

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Rugby School

Full Name of the School	Rugby School
DCSF Number	937/6010
Registered Charity Number	528752
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Age Range	11 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	3rd to 6th March 2008

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 and May 2007.

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 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 Rugby School was founded in 1567 as a free grammar school for the boys of Rugby and Brownsover, in accordance with instructions attached to the will of Lawrence Sheriff, Grocer to Queen Elizabeth I. He also left land in London, the rents from which are now used to fund scholarships and exhibitions to Rugby. The school had modest origins and remained in obscurity for nearly two centuries. In 1750, when the original school became impossible to maintain, it was moved from the middle of the town to a manor house on the present site of School House. Even in 1777, the boys were taught in one room, but by 1794 the number of boys had risen to 245. The school's most famous head master was Dr Arnold (1828-1842) and there were 360 boys in the school at the time of his death. Since then the school has continued to expand its numbers, facilities and buildings to the present position. The first girls were admitted to the sixth form in 1975. The school now occupies an expansive site in Rugby and was last inspected in February 2002.
- 1.2 Rugby is an 11 to 18 mixed boarding school; at present there are 783 pupils on the roll, of which 643 are boarders. There are slightly more boys than girls and 184 pupils are funded in some form by the school. There are 117 pupils who have been identified as having some learning difficulty and 1 pupil has a statement of special education needs. Around 1 in 14 pupils have English as their second language and 14 of these receive extra language support.
- 1.3 Although this is an eleven to eighteen school, only a small number of pupils enter at the age of eleven from local maintained primary schools; the majority of the pupils arrive at the age of thirteen and there is also a significant entry into the sixth form. The school is selective on entry; of those who enter at thirteen, about two-thirds are well above average, and around one in ten of average ability. This means that if pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in public examinations will be broadly in line with the average for maintained selective schools.
- 1.4 The original Lawrence Sheriff bequest provided for Foundation Awards for local pupils to several day houses. The school is now run by a governing body with the assistance of a number of sub-committees. The Arnold Foundation for Rugby School, established in 2003, is funded through donations and gifts, and offers free places to pupils who would benefit from a boarding education, but whose parents are unable to afford the fees. There are currently twenty pupils in Arnold Foundation places at Rugby School.
- 1.5 Rugby's declared principal activity is the education and care of its pupils. It sees its primary objective as to develop rounded individuals who are also useful members of the community. It seeks to preserve many traditions, including that of constant innovation. It aims for academic excellence while striving for distinction in every sphere and declares a defining feature of the school to be its boarding ethos. The school aims for both breadth and challenge in the curriculum and to promote fundamental qualities such as: curiosity, shrewdness, initiative, an awareness of beauty, a sense of humour, a sense of responsibility and a gift for friendship.
- 1.6 Rugby School seeks to develop pupils' cultural awareness and their physical development through active participation both in and outside school. The school is a Christian foundation and encourages spiritual development in the context of rational enquiry. Chapel is regarded as the heart of school life.

- 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
G1	Year 7
G2	Year 8
F Block	Year 9
E Block	Year 10
D Block	Year 11
Lower Twenty	Year 12
Twenty	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Rugby School achieves outstanding success in its primary objective of developing rounded individuals who are useful members of the community through its provision of a broad and challenging curriculum. Improvements have been made since the last inspection by, amongst other initiatives, the introduction of religious studies into Years 9 and 10 and innovative courses into the sixth form.
- 2.2 Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have a very broad curriculum and, through their access to excellent facilities, have a wide range of educational opportunities, on which they thrive.
- 2.3 In Years 9 to 11, the curriculum has grown and evolved since the last inspection. For some it is less broad at Year 9 than at the last inspection, reflecting the tension between offering real breadth and ensuring that all pupils have a broad curriculum. For example, in Year 9, although a good range of core subjects is offered, music has become optional and physical education is being phased out. The school's rationale is that pupils have many opportunities for extra-curricular music and that the skills of physical education are to be taught through games. The school is aware that it will require to set in place very careful planning and monitoring to ensure that the maximum number of pupils benefit. Subjects such as art, drama and design are taught through a carousel system. As a response to the last inspection, divinity and a short GCSE course in religious studies have been introduced into Years 9 and 10, although study of comparative religion is confined to Islam and Christianity.
- 2.4 In Years 10 and 11, the International GCSE has been introduced in English, mathematics, physics and music. A new innovative course called Perspectives on Citizenship is being developed in Year 11 and its effectiveness is intended to be evaluated; the early indications from interviews with pupils and lesson observation are very encouraging.
- 2.5 In the sixth form, the school has been at the forefront of curriculum development in pioneering the 'Cambridge Pre-U' course through its representation on the steering committee, by introducing and developing the Perspectives on Science course, and by developing A-level science courses, amongst others. The curriculum includes a group of Extended Projects in addition to the usual A-level and AS-level courses. These are research-based projects within a taught course and are designed to develop skills in analysis, presentation, enquiry and argument over a period of time. Such courses are offered in science, engineering and oriental studies, amongst others. Also, 'Pre-U' courses will be offered in some subjects, including physics, from September 2008, together with some international alternatives to A level. The sixth form curriculum is therefore challenging.
- 2.6 Planning for the curriculum is very good and has improved since the last inspection. Subject departments have appropriate schemes of work, handbooks and development plans, although the latter lack a degree of consistency in their format and quality. The breadth of experience offered to pupils ensures that they have opportunities to acquire and develop an appropriate range of skills and knowledge.
- 2.7 Information and communication technology (ICT) is taught as a timetabled subject in Years 7 and 8 but not as such in other years. However, a series of subject-specific ICT tasks have been embedded into the teaching of some subjects, such as mathematics, geography and science, in Year 9. This initiative is in its infancy, and the school is aware that the pupils' skills will need careful monitoring to ensure that the intended curriculum is taught. Much has been invested into the ICT infra-structure of the school, so as to give all pupils access to the intranet system for information, software and programs for learning. All pupils in Years

- 9 to 11 have a laptop with a wireless connection to the intranet; those in the sixth form are advised to have a laptop.
- 2.8 Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is taught in the houses, with each pupil having a PSHE tutor who arranges informal group meetings. The training and support for tutors are good. Issues such as relationships and friendships, starting at a new school, cyber-bullying, smoking and alcohol education, are examples of topics for discussion. The team of voluntary tutors is led effectively and good progress has been made since the last inspection in this area. Whilst the curriculum has been mapped out, its scheme of work lacks detail and a sufficiently tight identification of where PSHE occurs elsewhere in the curriculum.
- 2.9 Citizenship is taught in Year 11 to all pupils, the school approaching this area by teaching three strands: social and moral responsibility, community involvement, and political literacy. The approach to the course is helpful in developing pupils' attitudes and in using interesting methods of learning. For example, one girl had produced an essay entitled 'Should organ donation be compulsory?' She had researched the subject, conducted her own questionnaire in the town, displayed the data, and covered important arguments and counter-arguments in her writing. In addition, the Year 12 Perspectives on Science initiative contains aspects of citizenship for development. As with PSHE, citizenship has not yet had a school-wide audit of the contribution of other subjects.
- 2.10 The taught curriculum is greatly enhanced by numerous opportunities for pupils to participate in an outstanding array of visits, lectures, clubs and societies, some of which are organised by the pupils themselves and to which the Levée body (prefects) offers significant support. The boarding ethos and highly committed teaching staff encourage pupils to explore these opportunities. Drama, music and games are particular strengths. More than twenty sports, ranging from polo to aerobics and rackets are available; there are numerous concerts and events school-wide and in houses. In Years 7 and 8, the small year group size militates against involvement in competitive teams, although netball is played against other schools. There is evidence of standards of distinction in many of the extra-curricular spheres and the parental response to the pre-inspection questionnaires showed that they appreciated this rich provision by the school.
- 2.11 Effective careers education and guidance ensure that pupils are well prepared for the next stage of education, training and employment. Pupils are clear as to how the system works and how they access advice. Work experience is organised through the careers department for pupils in Year 11 after their GCSEs. If pupils arrange it themselves, then they are obliged to keep a log book; if it is arranged by the school they will be trained in health and safety matters and visited on site. Work experience for pupils in Year 12 is made available through contact with a large number of former pupils. This is a strength of the school which attracted very positive comments from pupils in interviews.
- 2.12 The learning development department provides good support for pupils with learning difficulties. Approximately twenty per cent of pupils receive support from well-qualified and dedicated staff, and those spoken to acknowledge that the support they receive makes a significant contribution to their progress. The rooms used are well maintained and, through the imaginative use of display material, provide a good environment in which pupils are taught. Comprehensive records of pupils' difficulties and needs are kept, and information identifying individual difficulties and suggesting possible strategies is made available to teachers via the intranet and up-dated annually. For pupils with more serious difficulties, detailed individual education plans are produced. These are up-dated on a regular basis and include a facility for pupils, tutors and subject teachers to contribute to the review, thereby ensuring that effective access to the curriculum is maintained. Similar provision is made for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

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

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.14 Pupils' learning and achievement are good, both in academic and extra-curricular areas, and enable the school to achieve its aim of reaching high academic standards and for pupils to become well-rounded members of the community. A broad range of skills and knowledge is shown by pupils: they apply these to new situations effectively and creatively. Pupils respond well to the challenges put before them. Since the last inspection, high academic standards have been maintained.
- 2.15 Results in the GCSE over the past three years have been above the national average for selective maintained schools. This means that pupils' attainment in public examinations over this period has been good in relation to their abilities. English, German, art and music have shown particularly high levels of achievement but the 2007 data shows that results are significantly above expectations in nearly all subjects. In 2007, eight examination board commendations were awarded, all in modern languages. Over the past three years, the school's performance in A level has been well above the national average for selective maintained schools; this represents a very good level of attainment relative to pupils' abilities. Results have been particularly good in English. Standardised measures of progress show that the school has consistently achieved results higher than expected from pupils' GCSE results. In recent years, about one in ten pupils have gained places at Oxford or Cambridge.
- 2.16 There are no significant variations in attainment between subjects or between different groups or ages of pupils. There is a tendency for girls to attain higher academic results than boys, consistent with the national picture and with their relative ability.
- 2.17 Pupils have good attitudes to their work and are developing appropriate skills to support their learning. In general conversation they communicate clearly and readily with both peers and adults and in lessons they concentrate well and, when given the opportunity, are able to reason and argue confidently. For example, carefully reasoned discussions were seen in art, mathematics and in a Year 11 history class considering the role of superpowers and the boycott of the Moscow Olympics. Productive reading was seen, for example, in a Year 13 English lesson based on *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Writing of high quality was also seen in Year 9 geography and in history. The Perspectives on Science course provides an innovative approach to learning in which pupils enjoy the development of research skills, philosophical concepts, report writing and oral presentations. Pupils were seen working on interesting topics such as medical ethics, black holes and consciousness. Some of the reports were of exceptional quality.
- 2.18 Pupils show good numeracy skills, for example in their algebraic work, in their use of complex graphical work in geography, and in the sciences. Their skills in mental arithmetic are less well developed. Excellent use of ICT was seen in Year 9 music technology and in several areas of geography, pupils' ICT skills, including internet research, were used effectively. Pupils were able to use an electronic whiteboard to enliven their learning and enjoyment. They make profitable use of their laptops for evening prep in the houses.
- 2.19 Much of the work in pupils' books and files is well organised and note-taking can be spontaneous and accurate; however, this skill is not consistently well developed. Pupils show willingness and ability to work with others and good examples of discussion in pairs were seen in history, science and mathematics. Year 13 pupils were able to talk in Russian throughout a lesson.

- 2.20 The tracking of pupils' progress has been developed since the last inspection and now they are monitored frequently. Those who are not studying effectively are identified and appropriate action is taken, both by academic and pastoral staff.
- 2.21 High standards are achieved in the wide range of extra-curricular activities, primarily due to the commitment and enthusiasm of the staff. Recent significant achievements by pupils include: successful essay entries for the Erasmus Prize for contribution to European society; representation in the England U18 rugby team; and two choirs reaching the later stages in national competitions. Further high achievement has been in athletics, golf, real tennis, eventing, musical scholarships and even in bagpipe playing.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.22 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding; it is at the core of what Rugby sets out to do and is one of the school's strengths. There are many elements of its provision which make a distinctive contribution: the extra-curricular programme, chapel, the pastoral care systems and daily life in the houses.
- 2.23 Since the last inspection, provision for pupils' spiritual development has been improved by the introduction of divinity in Years 9 and 10, including some study of Islam, and by a short course in religious studies. The curricular provision has been further enhanced by: improvements in the PSHE programme, taught by a large tutorial team in the houses; by citizenship, with its central strands of social and moral responsibility, political literacy, and community involvement; and by the Perspectives on Science course.
- 2.24 The school's *Guidelines for Life at Rugby School* emphasise the need for spiritual awareness, understanding right from wrong, respect for the worth of each human being, and the role of the school's chapel. Four school services a week are led by the chaplains, by members of the staff, or by visiting speakers and, although the overall tone is Christian, presentations are also made by those of other faiths and of none. Pupils develop a strong sense of community through the chapel and through the pastoral care they receive in their houses. In addition, the chaplains get to know their pupils well by their work teaching divinity and by an assiduous programme of visits to houses for lunch and in the evenings. Pupils speak with affection and respect about the influence of the chaplains and there are flourishing voluntary groups of pupils exploring or affirming their faith, and preparation for Confirmation is offered to those who demonstrate real commitment.
- 2.25 Pupils have a very well-developed sense of morality and are fully capable of evaluating arguments over matters which are important in themselves, or which affect their lives as young people. Hence debate is a regular feature of classroom life, for example when a lively discussion took place in a Year 12 French class on the role of women. Pupils are well informed about social and moral issues involving drugs, alcohol and aggressive behaviour. They understand and accept the school rules. Standards of attendance and behaviour are very good. Pupils can tell right from wrong and will help each other in this respect. For example, senior pupils have played a significant role in educating younger ones about cyber-bullying.
- 2.26 Pupils' social development is excellent. They fulfil the ambition expressed on their behalf to be 'useful members of the community' whether that community is their house, their school, or the wider world, through community service and charitable work. However, fundraising is not the central purpose; the aim is to make pupils more aware of the needs of others and, ultimately, to give generously of their time and energy. Recent examples include a wealth of house-based activities, from baking to fasting, sponsorship to run marathons, and a school-sponsored walk which raised over £70,000 for Future Hope in Calcutta. Prefects and other senior pupils value highly their pastoral responsibilities, often seeking to emulate the

excellent example of their tutors in this respect. The pupils are confident, articulate, frank and open, and relate well to adults. They display in abundance the humour, responsibility, and gift for friendship to which the school aspires.

- 2.27 Pupils are able to develop their cultural awareness through the many visits and exchanges organised by academic departments and through other activities. The way they treat one another regardless of considerations of race or religion is exemplary, and so rooted in the culture of the school that it is never questioned.
- 2.28 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.29 The quality of teaching is very good overall. In three out of four lessons observed it was good or better, thus enabling pupils of all abilities to make very good progress and achieve high standards. This takes the school some way towards its aim of achieving academic excellence. Standards of teaching are similar to those seen at the last inspection.
- 2.30 There has been much recent debate about teaching, for example in the curriculum committee, the annual meetings between heads of department and senior staff, and through the appraisal system. All this has helped to raise teachers' awareness and set an agenda for a more creative approach to teaching and learning. Teachers have been encouraged to engage in this dialogue and to visit other departments to discuss teaching approaches.
- 2.31 Relationships between the pupils and staff are excellent and hence the atmosphere in lessons is conducive to good learning. Pupils are encouraged to behave responsibly and show concern for each other's needs and individuality.
- 2.32 The teaching enables pupils of all abilities to achieve well in public examinations. In about one in seven lessons seen the teaching was excellent. Here, teachers used their extensive knowledge, displayed real enthusiasm and conducted well-focused lessons at a brisk pace.
- 2.33 The vast majority of lessons were good or better. These were again characterised by the teachers' good subject knowledge and in most cases pupils were set appropriate intellectual, physical or creative challenges. This resulted in pupils taking an interest in their work, thinking for themselves and learning from each other. These lessons were well planned and made appropriate use of time and resources. A good variety of teaching styles was seen, including instances of pupils working in groups and pairs. Such practice helped pupils' proper conduct, learning and enjoyment of the lesson. Many pupils were also capable of working well on their own. Practical subjects were highly effective in enabling pupils to work with enthusiasm and to develop skills, for example in a Year 9 music lesson where pupils showed an excellent command of music technology software when adding a soundtrack to a movie clip.
- 2.34 In the one in four lessons observed that were satisfactory, the use of time was not always effective, too few pupils were involved, or teachers did not make use of pupils' misconceptions. A small number of lessons were rather dominated by the teacher. This was especially the case when teachers responded to the perceived pressures of the examination system.
- 2.35 In the pupil pre-inspection questionnaires and interviews conducted, almost all the pupils found the work they were given interesting, stated that they were given the right amount of work and said they were given immediate help by teachers if concerns arose.

- 2.36 Pupils with learning difficulties receive good teaching, both from specialist teachers and when they are in mainstream lessons. Their needs are identified clearly and are noted by their subject teachers, who often make special provision for them in class and are sympathetic to their needs.
- 2.37 Teaching is supported by a wide range of resources whose quality and quantity are excellent. Where use of interactive whiteboards was seen, they were helpful in aiding pupils' learning, for example, in a Year 7 lesson on volcanoes, and lessons in mathematics, physical education and French. The well-stocked library, with an extensive periodicals section and attractive displays, is a valuable resource; it is also a most congenial place in which to work, with an ambience both scholarly and comfortable.
- 2.38 The school's assessment system for recording pupils' attainment, effort and progress is clear and one with which pupils feel comfortable. It means that teachers have a good understanding of the pupils' prior knowledge and it allows tutors to review a pupil's work and to take any appropriate action, if needed. Pupils who are not meeting expectations are identified, discussed and appropriate actions are taken. The marking of written work is variable; some is annotated with devotion and forward-carrying momentum but, elsewhere, it can be less assiduous, even perfunctory. Most work is returned after marking within 48 hours or even sooner, but there is evidence of some taking longer, and so being less helpful to pupils' progress.
- 2.39 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 offers outstanding pastoral care to pupils. The expectation that all pupils are treated as individuals within the houses and in the general school community is successfully achieved. The high quality of pastoral care identified in the previous report continues to be a significant feature of the school.
- 3.2 All staff in the school make a significant contribution to pupils' pastoral care. The senior staff set a good example by being seen as approachable. Housemasters and housemistresses, who are at the forefront of the pastoral care system, are well supported in their role by assistant housemasters and mistresses, academic tutors, house staff, matrons and secretarial support. The chaplain and his staff play a prominent role in the pastoral support of pupils. These highly effective teams are primarily responsible for pupils' well-being and development. A pastoral committee meets to discuss the welfare of individual pupils or year group issues and to agree any actions to be taken, sometimes involving the pupils themselves. For example, cyber-bullying has recently been highlighted as a concern and Year 13 pupils, involved in raising the issue, made a well-received presentation to younger pupils. This approach was encouraged by staff, including the child protection officer, the PSHE co-ordinator and members of Levée.
- 3.3 The warm and all-encompassing pastoral support, given to each individual pupil by all adults with whom they have contact, ensures that pupils feel both cared for and valued. In interviews with pupils this was readily acknowledged and much appreciated by all. They spoke very warmly of the importance of forging strong and lifelong friendships whilst at school. There is a strong awareness that the flourishing house system both encourages and enables this. The importance of nurturing each individual is highlighted in the school's documentation and this aim is successfully met. One boy summed things up when, referring to his tutor, said 'it's like having a parent at school'.
- 3.4 The house system is very effective in giving support and guidance to pupils. Parental response to the questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with the care given to pupils, including new pupils. Pastoral reports show that housemasters and housemistresses have detailed knowledge of their charges, and all pupils are well aware that there is someone they can turn to.
- 3.5 Arrangements are in place to provide a healthy life style through appropriate diet and exercise. All pupils eat in houses and this creates a pleasant and homely environment which allows them time to eat regularly with friends and at other times talk to older pupils in their own house. Some parents, in their response to the questionnaire, were of the view that the quality of meals varied from house to house.
- 3.6 Information provided to all pupils, for example telephone numbers for internal and external lines of support, means that all pupils are aware of the many options available to them. They appreciate the regular contact with tutors, the friendly and open nature of their house staff and being able to access a school counsellor as an individual or a group.
- 3.7 Detailed and comprehensive attention is given to the arrangements to promote and safeguard pupils' welfare, health and safety. Policies and procedures give clear guidance to staff on how to manage the personal well-being and development of pupils. Parents are involved at an early stage in any discussion about issues affecting their children.

- 3.8 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is outstanding, and contributes greatly to the orderly behaviour of pupils in and out of the classroom. All staff encourage pupils to develop the self-discipline and consideration for others that are so characteristic of the school. Good discipline and mutual respect for each other are strong features. Behaviour falling short of these high standards is dealt with firmly but fairly, and any sanction given is clear, applied consistently and recorded appropriately.
- 3.9 An outstanding feature of Rugby is its commitment to supporting pupils through bursaries and scholarships. Currently, nearly eight per cent of pupils are supported through the Arnold Foundation and the Foundationers' Scholarship Programme, with a target of ten per cent in the future. Day pupils given Foundationships under the Lawrence Sheriff bequest and Arnold Foundation pupils have all their fees and extras paid, subject to means testing. One parent expressed her gratitude to the school, pointing out that the generous financial assistance was accompanied by an inclusive ethos within the school.
- 3.10 Child protection arrangements are fully in place, well documented and known by staff. The child protection officer, an appropriately trained senior member of staff, works closely with Warwickshire Safeguarding Children Board to ensure that arrangements comply fully with statutory obligations and to seek support and guidance. Appropriate training of staff and older pupils has been carried out by qualified staff. Regular contact with the Warwickshire unit ensures that the school understands and carries out any new requirements under child protection legislation. The annual written review of policies and procedures, and the efficiency of the school policy on child protection, show the school to be thorough and efficient in the operation of them.
- 3.11 The school has worked effectively with the local fire authority, and relevant fire risk assessments have been drawn up and any recommendations acted upon. Regular fire drills are held and reported to the school's fire safety officer who, in turn, reports to the health and safety committee. An outside agency is used to test electrical equipment and assessments of physical risk around the school are in place. One current focus is the risk posed by pupils crossing public roads. Frequent encouragement of pupils to exercise care when doing so and to make use of a recently installed pelican crossing are examples of the detailed and careful attention the school gives to the safety of its pupils.
- 3.12 Detailed guidance is available to ensure the health and safety of pupils on trips and activities outside the school. Assessments of risk are carried out and a record is maintained by an assistant head who also records any adjustments to the assessment after a review at the conclusion of a trip. There is also a detailed first aid policy and a regularly up-dated list of staff who have had training in first aid.
- 3.13 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

- 3.14 The school fosters excellent links with the parents and the wider community, a standard maintained since the last inspection. The notion of public benefit has taken on more significance since that time and the school's considerable response continues to enrich the pupils' educational experience.
- 3.15 The vast majority of parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire were pleased with all aspects of the school's provision. They singled out for particular praise the provision for boarders and the range of extra-curricular activities. There were some concerns regarding the difficulties of being a day pupil but the inspection team found day pupils to be fully integrated and welcomed into the life of the school - indeed this year one of the heads of school is a day pupil.
- 3.16 Communications between the school and parents are excellent. Parents receive regular newsletters, handbooks, curriculum guides and other relevant information. The head master's end-of-term letter is very detailed and gives a clear insight into the life of the school. The newly developed and ever-evolving parental web-portal is available to all parents who have internet access and contains a variety of information, including pupils' timetables, daily bulletins, end-of-term grades and reports, relevant school policies and careers guidance. The housemasters and housemistresses act as the main contact between the school and parents, and are available in person, by phone or email, to resolve any issues as they arise. They perform an outstanding service in this regard, much appreciated by parents.
- 3.17 Parents are given good opportunities to be involved in the activities of their children through attendance at sporting fixtures, house activities, music concerts and other events, such as the careers convention. Parents' mornings are helpfully placed in the term in order to maximise the number who can attend; they are often preceded by club dinners where parents are encouraged to meet each other, dine together with the senior management team, and enjoy a variety of evening entertainment. For parents of pupils in Year 10 and above, there are annual briefings about careers. A careers convention for parents and their children is held every two years and, for pupils in Year 12, parents are briefed on two occasions about university entrance and work experience, as well as careers.
- 3.18 Parents receive reports on academic and pastoral matters at the end of each term. The quality of the pastoral reports is excellent and shows clearly that the house staff have a detailed knowledge of their charges and that they give them caring and thorough guidance. The written subject reports are variable in quality; some give good advice on pupils' attainment and how they can improve, but others are less informative and concentrate on personal qualities. Parents have very good access to house staff to discuss reports or any other matter. The termly reports are further complemented by mid-term internal reports which only the pupils receive. Pupils discuss both sets of reports with tutors on an individual basis and are set targets for improvement.
- 3.19 A thorough formal complaints procedure is in place. A record is kept of all serious concerns and complaints and how they were resolved. Written replies to parental concerns show that the school handles these with care and sensitivity.
- 3.20 The school promotes excellent links with the wider community and continues to have a high profile in the town through supporting numerous community-related projects and activities. Through the Independent State School Partnership of Warwickshire scheme, teaching and support staff share and develop best practice with colleagues from local schools and pupils are engaged in mentoring programmes. An activities afternoon on Thursdays involves about 170 pupils and 30 members of staff in the running of around 20 separate clubs and societies

for a wide range of local people. The school facilities are used without charge by many local groups and the science department in particular is successful in inviting local people to lectures and other events. Charitable work also provides further links with the wider community. All these opportunities enrich the work done in the classroom and contribute to the quality of education provided.

- 3.21 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

- 3.22 The school makes excellent provision for boarding, in line with its aims. The boarding houses make a highly significant contribution to the outstanding pastoral care, excellent personal relationships, and clear sense of interest in the welfare of others displayed by pupils. The high standards identified in the last inspection have been maintained.
- 3.23 Relationships within boarding houses are excellent and make a significant contribution to the strong family atmosphere that prevails. Much of this reflects the dedication and hard work of the house staff and their teams, who give much of their time. The deployment of both resident and non-resident boarding staff in each house is very effective. The house staff work well as a team, and meet regularly with senior management and occasionally on their own to share good practice and to ensure that their very high standards are maintained.
- 3.24 The dedicated housemasters and housemistresses are important figures in the boarders' lives. They are highly committed to the well-being of their extended families and take their pastoral responsibilities very seriously. An outcome of this is that each house has its own individual character, and this is welcomed by pupils who display strong allegiance to their house and hold their house staff in high regard. In keeping with its strong boarding ethos, the school offers a wide range of activities in the evenings and at weekends. Boarders lead exceptionally busy lives at Rugby and some pupils felt that, on occasion, the weekend provides a welcome opportunity to simply relax, or to catch up on work.
- 3.25 The quality of the accommodation provided in houses is very good and is maintained well, with due attention given to safety. Pupils are provided with ample space in which to both work and relax. The facility for dining within houses and the presence of the staff teams at meals add significantly to the family atmosphere and lend a civilizing influence to these occasions. Inspectors visiting houses became immediately aware of the warmth of the atmosphere within the house.
- 3.26 All recommendations made in the last social care boarding inspection report have been met. In particular, the recommendation that the clear readiness of pupils to offer views should be formalised has led to the creation of pupils' committees within houses; they meet regularly and make suggestions for improvement in provision.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The governance of the school is outstanding and is very effective in ensuring the continued and successful development of the school's educational provision. Governors' business is conducted in a thoroughly professional manner. The governing body meets termly and has a large number of sub-committees which, between them, cover all aspects of the school's requirements. In addition to these meetings, governors convene an annual meeting where general strategy is discussed and decided. As a body, they have a good range of expertise, particularly in the fields of education, finance and law. They are supportive of the head master and are very encouraging of school developments.
- 4.2 Governors develop a good insight into the working of the school through a variety of ways. For example, before their termly meetings, some will visit a boarding house or attend dinners with staff and pupils. Furthermore, they are made aware of current educational issues through formal presentations each term by both staff and pupils on subjects or aspects of school life. Recent subjects have included child protection issues, geography, ICT and the school's afternoon activities. In addition, they are kept fully informed by detailed and regular reports presented to them each term by the head master and, annually, by the deputy head.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.3 Leadership and management are outstanding. The leadership of the head master is extremely effective and an important factor in the success of the school. He is accessible to both staff and pupils, shows an intense interest in school life, inspires his senior management team to do likewise, and knows his school very well. He is most ably supported by his senior management team who, collectively, have a very good variety of skills, which ensures that management is instrumental in improving the school's provision. The senior management team has been recently strengthened by the appointment of two new assistant heads. Communication between the senior management team and other staff is very effective; this is aided by the work of an appropriate range of committees and a view from the staff that the senior management team are supportive and helpful. The work of the committees for pastoral staff and heads of department has been influential in enabling middle managers to be effective in their roles and also in acting as a useful conduit between staff and senior management.
- 4.4 The analysis of the school's needs through the process of planning for development is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The senior management team has drawn up a five-year school development plan which is over-arching and tackles broad school objectives. This is supplemented by a three-year academic plan devised by a committee of heads of department. Thus, the school's priorities are clearly identified and the progress made in achieving them is closely monitored. At a third tier, every department has a development plan which, again, is monitored by senior staff. Whilst some of these are good, they vary in their format and quality.
- 4.5 Close monitoring of provision means that the senior management team are fully aware of any strengths and weaknesses. Annual reviews of departments take place, initially through discussion with the deputy head who acts as a first point of reference on many academic matters. It is quite clear that her work is enormously valued and appreciated by the staff. Annual reviews are also discussed with the head master. In addition, the senior management

team also observe lessons and examine pupils' written work. Heads of department appreciate these reviews and find them positive and helpful.

- 4.6 Teachers new to the school are inducted well. A formal process ensures that all they are able to visit the school prior to their appointment and meet the relevant senior staff, including their mentor. Arrangements for newly qualified teachers are effective. Induction procedures include matters such as child protection, in addition to preparation for teaching. Regular and formal reviews of progress are made in the early months to cement the process of induction. The arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, including the maintenance of a single register, are entirely appropriate.
- 4.7 The professional development of staff is given a high priority. All teachers are appraised on a three-yearly cycle; this involves a chosen mentor and contains an element of self-evaluation. This system, currently under review, is being used increasingly to identify teachers' training needs. Recent training has been linked to the school development plan and included creativity in teaching and the use of ICT. The needs of experienced teachers are often met well by creating new opportunities for their continued professional development.
- 4.8 Good financial management ensures that the school is well resourced and the premises and accommodation are maintained to a very good standard. Communication on financial matters is very good. For example, the bursar meets the head master twice-weekly, monthly figures are available, and any significant variations are reported. Throughout the year, the finance committee receives appropriate information about the school's finances. This committee meets termly and proper accounting procedures are followed. Effective financial planning also ensures that the departments and houses are very well resourced. Budgets are prepared well in advance, and are discussed with relevant staff, with final decisions made by the senior management team.
- 4.9 The school runs smoothly and effectively, which is a tribute to the hard-working non-teaching staff and all those who help to provide facilities and services for both pupils and teachers.
- 4.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.11 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 Rugby School's aim of ensuring the education and care of its pupils is met with outstanding success. It is a school that achieves very well in all aspects of what it does and has no significant weaknesses. Central to its provision is a strong boarding ethos, which encompasses excellent pastoral care for pupils through the creation of a family atmosphere. The pupils are happy and proud to be part of a school with long, established traditions and yet one which seeks to innovate and develop. They achieve well in both public examinations and in wider spheres, because of the very good quality of teaching and the strong curriculum and educational experience provided, especially through the wide range of extra-curricular activities. The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development means that the school's aims of producing well-rounded pupils with a sense of responsibility and a gift for friendship are fully met. Not least in the factors contributing to Rugby's success is the outstanding level of governance, leadership and management.
- 5.2 The school has made very good progress since the last inspection. With reference to issues raised in the last report: the school's development plan and its evaluation have ensured continued improvement; religious studies is now firmly established; the programme for teaching PSHE is now effective. Whilst the planning in subject departments has improved, there is still scope to ensure a greater consistency in the quality of subject development planning.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 Rugby is a school with many strengths and no significant weaknesses. However, to develop provision even further, the school should consider:
1. improving the consistency in the quality of departmental development plans;
 2. improving the monitoring of pupils' use of ICT across the curriculum;
 3. improving some aspects of assessment, such as the consistency of the quality in the subject reports on pupils, and in the marking of their written work.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 3rd to 6th March 2008. 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 the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and chapel. 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

Dr Joe Tierney	Reporting Inspector
Mr Roger Denning	Former Deputy Head, HMC school
Miss Jean Walker	Senior Teacher, GSA school
Mr Simon Davies	Head, HMC school
Dr Andrew Storey	Head of Department, HMC school
Mr Bill Burn	Deputy Head, HMC school
Dr Gerald South	Former Director of Studies, HMC school
Dr Richard Palmer	Head of Department, HMC school