activities is both wide and varied, including a good choice of sports, as well as more leisure and educational activities. Music is again prominent, although pupils would like yet more opportunities for team competition with other schools, which the school is trying to achieve. In support of the curriculum, improved facilities since the previous inspection now exist for drama, and a new physics laboratory has been installed. The library has been completely refurbished, is well run and effectively promoted, and is now used confidently by many pupils. The ICT resources are now good and used increasingly to support teaching and learning across the curriculum.
- 3.12 Good careers advice is given, starting in Year 7, and is a significant topic in the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme, backed up by the use of

professional aptitude tests. Expert advice on applications for higher education through UCAS is available, and literature in the careers library and the advice of tutors support the choice of degree courses and universities. Pupils are encouraged to attend local higher education fairs and visit potential universities.

- 3.13 Learning support for pupils with LDD is well organised and pupils are able to drop in for extra help as well as receive regular one-to-one tuition. Individual education plans are used to keep track of the pupils' progress and to inform class teachers of the needs of these pupils. However, the proportion of pupils with LDD needing individual help limits opportunities for the head of learning support to spend time in the classroom or to offer training for classroom teachers. In the Junior Department, the learning support arrangements include close and effective links with the classroom teacher. In the Senior School, the response in class to the needs of these pupils is inconsistent. Support is also available when needed for pupils with EAL. The school encourages form teachers and heads of department to provide appropriate extra stimulus for those pupils identified as gifted and talented, as well as offering some opportunities within the activities programme.
- 3.14 The school has a number of links with other schools, including a regular exchange programme with one in Germany. Sports tours have visited Canada and South Africa, and the geography department has organised overseas trips to Iceland and Italy. The school offers the use of its facilities to a number of local organisations and has hosted various school events, including cross country championships, creative arts activities and a civil engineering day, to the benefit of both pupils of Longridge Towers and visitors.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.15 The quality of teaching in the school is good; it is committed and effective. Since the previous inspection, greater encouragement has been given to independent learning and more teaching involves a variety of approaches according to the needs of each class. Teaching largely meets the school's aims, focusing on promoting each pupil's good progress.
- 3.16 Teaching in all subjects in the Junior Department is of good quality. This supports the pupils' achievement and progress well. Outstanding teaching in art involved younger pupils making a collage of their home, and used background music to create atmosphere and encourage application. This exemplifies the increase in the range of teaching strategies used and the readiness in the Junior Department to share ideas and to consider the learning needs of the pupils. Most lessons are well paced and include a range of activities. Pupils are encouraged to respond to questions and to listen to each other. Opportunities for co-operative learning, in pairs or small groups, are used frequently to increase the pupils' confidence and encourage them to help each other. Classroom assistants are used well and are fully integrated in the department team.
- 3.17 In the Senior School, teaching is satisfactory and often good. The best teaching is stimulating, challenges pupils to apply their knowledge, and fosters their independent thought and enquiry. In English, sixth-form pupils were given an enterprising task that sparked an effective discussion and analysis of the characters in *Great Expectations*. Younger pupils in biology were able to deduce that acid rain is harmful by examining its effects. Lesson plans are well structured and teachers have sound subject knowledge. Occasionally, however, a lack of pace and planning or a fixed teaching style, combined with low expectations for pupils' learning, result

in a lesson that lacks real momentum and limits the pupils' progress. This was particularly the case in some sixth-form lessons. A wide range of abilities exists in most classes, and varied teaching and task setting to suit different groups were seen in the Junior Department, for instance in mathematics and ICT lessons. However, the most able pupils are not always challenged sufficiently. In the Senior School, identification of both pupils requiring learning support and those who are gifted and talented is well documented but the use of varied approaches to suit the individual needs of pupils is limited. Although still not fully widespread, the use of ICT in lessons, for teaching and to support learning, has much increased since the previous inspection.

- 3.18 The school has comprehensive arrangements for assessment. Examinations are held twice yearly in most year groups in the Senior School. Pupils receive reports every three weeks, providing a range of information regarding attainment and attitude, which is discussed with tutors. Recording of data in both the Junior Department and the Senior School provides management with a clear picture of academic progress. It also enables individual teachers and tutors to set targets for pupils, although somewhat inconsistently at present.
- 3.19 The quantity and quality of marking, particularly in the Senior School, are variable. Good marking, with meaningful feedback, which supports the pupils' progress, was seen in some subjects, but marking is often irregular and lacks rigour. The school has a sound policy on marking but its application is variable, in spite of the requirement for heads of department to undertake regular work scrutiny in their subject. Some departments have developed successful self-assessment schemes for pupils and have produced useful, simple templates to achieve this.

## **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 outstanding throughout both sections of the school and the EYFS, and fully reflects the school's aim for pupils to excel emotionally, spiritually and socially. Pupils are self-assured, and feel recognised and valued by each other and by their teachers. The Adventure Service Challenge in the Junior Department promotes self-esteem and an understanding of the world, as does participation in the D of E scheme in the Senior School.
- 4.2 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent in both sections of the school. Pupils have a strong sense of self-worth, are confident and, in the attractive school environment, are well aware of the beauty in the world around them. They have access to a range of creative activities, including music and drama, and clearly value and respect each other, developing lasting friendships.
- 4.3 The moral development of the pupils is outstanding. All pupils have a strong sense of fairness, and a clear understanding of right and wrong. Their moral development is under-pinned by the extensive PSHE programme as well as by topics covered in assemblies and in lessons, including English, history and geography. Pupils, in their questionnaire and in interviews during the inspection, said that bullying is rare but, should it arise, they know how to respond and are confident that it will be dealt with promptly.
- 4.4 The social development of pupils is also excellent. The school meets its aim to create a positive learning environment that values mutual respect, independence, consideration and personal responsibility. The pupils' behaviour and manners are impeccable. They enjoy being part of a structured community in which they have the opportunity to take on responsibilities at a young age. Pupils interact across the age groups. At Senior School break time, a game of touch rugby often involves groups of pupils of widely differing ages. Sixth-form pupils volunteer to hear children read in the Junior Department, and pupils from different year groups co-operate well together. At lunch time, Year 6 pupils assist the younger children and the kitchen staff with clearing, and Senior School pupils helped children in the Junior Department with a charity cake sale on Red Nose Day.
- 4.5 The recently established school council, together with a suggestion box, is valued in the Junior Department, and the house system works well throughout the school, endorsing the family atmosphere and sense of belonging. House captains and vice captains in both sections of the school enjoy and take seriously their positions of responsibility, and the elected council members work hard to promote the requests of their peers. In addition, the roles of prefects, librarians and form captains give pupils the chance to taken on different responsibilities. The pupils raise money for charities and for an outreach programme in Borneo. The three-weekly grade system, linked to house points and certificates, is valued by pupils, giving them a feeling of self-worth as well as a competitive purpose.
- 4.6 The pupils' cultural development is good. Some reference to faiths and cultures is made in a number of subjects. Pupils are aware of different cultures, not least through the presence of boarders from overseas and through the celebration of religious and social festivals, such as Chinese New Year. Pupils learn about the history of the North East and Scottish Borders; those learning Latin in the Junior Department visited a Roman site during the inspection. The exchange programme

gives pupils contact with those from Germany, and a variety of tours and overseas trips widens their experience further. Within the school, art, drama and music allow pupils to develop an understanding and appreciation of Western culture.

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

- 4.7 Arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are outstanding, supporting their excellent personal development. The school successfully creates a happy community where pupils feel valued, safe and supported.
- 4.8 The pastoral structure in the Senior School works well through the tutor system and the heads of year groups, backed up by the house system. Form teachers have pastoral responsibility in the Junior Department. Pupils believe that teachers help them to make progress; they clearly respect the staff and welcome the support they receive from them. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Nearly all pupils who responded to questionnaires were confident that they have an adult or senior pupil to turn to and this was confirmed in discussions. They also said that teachers show concern for them as individuals and most agreed that the school listens to them. Almost all like being at the school and consider it to be well run.
- 4.9 The school has effective procedures for dealing with bullying or any unacceptable behaviour. Pupils indicate that staff deal promptly and effectively with bullying matters and with any misbehaviour. Safeguarding arrangements have regard to statutory guidance and all staff are trained in child protection. Many are also trained in first aid; a fully qualified nurse oversees training, and provides both medical and pastoral care for day pupils and for boarders. The matron and the other boarding staff care for pupils who are ill, as well as fulfilling a large pastoral role. Pupils with LDD are well provided for and the school has a detailed accessibility plan, so that full access to the curriculum for all pupils is assured.
- 4.10 Pupils are offered a healthy diet at lunch time, and healthy eating and regular exercise are covered in PSHE lessons. The great majority of pupils questioned, including the boarders, said that they are very happy with school meals.
- 4.11 The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained, and the school complies with all requirements to reduce risk from fire and other hazards.

#### **4.(c) The quality of boarding education**

- 4.12 The quality of boarding is excellent. The number of full-time boarders has recently increased. Pupils from Holy Island board at the school when inconvenient tides prevent them from returning home; and some others board occasionally when room is available.
- 4.13 Boarding is organised to be a 'non-school haven', very largely served by non-teaching staff who manage boarding provision, and run activities and trips at weekends. Boarding is overseen by the senior teacher (pastoral), and close contact is maintained between boarding staff, tutors and the head of the Junior Department.
- 4.14 The accommodation is of a high standard, recently refurbished and situated on two floors of the main house. As well as good sized bedrooms and well-equipped bathrooms, boarders have two well-appointed common rooms, with kitchen, games, ICT and television areas. The boarding staff have flats within the boarding area. The one minor recommendation from the most recent boarding inspection, undertaken by Ofsted in 2009, has been met.

- 4.15 Many of the school facilities are available to boarders in the evenings and at weekends. A particularly thoughtful arrangement is the accommodation of the Junior Department book club activity in the room of one of the junior boarders. Regular trips are organised at weekends and boarders are able to go into Berwick-upon-Tweed for shopping, while the older ones sometimes go there for an evening meal. Pupils and parents both expressed their approval of the arrangements for boarding and praised the level of care. Pupils say that they feel part of a multi-national family within the school.
- 4.16 The boarding element, although quite small, has a marked influence on the ethos of the school. It has an effect on the shape of the day and strongly supports the sense of community in the school, as well as enhancing its cultural mix.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The governing body provides very effective oversight of the school and fully discharges its responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, and investment in staff and resources. Following consultation and training from a professional body of governance in independent schools, considerable changes have been made, both in the internal organisation of the governing body and in its approach to meeting its responsibilities and achieving its aims for the school. Governors embrace a suitably wide range of experience and expertise, as well as an understanding of the school's catchment area and current educational issues.
- 5.2 The number of committees and the frequency with which they meet have increased, so that more governors have a closer contact and better understanding of how the school works, and what it achieves. These now include, as well as finance and general purpose, estates and fabric, remuneration, and health and safety committees, a risk committee that monitors relevant policies, and strategic development and education committees. Contact between governors and staff, particularly the senior management team (SMT), has increased, and all the members of the SMT report to and attend the termly full governors' meeting. The governors are also closely involved in the development, as well as the approval, of the new strategic plan for the school. The relationship between the governors and the headmaster and SMT is strong, both supporting the school's management and maintaining accountability. This level of oversight has been particularly helpful during the recent period of rapid change at the school.
- 5.3 Most governors also have particular areas of responsibility, for example for the EYFS, for boarding, for health and safety or for child protection, which has been helpful to school management. Governors frequently attend relevant training and so are well prepared to support the school. They fully discharge their responsibilities for safeguarding, welfare, and health and safety throughout the school.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.4 Leadership in both sections of the school is excellent and management at all levels is mostly good. Leadership from the senior management team in the Senior School, and in the Junior Department and EYFS, is effective in driving the school towards the achievement of its professed aims.
- 5.5 The Junior Department functions very well as a team under the head of the Junior Department's leadership. Subject co-ordinators have a key role in overseeing their subject's effectiveness. They also help to drive a system of monitoring standards and tracking pupils' progress, which is now well established, and is successful in raising expectations of pupils and their achievement. A supportive appraisal system is also now a welcome feature of staff professional development.
- 5.6 Since the previous inspection, the roles of middle management in the Senior School have been clarified and since 2009, a major restructuring of senior and middle management has taken place, embracing much greater delegation to, and more accountability from, management at all levels. Next to the SMT come the three senior teachers, each of whom is head of one of the Senior School houses, as well

as holding their particular responsibility for examinations, operations or pastoral oversight. The three heads of year groups provide excellent pastoral management under their senior teacher. The head of department role is being further developed to include accountability to the deputy head for standards in their subjects. Teaching staff are accountable academically to their heads of department, and pastorally to the heads of year groups and heads of houses. The implementation of a monitoring and appraisal structure, similar to that successfully introduced in the Junior Department, is now beginning to be effective in the Senior School. Currently, appraisal and lesson observation are carried out by senior management and infrequently within departments. Thus, a more comprehensive sharing of good teaching practice is not yet a reality. While heads of department work hard in the administration of their subject, their effectiveness in raising standards and making the best use of the new monitoring procedures are as yet more variable.

- 5.7 A further change in management is the new inclusive approach to planning, which involves staff in departmental budgeting and planning, co-ordination at senior management level, and discussion by governors in the production of a new three-year plan for all parts of the school and its educational provision.
- 5.8 The teaching staff are well qualified, and strongly committed to the pupils' progress and welfare, as confirmed by pupils in interviews and in their questionnaire. Communication throughout the school is excellent and the common room is marked by a real sense of teamwork. The school has appropriate arrangements for the induction of new staff. A particularly strong and well-used mentoring programme is available for use with trainee graduate teachers, newly qualified teachers and others.
- 5.9 Non-teaching staff provide expertise to support the work of teachers, and are strongly committed to the school and to the welfare of the pupils. They are very much a part of the school family and their contribution is appreciated by all. The school has thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of all staff for working with children.

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

- 5.10 Links with parents continue to be excellent, which meets the school's aim to establish an effective relationship with parents and others with an interest in the school. The school provides regular information to parents on their children's progress, in end-of-term reports twice a year and in the grade reports provided every three weeks on achievement and effort, which many parents appreciate. Two or more parent meetings are held each year to discuss progress with teachers, or to discuss specific issues such as university choices or curriculum content in the Junior Department. The required information for parents of current and prospective pupils, together with more general information, is available on the school website, including half-termly newsletters, and a greater use of email speeds up communication. Pupil planners provide a daily contact for parents of those in the Junior Department and younger Senior School pupils. The relationship between the school and parents is particularly close in the EYFS and the Junior Department.
- 5.11 The response from parents in the pre-inspection questionnaire was extremely positive. The strongest approval was given to the quality of pastoral care, the attitudes promoted by the school, the range of activities, and the ease and effectiveness of communication with the school. Parents also praised the management of the school and are pleased with the progress made by their children, academically and personally. Parents of those in the Junior Department, in addition, praised the range of the curriculum and pupils' behaviour. The inspection findings confirm these parents' views. The only significant criticism was for the quality of learning support. The inspectors judge that the organisation and quality of learning support have improved, but agree that the quality of support for pupils with LDD within the classroom is uneven.
- 5.12 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in the life of the school. Many parents of younger pupils come into school, often on a daily basis. Throughout their children's time at the school, parents are welcome to attend concerts, plays, and sporting and other events, and the Longridge Towers Development Association exists to give parents and others social contact with the school and each other, and to help with fund raising.
- 5.13 The school handles any concerns raised by parents with care and follows closely its published complaints policy and procedures. Nearly all parents said that they are satisfied with the way concerns are dealt with by the school.

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

## **6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

### **6.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage provision is good. In the recent past, the setting has made rapid progress in embracing the curriculum and welfare requirements of the EYFS. The setting achieves its aim of developing the whole child and meets the needs of individual children, encouraging them to reach their full potential, and nurturing resilience, capability and confidence. Strong features of the provision are the many learning opportunities given to the children through both visits out of school and visitors to the classroom. There has been recent improvement in the planning, equipping and organisation of the outdoor area, which is now used well as an extension to the classroom. More generally, the EYFS is organised well for continuing improvement. Staff are very welcoming and have excellent relationships with parents, who are overwhelmingly supportive of all aspects of provision.

### **6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.2 The quality of the leadership and management of the setting is good, with many strong features. Comprehensive arrangements are in place for safeguarding children, and all staff are suitably qualified and hold paediatric first aid certificates. The head of the Junior Department, ably supported by the EYFS co-ordinator, has a clear vision for the EYFS as a whole and sets well-developed priorities, with a strong focus on the well-being of each child, his or her personal achievement and individual learning journeys. Staff work as a happy, caring and effective team, well aware of its responsibilities. They meet the diverse needs of the children, assisted by the regular involvement of parents and external agencies. Teaching is monitored as part of the appraisal process. Risk assessments are carried out regularly to ensure that accommodation, and indoor and outdoor equipment are safe for the children. Most areas of learning are well resourced, although ICT provision is limited. Resources are used well to support the children's learning.

### **6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.3 The quality of provision is good. Children are provided with a stimulating balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities across all areas of learning, both in and out of doors. Staff ask challenging questions to develop the children's thinking skills. They are warm and enthusiastic, and work exceptionally well as a team, promoting an ethos that shows they value each child as uniquely special. Staff actively promote the welfare and safety of the children, creating an atmosphere in which they feel secure and thrive. The curriculum is well balanced, and specialist teaching for music and French enriches the children's experiences. Children are also able to attend after-school enrichment clubs. Thorough systems are used to assess the children's progress and to plan the next learning steps. Observations of children are part of daily practice, and profiles of each child's learning and progress are kept, and made available to parents.

### **6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 6.4 The outcomes for children in the EYFS are good. Children make good progress in relation to their starting points and they begin to develop sound skills for the future. They are happy and independent learners who respond wholeheartedly to activities and enjoy choosing their own tasks. They show an excellent awareness of the wider world in their play, and are observant and inquisitive. Their skills in communication, language, literacy and numeracy are developing well, including reading and writing skills; they enjoy counting games and story times, where they are often able to read along with their teacher. ICT skills are less well developed, due to the lack of appropriate resources. Children feel secure in the setting, are considerate towards each other, learn to share and form happy friendships. They understand the importance of eating healthily, being safe and the need to maintain good hygiene.

**Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.**

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

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

### **Inspectors**

Mr Michael Higginbottom

Mr Alfred Bogyor

Dr Peter Kelly

Mrs Sara Taylor

Mr John Tolputt

Mrs Lynda Sharpe

Reporting Inspector

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