

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

The Moat School

Full Name of the School	The Moat School
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Registered Charity Number	1068445
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Age Range	11 to 16
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	6th to 9th May 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 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 The Moat School is a specialist co-educational day school for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years of age. The school, which follows a mainstream model, is dedicated to the teaching of pupils with specific learning difficulties, particularly difficulties of a dyslexic nature. It aims to identify and nurture the extraordinary talents and creativity that dyslexic children often possess to enable them to flourish, experience success and fulfil their potential, in a safe and supportive learning environment. Through an intensive and structured learning programme, it aims to motivate its pupils towards independence in learning and everyday life and to help each one realise their full intellectual and academic ability. By developing and nurturing their self-esteem, skills and natural abilities, the school aims to prepare its pupils for success in public examinations and thereby give them the opportunity to enter higher education or vocational training.
- 1.2 A group of parents established a charitable trust, the Constable Educational Trust, in 1994, with the purpose of opening a secondary day school for dyslexic children in London. They had experienced difficulty in finding suitable secondary education for their own dyslexic children and, driven by their belief that all children with extra challenges should have access to the specialist education they need, these parents worked tirelessly to find accommodation and funding for their project. Four years later, in 1998, the school opened with five pupils in the premises of a former Church of England secondary school in Fulham. The buildings have been extensively refurbished as numbers in the school have increased. There is playground space adjacent to the school for morning and lunchtime breaks. The school adjoins a large park, Fulham Palace Gardens, with games fields and tennis courts and is able to make use of these facilities. The present head was appointed in June 2007.
- 1.3 By the time of the last inspection, which was carried out by Ofsted, the number on roll had increased to 80 pupils. There are now 89 pupils in five year groups in the school, and it is almost at capacity. Of the 89 pupils, 65 are boys and 24 are girls; there are 36 pupils in total between the ages of 11 and 13 years in Years 7 and 8, and 53 pupils between the ages of 13 and 16 in Years 9 to 11. All pupils have an identified professionally diagnosed profile of specific learning difficulty and receive specialist learning support from the school; 56 have a statement of special educational needs. The school is approved by the Secretary of State as suitable for the admission of pupils for whom statements are maintained.
- 1.4 Entry to the school is generally in Year 7, although a few places may be available in Years 8 to 10. The process of admission is designed to select pupils whose specific learning difficulties encompass either or both dyslexia and dyspraxia. The profile of needs represented has become increasingly complex and, in some cases, more severe in recent years. No pupils have English as their second language, although a few are bilingual. Virtually all pupils are British and less than half are from different ethnic origins. The ability profile of pupils on entry is below the national average, although it is difficult to establish because individuals have specific areas of strengths and weaknesses. Overall, pupils' average ability may be at least in line with the national average but a significant majority of pupils will not have achieved standards in line with the national average for pupils in maintained primary schools by the end of Year 6. If pupils are performing in line with their ability, their results in public examinations in Year 11 will be in line with the national average for all maintained secondary schools.
- 1.5 Pupils come from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and travel to school from a wide area across London.

- 1.6 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
Form 1	Year 7
Form 2	Year 8
Form 3	Year 8
Form 4	Year 10
Form 5	Year 11

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides for its pupils a good quality educational experience which is wholly consistent with its declared aims and philosophy. The range of educational opportunities which the school curriculum offers is very carefully matched to the needs and aptitudes of its pupils. Since the previous inspection, larger groups have taken GCSE examinations, the curriculum has been extended and planning is more consistent. The installation of a comprehensive wireless network has enabled very effective use of information and communication technology (ICT) and has led to more opportunities for co-operative and independent learning as recommended in the previous report.
- 2.2 The school takes pupils with an increasingly complex range of special educational needs and offers these pupils a curriculum that is accessible and achievable, and well matched to their learning requirements. Pupils are carefully considered before a place is offered to ensure that appropriate provision can be made for their needs. A thoughtfully-judged range of curricular and extra-curricular activities provides opportunities to raise pupils' confidence and self-esteem. The school is successful in adapting and planning the curriculum to meet each pupil's needs, and it provides a happy and secure environment in which pupils flourish.
- 2.3 The curriculum is broad and balanced; it does not include a modern foreign language because of the significant literacy difficulties experienced by many pupils. It provides good continuity between year groups and ensures that pupils have experience in the key areas of language, mathematics, science, technology, humanities and the arts. Small group teaching by staff with specialist training, individual tuition and support in the classroom combine to enable pupils to experience success in many subjects.
- 2.4 Aesthetic and creative skills are strongly encouraged as this is often an area of strength for pupils with specific learning difficulties. Year 8 pupils are very skilful in the use of ICT to make their own films, artwork displayed in the school shows vibrancy and skill, and high standards of craftsmanship are evident in design and technology (DT).
- 2.5 The development of literacy and numeracy skills presents significant challenges for many pupils because of the entrenched nature of their difficulties, but the use of laptops throughout the school enables pupils to work with greater independence and overcome problems with written presentation and technical accuracy. The school is implementing a whole-school approach to both literacy and numeracy in order to improve pupils' performance in these areas.
- 2.6 Curriculum content is regularly reviewed to ensure that it meets the needs of the pupils whose range of learning difficulties on entry are becoming more complex. Consideration is being given currently to the introduction of vocational courses, and further modular GCSE courses as they become available. Additional specialist support is available; speech and language therapists work with individual pupils and small groups to develop speaking and listening skills and to help pupils with social interaction and integration. An occupational therapist helps pupils develop their fine and gross motor skills.
- 2.7 The school's personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme reflects the ethos and aims of the school. It emphasises the need to give pupils a safe and supportive learning environment, and opportunities to develop their confidence and self-esteem. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good. Lunchtime clubs and activities are well supported and cater for a wide range of interests including football, basketball, chess, photography, origami, animation, singing, stencil printing, play rehearsals and card games. After-school activities

are restricted by the fact that many pupils have transport arranged over a wide area of London, but sporting activities, training for the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and homework club are popular. Links with the community have been established through a project with the police and pupils are regularly involved in charity fundraising.

- 2.8 Careers advice from the Connexions service, careers education in the PSHE programme and a two-week work experience placement for Year 10 pupils help them think about the future and gain valuable insights into the world of work. For some this might appear a daunting challenge, but Year 11 pupils view it as a valuable opportunity to gain some specialist knowledge for future use or simply to try something new.
- 2.9 Pupils are expected to take at least six subjects at GCSE and are well prepared for the next stage of education, training or employment. The school is aware of the difficulty in finding appropriate sixth-form or further education provision for its pupils and makes it clear to parents what choices are possible. It is starting to track leavers' destinations in order to set up links and networks and to facilitate links between parents so that experiences and information can be shared. Former pupils return to the school to talk to present pupils; approximately 30 per cent have gone on to university.
- 2.10 The school is successfully developing a whole-school approach to curriculum planning to ensure coherence and consistency in schemes of work and to extend resources and activities appropriate to the learning styles and needs of the pupils. A senior member of staff has responsibility for the curriculum and monitors subject planning. Curriculum content is under regular review to ensure that it meets pupils' needs and to take advantage of modular courses and new initiatives. The special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) provides pupil profiles based on an educational psychologist's or other professional reports, together with their most recent literacy attainment scores, to help staff with their curriculum planning and teaching.
- 2.11 The curriculum is enriched further by a programme of appropriate trips throughout the year. All year groups visit at least one art gallery each year, Year 9 visited the Ecology Centre, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have been to the Imperial War Museum, the National Theatre and the Polymer Centre and Year 7 visited a zoo as part of their work in Biology. In addition, there are geography field trips, an annual trip to France for Year 9 and a biennial ski trip open to the whole school. Residential trips provide a valuable opportunity for the pupils to develop greater independence. Older pupils accompany the Year 9 trip; it is used as an opportunity to develop leadership skills.
- 2.12 The school makes outstanding provision for the specific learning needs of its pupils by providing a broad and balanced curriculum in which lessons are planned and delivered to meet the individual needs of each pupil. Tasks are planned according to need and ability, and a wide range of multi-sensory teaching and learning approaches is employed. Pupils are thereby enabled to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding despite their significant literacy, language or other learning difficulties.
- 2.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.14 Pupils are well educated; they are given a good grounding in the knowledge, skills and understanding they require for the subjects they study and the activities in which they participate. They become increasingly adept at applying their knowledge, skills and understanding and they develop the strategies they need to enable them to study successfully. Given the nature and extent of the pupils' learning and language difficulties, their achievement is good. Statistics show good progress in reading and spelling ages from year to year, and results in public examinations are better than predicted. Drama, which is offered as a GCSE subject, continues to provide opportunities to illustrate progress in oral expressive language skills. The school is very successful in meeting its aim to develop pupils' self-esteem, skills and natural abilities, and to realise their full intellectual and academic potential. As at the time of the last inspection, pupils make good progress and GCSE results have steadily improved.
- 2.15 For some pupils, specific learning difficulties and language disorders impede and delay the development of literacy, numeracy, comprehension and critical thinking skills but, as pupils grow in self-esteem, they become more confident orally and demonstrate and apply their knowledge, skills and understanding, particularly in practical and creative subjects. They are efficient and independent in their use of ICT in many subjects, including science, history, geography, business studies and English.
- 2.16 The attainment of pupils in Years 7 to 9 was good in almost half of the lessons observed. As their literacy skills and strategies for learning develop, their achievement improves perceptibly in Years 10 and 11. Many pupils arrive at the school having experienced considerable difficulties elsewhere. The nurturing environment of the school, small class sizes, individual support, and specialist teachers throughout the school trained in teaching pupils with specific learning difficulties, all combine to enable pupils to achieve their potential. Attainment in creative and practical subjects is better than in subjects requiring literacy skills. However, through regular practice and reinforcement, pupils' written and oral language skills develop steadily. Pupils make good progress in reading and spelling; they become more articulate, confident to ask questions and able to select and develop the study skills and strategies appropriate to their individual learning style.
- 2.17 Standardised tests of cognitive abilities and skills administered in Years 7 and 9 indicate positive improvement and progress for the majority of pupils as they move through the school, with GCSE results far exceeding predictions.
- 2.18 Pupils' attainment in GCSE is good in relation to their abilities and specific learning and language difficulties. Overall GCSE performance over the last three years has been above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. Pupils achieve results at GCSE below the national average in English, history and mathematics, and in line with the national average in geography, music and physical education (PE). Results are above the national average in ICT, DT, food technology, business studies, and drama. Standards well above the national average are consistently achieved in science and art. The school is implementing whole-school strategies to improve attainment in English and mathematics. Their results enable pupils to move on to sixth-form and college courses of their choice.
- 2.19 Pupils experience success in a wide range of individual and group activities. These include successful individual performances at national level in swimming, gymnastics, tennis, climbing and karting, and recognition in a national art competition. Pupils are successful in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme at Bronze level. They enjoy representing the school in inter-school cross-country, athletics, football, rowing and swimming activities. Pupils have been particularly successful in the Times Educational Supplement competition to

produce a newspaper in a day; they have competed on equal terms with other contestants. Participation and achievement in these activities develop pupils' self-esteem, skills and natural abilities.

- 2.20 Pupils develop effective study skills and positive attitudes to work as they move up the school. In Years 7 to 9, many pupils need and are given frameworks to structure written tasks, support and encouragement with the presentation and organisation of work, and strategies to help with spelling, concentration and the development of reading comprehension. By Years 10 and 11, pupils have developed greater independence in learning. They are able to analyse and explain issues, engage in discussion, demonstrate good reasoning skills and share ideas lucidly with each other, as was observed in a business studies revision lesson.
- 2.21 In English, pupils analyse style and language and write with an awareness of audience and purpose. They are skilful in the use of ICT, using it to plan, draft and proof-read work. They also acquire a range of techniques to maximise their success in examinations.
- 2.22 The majority of pupils are well motivated and enjoy their lessons. Despite considerable difficulties, they show perseverance and a desire to succeed. Some pupils find social interaction difficult, but many work well co-operatively, as was seen in music, food technology and drama. However, in some lessons the challenging behaviour of a small minority of pupils was seen to have a detrimental effect on the learning of others. The school is aware and alert to the need to develop further strategies. Pupils are keen to participate in lunchtime activities and in house and school teams.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.23 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of the pupils is well developed. An important aspect of the aims of the school is the nurture of self-belief and self-esteem and it is very successfully fostering these qualities in its pupils by developing their skills and natural abilities. The ethos of the school enables pupils to acquire a sense of identity and self-worth, and to develop self-knowledge and self-confidence. Since the last report, the school has improved the challenging and leadership experiences available to pupils by providing an adventure trip to France. It has also increased charitable fundraising, making the pupils more aware of the situation and plight of others, both locally and internationally.
- 2.24 Pupils in Years 7 to 9 are encouraged to discuss values and beliefs in religious education lessons where world religions are studied. A sustained discussion on science and evidence versus faith was heard in a Year 7 religious education lesson. A daily gathering, or assembly, enables classes to hear and see presentations and explore a broad range of issues. A short undirected period of reflection is included in this meeting. A sense of self-worth is encouraged by the merit system. Each week, one gathering is devoted to the celebration of merit awards and certificates which are awarded not just for academic and sporting achievements, but also for personal contributions to the well-being of others and to the wider life of the school. The pupil achieving the highest number of merits is also mentioned in the head's weekly newsletter to parents.
- 2.25 The school is helping pupils to develop morally and to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils regard the set of rules as fair. Strict guidelines are in place to enable pupils to distinguish unacceptable behaviour and understand the consequences. Pupils are encouraged to consider the factors contributing to their actions, and the consequences, in individual discussion with a senior member of staff. Sanctions are negotiated.

- 2.26 Pupils develop socially and are encouraged both to show initiative and to contribute to the community. Much work is done to develop the language of friendliness and cooperation in social intervention sessions with the speech and language therapists, in teaching and in less structured times. Staff set a very good example of caring behaviour, which is copied by pupils. Pupils plan, raise funds for and take part in a range of activities to help different sections of the community, both here and abroad.
- 2.27 In PSHE, some study is made of public institutions in a course which is taught once a week. Practical experience of the democratic process is given by the election procedures developed for the school council. This group is organised constitutionally and meetings are run efficiently by the pupil chairman, supported by staff.
- 2.28 Pupils are particularly aware of the need to respect each other, and they describe the tolerance of each other's differences and difficulties which exists across the school. In history and religious education, tolerance is encouraged by a study of the holocaust and the plight of the Jewish people.
- 2.29 There are good opportunities across the curriculum to study different cultural traditions, including literature drawn from other cultures. Music from other traditions was enjoyed in a Year 9 music lesson and a range of cultural visits is organised, including one this term to the Globe Theatre to see Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.
- 2.30 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.31 Teaching is a strength of the school; it is good across all age groups and all subject areas. This enables pupils to flourish and realise their full academic potential while developing skills and natural abilities. The teaching contributes greatly towards the school fulfilling its stated aims. It helps pupils to become increasingly independent in their learning and enables them to succeed in public examinations at GCSE level, and so move on to further education and higher education, or vocational training. In addition to maintaining good standards of teaching, improvements in lesson planning and evaluation of teaching by the senior leadership team have been put in place, as recommended in the report from the previous inspection.
- 2.32 A strength of the teaching is that the great majority of lessons are meticulously planned and delivered with a wide variety of different techniques, resources and activities to suit the differing learning styles of pupils, thus enabling them all, whatever their particular learning difficulties, to make good progress and increase their understanding and develop their skills.
- 2.33 An additional literacy element is planned into almost all lessons. The learning needs of pupils with different levels of difficulties are catered for by different tasks which are set, by individual support from the teacher or learning support assistant, by verbal as well as written instructions, by visual aids, diagrams and presentations, and by extension tasks for the more able.
- 2.34 Pupils are continually encouraged to make the necessary intellectual, physical and creative effort, which gives them interest in their work and encourages in each of them the ability to think and learn for themselves, as far as their aptitudes allow. Pupils were seen to apply themselves and enjoy investigating tile patterns and drawing nets for solid shapes in mathematics. They put much physical effort into PE activities and lunchtime games from

which they visibly derive enjoyment, as they do also from developing their creative talents in art, drama, music and in play rehearsals.

- 2.35 Another strength of much of the teaching is the fast pace and variety within lessons which holds interest and maximises learning while encouraging good behaviour. Year 10 mathematics pupils were given strategies to enable them to learn complex vocabulary using their own mnemonics, and how to simplify fractions, in a single lesson, while a Year 11 science class were entirely involved in the topic of the periodic table by the use of colourful resources, songs and a computer animation programme.
- 2.36 However, in a small number of lessons, where there was less variety and the pace of the teaching was slower, this allowed the opportunity for distraction and the disruptive behaviour of a few pupils to impair learning progress. In a few instances, the teacher's writing on whiteboards was not as well-formed or clear as it needs to be for pupils with literacy difficulties, and enunciation was not sufficiently distinct.
- 2.37 Pupils are encouraged to work co-operatively and help each other as seen in both drama and music classes. Many teachers have been trained in, and have developed, skilled questioning techniques which they use to draw out understanding and gradually build up knowledge. This was seen in a business studies lesson on risks and rewards and another on American history.
- 2.38 At GCSE level, high expectations challenge pupils and build their self-confidence. In many subjects, including English and science, some of the teaching is explicitly linked to optimising access to examination questions and making best use of the time available in public examinations.
- 2.39 Teachers are not only well qualified in their own subjects but the majority also have specialist teaching qualifications, which gives them a deep understanding of the needs of their pupils, and enables them to make progress. The school's recording system ensures that teachers have a good understanding of the aptitudes and prior attainments of their pupils. All staff, during their first two years in the school, undergo training, at the school's expense, in teaching pupils with specific learning difficulties. The staff are so expert in their field that the school offers training sessions to staff from other schools. Learning support assistants are also well qualified and, working closely with the teaching staff, they have an important role in the classroom. The ratio of teachers to pupils is very favourable and conducive to successful teaching and learning.
- 2.40 Teaching benefits from the good quality, quantity and range of well-researched resources available to staff. Much use is made of bright 'reminder' posters and the resources for the newly-introduced literacy programme are outstanding. Hardware and software for ICT, including new laptops for all pupils and staff, are constantly and competently used. Film-making in ICT, data-logging in science, video and animation clips, internet research and computer presentations are all routinely and effectively used by pupils.
- 2.41 Assessment is regular and constructive. It is used at an individual pupil level in most lessons to help with the evaluation of work and to set targets for progress. Achievement is assessed at the end of each unit in each subject, and this helps staff to monitor progress and informs their planning for future lessons for their teaching groups. The use of assessment to inform curriculum planning is beginning to be developed at the departmental and whole school level.

- 2.42 An assessment framework is carefully planned; it runs through the academic year and includes an explanation of the purpose of each individual test. Nationally standardised scores from testing at Year 7 and Year 9 enables the school to track pupil progress and measure improvement, as well as predict GCSE outcomes. By relating this to actual GCSE grades achieved, the school can compute a score for each pupil; that is, the school can calculate how actual achievement relates to predicted achievement; the school scores highly in these calculations.
- 2.43 Departments also use National Curriculum levels as a measure of progress. All parents and their children now have the opportunity to discuss assessment results and progress at an annual review meeting with the form teacher, head and SENCO. The school has designed its own version of an individual education plan; each pupil has his or her own curriculum map which forms the basis for discussion between parents and staff and other professionals from the authority which is funding a statemented pupil. This recently introduced system is sensibly still under review and development, in particular the final stage of target-setting in order to further refine this aspect and make it more pupil-orientated.
- 2.44 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 committed and dedicated staff team provide a high quality of care for the well-being and development of all pupils; they work within a secure framework which is closely monitored for effectiveness. Systems and procedures are in place to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils at all times. This contributes significantly to the achievement of the school's aims of providing a safe, secure and supportive environment in which pupils can flourish, develop their self-esteem and experience both academic and creative success. In the parental questionnaire, all parents were happy with the help and guidance provided for their children and almost all thought the school achieved high standards of behaviour. The high standards of pastoral care noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained and, in some areas, extended by new initiatives.
- 3.2 Form tutors, supported by designated learning support assistants in Years 7 to 9, are at the heart of the effective support and guidance system providing organisational, emotional and moral direction. Pupils appreciate the frequent prompts to help remember timetables and commitments given at registration and throughout the school day. All staff, including non-teaching staff, know their pupils well and are good role models. They are aware and enthusiastic, providing constant attention and a high level and quality of care. The school office, with the adjacent well-equipped medical room, is a focus where pupils are always assured of a smiling welcome and ready help.
- 3.3 Another example of the quality of thoughtfulness and care is the recent appointment of an experienced school counsellor who is available for pupils, parents and staff. The after-school homework club, where staff are on duty to help and advise, is invaluable for pupils who would not have access to a computer at home.
- 3.4 The school's extensive wireless network and accessible email system ensures that issues and problems which pupils may have can be immediately and effectively communicated to senior staff and others involved. A member of the senior staff is available at all times to deal with concerns or incidents, and give support if a pupil has difficulties in class.
- 3.5 Pupils show respect for their teachers and follow staff instructions. These are always imparted in a positive, non-confrontational quiet manner even when reminding pupils of inappropriate behaviour. Pupils feel free to voice opinions and ask questions both in and out of the classroom. Staff know their pupils well and are proud of their achievements; pupils respond to the atmosphere of encouragement and care.
- 3.6 Pupils are clear about school rules which they realise are in place for their benefit. They understand and support the effective rewards and sanctions system, competing for as many merits as possible to support their house and in the hope of being top scorer for the week. House loyalty is strong, leading to healthy competitiveness in games, academic work and in good behaviour. A clear anti-bullying policy is in place and pupils know bullying will not be tolerated. Swift action is taken as soon as incidents are reported, and pupils appreciate that the positive intervention used has a more direct result than punishment.
- 3.7 Child protection measures are successfully in place and all staff have been trained as required. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are documented, reviewed regularly and communicated to staff. The admissions register is up-to-date and carefully kept. Attendance is recorded electronically and the system works efficiently, with

- careful attention paid to instances of lateness and absence. Levels of attendance are satisfactory.
- 3.8 Health and safety policies are thorough and detailed; they have been prepared with awareness of and careful attention to the needs of pupils. Records are kept to show that all staff have read the documents and agree to comply with them. Emergency planning is comprehensive and risk assessments are completed for all trips, off-site and on-site games, science practical lessons and technology activities. Procedures for dealing with accidents, illness and medication are all followed and very carefully recorded. The requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act are considered carefully and appropriate planning is in place.
- 3.9 Healthy eating is encouraged and a selection of salads and fruit is available at lunchtimes as an alternative to the cooked meal. As lunchtimes are very orderly, but relaxed, they provide an excellent opportunity for social interaction amongst pupils and between staff and pupils. Opportunity for exercise is available, but this is limited. Break-times and lunch-times are both relatively short because there is little available flexibility in the timing of the beginning and end of school day which is dictated by travelling needs. The school does not have a gymnasium and although very good arrangements are made for PE lessons which take place in the playground or the neighbouring park or in local health club facilities, time spent travelling restricts time spent in physical activity. Pupils make good use of the playground at break-times and lunch-times, but in discussion and in the pupil questionnaire they expressed a desire to have timetabled PE and games extended.
- 3.10 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

- 3.11 The links with parents and the wider community which the school has established are very effective and worthwhile. The outstanding information which the school provides for its parent body creates an essential partnership between the school, parents and pupil. Significant advances have been made in this aspect since the last inspection. The links which the school establishes with the wider community are of value to the community and the school, but above all of value to the pupils who gain a sense of worth by making an important contribution to the community. The school is thus fulfilling its aims to develop and nurture self-esteem, and also to motivate its pupils towards independence in learning and everyday life.
- 3.12 Almost all parents who replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire are satisfied with the education their child receives. They are virtually unanimous that the teaching helps their child to make progress, that an appropriate range of subjects is offered, and that they are happy with the help and guidance given. They are very positive that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and values, and very definite that worthwhile help is given regarding special educational needs. The school is extremely responsive to the needs of parents and pupils. Although concern over homework was raised in the parent questionnaire, the school has provided, for some time now, considerable support by establishing a homework helpline, which is well advertised and available for queries nightly. A member of the teaching staff is on duty by a telephone every evening with a day book in which teachers have recorded all homework set that day, in order to support parents and pupils at home. A homework club exists and the school is presently developing the use of the school intranet and linking it to the website so that pupils can access school software and sites at home.

- 3.13 Support is given to pupils to enable them to make realistic choices for college or sixth-form placements. A work experience programme which is exceptionally well suited to the needs of the pupils is enjoyed by Year 10. The school offers a wide range of discussion opportunities including evenings for parents when information on the curriculum is disseminated. The recent introduction of individual curriculum maps and an annual review make sure that all parents are aware of the courses and therapy which their child is following.
- 3.14 The school does not use an individual education plan in the customary format for each pupil, but parents are thoroughly involved in and informed on the progress of their child. This is particularly facilitated by the pupil's annual review which is provided for both statemented and non-statemented pupils. The review is held in addition to a two-part termly report and an annual parent-teacher meeting.
- 3.15 The head publishes a weekly newsletter to update parents which is particularly valuable as the geographical spread of the pupils has the result that the Parent-Teacher Association remains somewhat small and informal. The annual regatta is well supported and much enjoyed.
- 3.16 Parents are provided with the required information about the school. A new prospectus is near completion. New pupils and parents receive a new-pupil pack which includes information on a wide range of policies including discipline and exclusions, curriculum, complaints and the role of the form tutor.
- 3.17 The school handles the concerns of parents with due care and this is endorsed by almost all parents. Frequent meetings and reviews allow concerns to be voiced. If the senior staff are concerned about a pupil, parents are speedily consulted, and in cases of unexplained absence, parents may be visited at home.
- 3.18 The school has an award-winning participation in a Safer Neighbourhood and Communities Project with the local police. All pupils are involved in charitable fund-raising for local, national and international causes. The school makes extensive use of local venues and facilities in PE lessons and within its activity programme. Associations with the wider community are established through overseas visits and the school is investigating ways of developing these continental links further afield.
- 3.19 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].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is a strength of the school. Since its foundation, the governors have been closely involved in setting and achieving the aims and values of the school and in providing effective oversight and guidance. As the school has grown in size, the structure and management arrangements relating to the governing body have been adapted appropriately, as recommended in the previous report.
- 4.2 A Council of Governors was constituted in 2004, and the structure of relationships between the trustees, the head, and the governors has become increasingly more formal. However, their interest in and effective oversight of the school has continued successfully. As the governors of a school which is only ten years old, there is a definite awareness, especially amongst those who are most closely involved, of their overall responsibilities for educational development and financial planning. Governors are well informed about the needs of the school and current educational thinking; they realize that to make effective educational provision they must continue to invest in staff and resources.
- 4.3 The minutes of governors' meetings indicate that there is good communication through the papers they receive and the regular contact which the chairman has with the head. An efficient and effective link between school and the governors is also established through the work of an executive director, one of the founding trustees, who cooperates closely with the head and the financial officer. Having overseen ten years of steady expansion of the premises, staff and pupil numbers, the governing body has a very good insight into the working of the school and its needs. From personal experience or their professional background and expertise, they are able to provide advice and support when necessary and the stimulus for growth and improvement.
- 4.4 The governing body is aware of its wider responsibilities and is very effective in ensuring the welfare, health and safety of the pupils.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The school has very effective leadership and management. The head, senior staff and others with delegated responsibilities work tirelessly and successfully to achieve the aims of the school. Since the previous report the leadership team has been increased; it has a broader base of background and experience, and clear line management has been established.
- 4.6 The good quality of the educational experience provided in this specialist school, and the outstanding provision for and understanding of the learning needs of its pupils, the dedicated care of the pupils and the successful fulfilment of the school's aims are all an indication of the very clear educational direction and leadership of the senior management team.
- 4.7 The needs of the pupils have been analysed in a most professional way by a team who combine significant relevant experience, total commitment to upholding the highest standards possible in their specialist field of education, great concern for the well-being of each individual pupil, and an infectious enthusiasm which communicates itself to their pupils. Priorities have been thoughtfully identified and decisions skilfully put into practice.
- 4.8 Educational standards and teaching are monitored through departmental evaluation. These evaluations form the basis of departmental development plans which link into the school development plan. Heads of department feel involved and well supported by the head and

- the senior management team. The annual appraisal scheme is seen as a positive new development, as is the ongoing evaluation and improvement of the quality of care and welfare of the pupils. Continuing professional development is encouraged and facilitated.
- 4.9 A consultative management style, good delegation and high expectations have resulted in an atmosphere where not only pupils are encouraged to do their best but all who teach, support and care for them are highly motivated and dedicated.
- 4.10 Careful attention is given to compliance with statutory requirements which are relevant to pupils with statements of special educational needs; members of the senior management team work closely with the local authorities who place pupils in the school.
- 4.11 Safe recruitment procedures are followed and appropriate checks on the suitability of staff, supply staff and governors are made in an efficient and timely process. The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers. The present newly qualified staff are being mentored and supported effectively.
- 4.12 At each pertinent level, financial resources are very well managed; pupils are taught in pleasant classrooms in a building which has been refurbished and adapted to suit their needs. Staff know that their thoughts and ideas will have a receptive hearing; for example, it was recognised that a traditional library arrangement was not ideal in this school, therefore another more appropriate library was established in the English department.
- 4.13 Resources are ample and well considered before purchase in order to ensure that they will be of most benefit to the teaching and learning, and the particular educational needs of the pupils.
- 4.14 The administration of the school is another most definite strength. Each area of administration has been carefully considered and very appropriate staff appointments have been made to ensure that all the essential record-keeping and paperwork is efficiently organised. The needs of pupils and parents are paramount and this motivates each member of staff, teaching and non-teaching, administrative, housekeeping, maintenance and catering, to offer a level of commitment and care which embodies the ethos of the school, and sets an example for pupils to follow.
- 4.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.16 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 The school remains true to the ideals of its founders and meets its aims and aspirations and the needs of all its pupils exceedingly well. Pupils are given the opportunity and encouragement to experience success and be aware of their potential. They develop self-confidence and self-esteem which gives them a sense of independence in their learning and in their everyday life. They are not daunted by the thought of public examinations and look forward positively to the next stage of their education in their new schools or colleges. The educational experience which the school provides for pupils with specific learning difficulties, in particular those with difficulties of a dyslexic nature is of good quality and the range of educational opportunities which the school curriculum offers is very carefully matched to their needs and aptitudes. The school's first aim to enable pupils to flourish, to experience success and realize their full intellectual and academic potential, is very successfully met. The teaching which is a strength of the school contributes greatly towards the school fulfilling its stated aims. It helps pupils become increasingly self-motivated in their learning and gives them strategies to enable them to overcome their difficulties and to succeed in public examinations at GCSE level, and then move on to further and higher education or vocational training. Pupils' very well-developed ICT skills also give them a certain independence in their learning and in everyday life, as do their successful and valued links with the local community through their work experience and their contribution to the safer neighbourhood project. The high quality of care for their safety and well-being given by all the adults in the school community enables pupils to acquire a sense of identity and self-belief in a safe and supportive learning environment and enables them to look forward to the future with confidence. Their personal development is enhanced by the encouragement they are given to excel in art, drama, music and sport. Such opportunities are less evident in terms of the time given to physical education in the curriculum and on occasions, the behaviour of some pupils is challenging, and they require further guidance and targets for improvement. Assessment and its use in target setting is under review.
- 5.2 The school has improved since the last inspection in many ways, it has continued to adapt to the ever-changing needs of its pupils. Since the previous inspection, larger groups have taken GCSE examinations, the curriculum has been extended and its planning is more consistent. The installation of a comprehensive wireless network has enabled very effective use of ICT and has led to more opportunities for co-operative and independent learning, as recommended in the previous report. In addition to maintaining good standards of teaching, improvements in lesson planning and the evaluation of teaching by the senior leadership team have been put in place. The high standards of pastoral care noted at the time of the previous inspection have been maintained, and in some areas extended by new initiatives. An adventure trip to France provides pupils with the experience of leadership and responding to challenge. Charitable fund-raising has increased, making the pupils more aware of the situation and plight of others both internationally and locally. Significant advances have been made in links with parents and the community. As the school has grown in size, the structure and management arrangements relating to the governing body have been adapted appropriately. The senior management of the school now has a broader base of background and experience, and clear line management has been established.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no significant weaknesses. In order to maintain its current high standards and continue to successfully meet the needs of all its pupils, it should:
1. develop consistent strategies to address the effect of challenging behaviour and provide further behaviour management training for all staff, including learning support assistants;
 2. consider ways in which time given to games and physical education within the curriculum can be extended;
 3. use the assessment information already gathered to provide data to monitor school performance further, and to provide pupil-orientated targets on pupils' curriculum maps.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 6th to 9th May 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 governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. 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

Mrs Danice Iles	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Nicola Boddam-Whetham	Head, ISA school
Dr Faye Meek	Former Head, ISA school
Mrs Susan Nebesnuick	Former Director of Studies, SHMIS school