

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

**INSPECTION OF
BLOXHAM SCHOOL**

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

9th – 12th October, 2006

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Bloxham School

Full Name of the School	Bloxham School
DfES Number	931/6002
Registered Charity Number	1076484
Address	Bloxham, Banbury, Oxfordshire OX15 4PE
Telephone Number	01295 720222
Fax Number	01295 722962
Email Address	headmaster@bloxhamschool.com
Headmaster	Mr Mark Allbrook
Chairman of Governors	Mr Barrie Hurst
Age Range	11 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	9-12 October 2006

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 has 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.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI). The CSCI report is available separately (www.csci.org.uk).

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 Bloxham is a selective boarding school which caters for girls and boys in the 11-18 age range. It was formerly a 13-18 boys' school and still has more boys than girls. Pupils enter the school at age 11, 13 and in the sixth form.
- 1.2 The school is a member of the Woodard Foundation. It is run as a separate entity and places considerable emphasis on both Christian teaching and pupils' pastoral care. Nathaniel Woodard founded eight schools throughout Britain between 1848 and 1880 and Bloxham, which had been founded as a grammar school by Philip Reginald Egerton in 1860, joined the Foundation in 1896. In 1994 the school changed its age range to take pupils aged 11 and became fully co-educational in 1998. The present headmaster was appointed in 2002.
- 1.3 The aims of the school are:
 - to provide a high quality education with an underpinning of clear Christian principles;
 - to encourage pupils to set a high standard of achievement, to respect other people, the community and the world in which they live, and through their experience of worship, religious education and the community, to come to a greater knowledge of themselves and God;
 - to remain a small boarding school and to maintain the boarding provision at the highest level;
 - to communicate all essential information to parents, to enable the relationship between the school, pupils and parents to be as fruitful as possible;
 - to provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which are fulfilling, stimulating and properly resourced.
- 1.4 The school occupies a compact site in the centre of the village of Bloxham, just outside Banbury in Oxfordshire. There are 409 pupils on roll, including 132 in the sixth form and 230 boarders. At the time of the last inspection in 2000 there were 361 pupils, most of the increase being accounted for by the recruitment of more girls. The number of boarders has also increased. Entry is by selection so that the school's intake is above average. This means that if the pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results will be above the average for all maintained secondary schools. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs and there are others, mainly pupils with dyslexia, who receive extra support in language. Thirty pupils do not have English as their first language and 15 of these receive language tuition. Many pupils live relatively close to the school and almost all come from families with a professional background.

- 1.5 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
1 st Form	Year 7
2 nd Form	Year 8
3 rd Form	Year 9
4 th Form	Year 10
5 th Form	Year 11
Lower Sixth Form	Year 12
Upper Sixth Form	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school makes sound provision for pupils to experience a broad academic curriculum. In addition, a rich range of extra-curricular activities is offered. Since the last inspection, Latin has been introduced in Years 7 and 8; there has been improved choice of General Certificate of Education (GCE) subjects, and a strengthening of the way in which the curriculum reflects the school's Christian aims and principles.
- 2.2 The curriculum allows pupils to acquire the knowledge and develop the full range of skills for success in public examinations and for their later life. The school's intention to maintain the seven-day schooling of a thriving boarding community is reflected in the timetabling of teaching and the range of the extra-curricular activities available. Pupils are appreciative of the help they receive at all hours of a long working week.
- 2.3 In Years 7 to 11 an appropriate range of courses is offered to all pupils, so allowing them to develop a broad range of literary, social, physical and technical skills. There is no timetabled drama but good opportunities for this are given through extra-curricular activities. Similarly, there is no timetabled provision for information and communication technology (ICT), except in Year 9 where an on-line course is taken. However, ICT is used in some subject lessons and all pupils from Year 10 have the use of a laptop computer. Increasing use is being made of this good provision, but the school does not ensure that all pupils are guaranteed an agreed ICT curriculum which is monitored. Exactly the same principle applies to careers education and guidance, and also to personal, social and health education (PSHE), where there is interesting provision at certain times of a pupil's career, but no guarantee of appropriate provision for all pupils throughout their stay in the school.
- 2.4 Since the last inspection, departmental schemes of work have been improved by being more precise in setting expectations of teachers. The allocation of time to teaching subjects is good, but French is allocated much more teaching time than other modern foreign languages. A revised and expanded PSHE curriculum in Years 7 and 8 includes a focus on citizenship, as well as exploring morality and ethics in accordance with the ethos of the school. The expansion of the teaching of religious studies, now taken by all as a short course in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) and also offered at GCE Advanced level (A level), reflects the school's aim to underpin the education offered with clear Christian principles. Pupils are given time for reflection in 'pause for thought' which reinforces the promotion of self-knowledge and spiritual reflection, whilst both worship and the taught curriculum also acknowledge other faiths.
- 2.5 Whilst pupils in the sixth form benefit from the many activities offered, their guarantee of a broad experience is not systematically planned. The formally taught curriculum comprises a good range of GCE level courses, and also games. The time allocated to subject teaching has been increased, with psychology and music technology offered as new options. Provision for PSHE is intermittent rather than regularly timetabled. Careers education and guidance is largely confined to planning a university application, although special events are held at the end of Year 12. Some pupils are helped to find work experience, but there is no overview of the extent of the need, nor of the school's capacity to support this. Thus, there is no guarantee that all pupils receive an experience of working in business or the local community. However, diverse activities are shared with the local church; other community service focuses largely on charity fundraising and events. There is an awareness of the need to improve the provision for careers and university applications.

- 2.6 Pupils participate in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered by teachers and visiting professionals; the majority of these focus on imaginative sporting and creative opportunities, with dance, polo and martial arts especially popular. The number of intellectual activities is somewhat limited. Other opportunities arise through membership of the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils appreciate the extensive opportunities to participate in games and school teams. Some teaching time is lost through the time-tabling of school matches against lessons in Years 7 and 8.
- 2.7 There is a well-organised course for pupils in Years 9 to 11 with dyslexia, but a narrow definition of learning difficulties means that some others requiring special provision are less well supported. Access to the course is restricted to a maximum of six paying pupils each year; these pupils do not study a modern foreign language. Extra help is available to pupils with dyslexia who are not on this course but, within the teaching of the mainstream curriculum, there is insufficient acknowledgement of individual needs. Although information on these pupils is provided, there is too little guidance for teachers. A small number of carefully selected pupils for whom English is an additional language cope well with the mainstream curriculum, supported by specialist lessons, again timetabled against modern foreign languages.
- 2.8 Higher-attaining pupils benefit from an accelerated GCSE curriculum in mathematics, French and science. A programme of extra-curricular stimulation is arranged for scholars and made available to all.
- 2.9 In completing a self-evaluation form for the inspection, the school identified the issues of PSHE and careers as being areas for further improvement.
- 2.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.11 Pupils' learning and achievements are good, in line with the school's aim to encourage pupils to set high standards. Through their studies, pupils develop a wide range of knowledge and skills which they apply effectively and with creativity. Since the last inspection, the leadership group and governors have developed an action plan to raise further the academic profile of the school and academic standards. Improvements are evident already in a number of areas.
- 2.12 The GCSE results over the past three years have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. Given the nature of the intake, this means that pupils' achievement is good. At A level, over the past three years, the school's performance has been slightly above the national average. Results at both levels have been particularly successful in art, and design technology. High standards are also achieved in the many extra-curricular activities undertaken. In recent years the girls have attained higher results than boys, in line with the national situation.
- 2.13 Recent significant achievements by the pupils include: a sports tour to South Africa involving 48 pupils; the award of performance diplomas in music to two girls; first prize for one boy in a national engineering competition; the appointment of a pupil as Oxfordshire's Lord Lieutenant's cadet; selection of two pupils for a national CCF expedition to Mount Kenya; and outstanding teams in boys' and girls' hockey, including national and regional selections.
- 2.14 Pupils' skills and attitudes for work and study are good. They are articulate, and converse confidently with their peers and with adults. In addition to work in class, opportunities for debating and drama foster this confidence. Their written work is for the most part well presented, clear and fluent, showing command of vocabulary and technical terms.

This is evident in the wide range of imaginative topics tackled in English at all levels. Some of the work in pupils' files is well organised, but this is not always the case and a point for future improvement.

- 2.15 The newly opened library at the heart of the school has been established as part of the school's programme to develop a culture of reading in order to enhance academic achievement. This gracious, well-stocked building provides rich opportunities for reading and private study. Younger pupils are encouraged through the 'Readathon' scheme and the use of the school bookshop to develop the habit of reading for pleasure. The use of the library is clearly developing strongly.
- 2.16 Mathematical skills are well developed throughout the school and are evident in other subjects, such as geography and business studies. By the end of Year 9 virtually all pupils have acquired the ICT skills required of the external course taken. Pupils use ICT in the learning of some subjects, such as mathematics, science, history and English, although there is scope for further development in this area. From Year 10 they also use the laptops issued to them in their studies, some making effective use of them in organising their notes and work.
- 2.17 When given the opportunity in class, pupils can express themselves clearly, listen to others' opinions and form their own views. However, such opportunities are not always provided in class. They have helpful work habits, settle quickly to their studies and work co-operatively in pairs and groups. This is seen routinely in modern languages, in oral practice and in role-play, and in A level theatre studies. They are particularly good at helping any fellow pupil in class. For the most part, pupils enjoy the challenges of their work and the sense of achievement that follows.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.18 **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is outstanding and one of the strengths of the school**, so ensuring that it fulfils its aim related to its Christian foundation. **Pupils are confident, caring and thoughtful.**
- 2.19 **The spiritual life at Bloxham is excellent.** The role of the chaplaincy is central to the spiritual provision in school. It supports and challenges the spiritual development of pupils regardless of their faith and many spoke of their real appreciation of the help given to them. The chapel is a centre for prayer, reflection and thanksgiving for pupils of all faiths. Pupils gain from the opportunities for traditional worship provided by whole-school communion and special services throughout the year. They are able to lead prayers and also take a major role in the organisation of services. Pupils throughout the school expressed their enjoyment of services and felt privileged to be a part of this spiritual community. About 35 pupils are prepared for confirmation each year. Pupils and staff speak very highly of 'pause for thought', which allows time for quiet reflection on a spiritual or moral issue, often led by pupils. Pupils develop a sense of caring for others by the use of a prayer board where they can add messages requesting prayers for someone, or something they care about. In English, there is a focus on canonical literature and in other lessons pupils are able to reflect on the wonder of nature or mankind, from supernova in physics to some exceptional art and sculpture on display. In a religious studies lesson they investigated a moral issue in a lively, thought-provoking way. The school itself has tranquil surroundings and beautiful buildings which also encourages calm and reflection.
- 2.20 Pupils' response to moral education in the school is strong, not just in lessons but as part of the Bloxham experience, with pupils and teachers setting high expectations of themselves and each other. In PSHE, religious studies and biology pupils cope well with ethical dilemmas. For example, a Year 8 group discussed 'Should children with disabilities be taught in special schools' and did so with passion, empathy and good common sense.

Also, 'pause for thought' has recently included the topics of warfare, euthanasia and genetics, and a Year 13 lesson considered the moral values in sport when competitiveness and ambition can lead to exhaustion. They are taught about the law and to distinguish right from wrong within their PSHE lessons.

- 2.21 **Pupils develop well socially; they are confident and considerate. The courtesy shown by all members of the Bloxham community towards each other and to visitors is a strongly evident.** Rules are respected and pupils were seen to support each other as a matter of course, both within lessons and around the school. Pupils are able to talk and listen to their peers and they spoke of their appreciation of talking about their own personal concerns. They gain knowledge of citizenship and of public institutions through their lessons in PSHE and can appreciate the different needs in local communities and overseas through charity work in school and activities with the local church.
- 2.22 Opportunities to develop leadership skills are available in many different activities, such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, the CCF, leading prayers and services, the work of school and house prefects, and representing sports teams.
- 2.23 Pupils' cultural development is strong because of the many valuable activities available to them. In religious studies pupils of all faiths share their beliefs and explain their practices. The religious studies curriculum also provides some cross-faith education; for example, Year 8 pupils have a Judaism day. **Pupils from overseas are welcomed and settle in harmony with others.** Children from developing countries are considered, not only financially and spiritually, but also through the regular exchange of letters.
- 2.24 An appreciation of our national culture is fostered through a variety of activities from music, drama and sculpture to visits to the ballet and a talk on the macroeconomics of oil. Pupils enjoy exchanges and visits to many countries. The scholars' society organises intellectual activities which are open to all pupils.
- 2.25 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.26 The quality of teaching is good and results in pupils of all abilities achieving well. About two-thirds of the lessons seen were good or better. Some excellent lessons and some unsatisfactory lessons were also seen. The overwhelming majority of parents and pupils declared themselves satisfied with the teaching. The recommendation in the last report called for greater challenge and more emphasis on independent learning for the pupils; a start has been made in this direction but more work is required.
- 2.27 All teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subjects. They are keen to share their enthusiasm with the pupils. As a result, the pupils respond promptly and responsibly. Lessons are well planned and good use is made of time, with pupils applying themselves and making good progress in the development of knowledge and skills. In many cases the pupils are active in lessons through reading, presentations, role-play, pair and group work. However, some teaching does not allow pupils enough scope to think for themselves, to show initiative, or to find their own solutions to problems. The school intends to improve the range of teaching styles used as part of its recognised development.
- 2.28 Both teachers and pupils have access to very good resources. Materials for teaching and learning are in good supply. There has been heavy investment in ICT and effective use of this is beginning to be made in some lessons, such as science and mathematics. It is the school's intention to monitor the use of the pupils' laptops and to maximise their potential.

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- 2.29 Although pupils with special educational needs are identified and classroom teachers are informed about their difficulties, little specific provision is made for them in lessons. Teachers are, however, regarded by the pupils as very caring and supportive. The teaching of pupils with English as an additional language is effective and helps them to access the curriculum.
- 2.30 The school has very full information on pupils' performance in public examinations over the years in relation to national norms. Teachers regularly assess, and report on, pupils' effort and attainment through the use of 'orders' and the assessment of pupils' progress is thorough, although there is less evidence about the use of assessment to plan subsequent work. Work is regularly marked; the best marking is detailed, helpful and gives pupils thoughts for improvement, but some is perfunctory. Classes are orderly, with teachers encouraging pupils to behave responsibly and succeeding.
- 2.31 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 quality of pastoral care is excellent and is underpinned by the school's clear Christian principles and aims.
- 3.2 **The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is outstanding.** Teachers know their pupils very well and are prepared to give them generous individual attention. The organisation and structure of the system for pastoral care are highly effective, including those that promote good discipline and behaviour. Pupils are very supportive of each other and there is a strong anti-bullying culture. Any problem that arises is dealt with fairly and effectively. Good self-discipline and behaviour are promoted in all areas of the school's life. This is helped by the clear policy on rewards and sanctions. Pupils speak highly of the care and guidance they receive and the friendly atmosphere which pervades the school. They feel they can easily take any concerns they may have to house staff, tutors and the chaplain. Particularly impressive is the high regard in which the system where pupils listen to their peers is viewed, and the sense of responsibility for others engendered by this process is evident. Prefects also willingly offer their contribution to the happiness and effective running of the community.
- 3.3 Bloxham aims to secure its future as a small boarding school. To this end it looks after the boarders well, providing accommodation ranging from good to very good. The pupils expressed their appreciation for the facilities provided for them. Other buildings also contain some additional social areas, such as the very popular internet café in the new library. The catering is of a high standard and the school responds to issues raised by the pupils through the food committee.
- 3.4 There is an effective system for child protection with the chaplain acting as the designated officer. All staff receive appropriate training. Checks with the Criminal Records Bureau are efficiently carried out and there is a code of practice to ensure other appropriate checks are undertaken. The details about ChildLine are incorporated within the calendar issued to every pupil. Since the last inspection, the school has also adopted a more pro-active programme of in-service training on pastoral care, both for new staff and for long-serving staff, ranging from how a tutor might best develop each individual to more specific topics, such as dealing with a pupil who has an eating disorder.
- 3.5 Health and safety is taken very seriously and considerable time and money have been spent to ensure a safe environment for the staff and pupils. The school has its own consultant on fire issues, as well as liaising closely with the local fire service. Regular fire practices are carried out and recorded, and residential staff receive appropriate training in fire and safety procedures.
- 3.6 The school provides excellent guidance on the health and safety of pupils on school trips with appropriate risk assessments. Risk assessments are also undertaken in all boarding houses, in the academic departments and for any extra-curricular activities. Concerns raised in the last inspection about lighting around the campus have been met.
- 3.7 The medical centre is an excellent facility and the school doctor is very involved in the life of the school. Pupils also have access to a confidential counsellor. The school has a first-aid policy and has responded well to the recommendation in the previous inspection to ensure some of the staff are trained to a higher level in first-aid.
- 3.8 The school is enabling physical improvements for the disabled in response to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.

- 3.9 The school meets almost all of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) preserve the contents of the admission register for a period of three years [Regulation 3.(9)].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.10 The school has an effective partnership with parents which reflects its intended aim of enabling good communication and fruitful relationships. Links with the local community are promoted well and those with the wider community are effective. Since the last inspection, communication with parents has improved by the use of email and interim assessments of pupils ('orders') are now sent home to parents.
- 3.11 Parents are very happy with the education and support provided for their children. They are particularly pleased with the quality of teaching, the extra-curricular activities provided, the values promoted by the school and the quality of boarding provision. A minority of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the reports on their children and their encouragement to be involved in the life of the school. The inspection team supports the parents' view that reports lack some detail, but feels that parents have opportunities for involvement, both at whole-school and house level. For example, they are invited to the founder's day lunch, the carol service, and the annual house dance, and are also welcome at house plays and other social occasions.
- 3.12 The parents' handbook is a valuable source of information about the ethos, structures, policies and procedures of the school. Use is made of the website to provide valuable information on fixtures, events and news stories, in addition to details of courses, options and other academic matters.
- 3.13 Parents' meetings to discuss progress are held once a year; for Years 8, 9 and 10 these take place in the summer term. Parents receive a written report each term, a short report in the term when a parents' meeting is held, and a full report in each of the other two terms. Parents of pupils in Year 7 are invited in to school to discuss their child's first set of assessments. Whilst some reports are good, particularly those in the sixth form, there is too much variation in the content and quality. Too few give a clear evaluation of what the pupils can do, or not do, and what they need to consider to improve. Reports tend to concentrate on pupils' attitude rather than their achievement.
- 3.14 The school's complaints procedure meets obligations. Formal complaints to the headmaster are very rare. Most concerns are handled at a house level where systems of recording significant conversations and emails have been put in place. The school is aware of the view of a minority of parents that some concerns are not uniformly well managed and has agreed to monitor practice.
- 3.15 Links with the local community are promoted well, particularly with the church. For example, pupils, staff and parents are involved in fundraising events for the 'village church windows appeal.' By working with a local young homeless project, pupils are developing social links with the wider community. School facilities such as the swimming pool, sports centre, tennis courts, all-weather playing surfaces and the school hall are regularly booked by local clubs and schools. Members of the public can use the facilities of the multi-gym.
- 3.16 The school also takes part in a scheme to sponsor children in third world countries and pupils compile Christmas boxes for disadvantaged children abroad. Sixth-form pupils have no regular, planned programme of community service.

- 3.17 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

- 3.18 The boarding provided within the school is excellent. It makes the school a happy place, thus fulfilling its aim to maintain boarding provision at the highest level. Improvements to the boarding accommodation have been made since the last inspection.
- 3.19 The boarding houses are central to the life of the school, especially as day pupils are members of them and, in the case of pupils in Year 9 and above, attend the school until 9.00 pm. The houses enable the school to offer a caring environment which is underpinned by the clear Christian principles emanating from the school's ethos and the activities associated with the chapel. They are sufficiently small to be intimate and the staff in charge endeavour to create a homely and friendly environment where pupils can feel safe, secure and comfortable. The tutor system is strong and pupils value the care and individual guidance they receive. New pupils to a house, both from within the school and from outside, value the mentor system which has helped them settle in quickly. Pupils are loyal to their house and proud of it. They are pleased with the range of facilities open to them.
- 3.20 An extensive programme of extra-curricular activities is provided. The pupils enjoy using the extensive facilities of the school and participating in musical, dramatic and sporting activities. Each house organises its own activities, but there is also a central programme of events for weekends, ranging from paintball and cinema trips to more extended outings to Alton Towers and the art museums in Oxford. House competitions are particularly appreciated by the pupils and add to the strong sense of community within the school.
- 3.21 The standard of boarding accommodation and facilities varies from good to very good. Houses are well-equipped with kitchens, common rooms and social areas. Study bedrooms provide very good space for private study as a complement to the excellent new library. The premises are well-maintained, clean and well-furnished. The rolling programme of improvements ensures that standards are not only maintained, but further improved.
- 3.22 All housemasters and housemistresses have handbooks which have been made more uniform in their content since the last inspection, whilst retaining important aspects of individuality. There are some variations between the houses in terms of their expectations and their rules, but often this is related to the geography of the buildings concerned. The school endeavours to make sure that there is uniformity on most issues and to this end the house staff meet on a weekly basis. The supportive and collaborative nature of this meeting reflects the strong corporate support for the school's ethos.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Through very good governance the school has developed well since the last inspection. Since then the governing body, called the school council, has made significant changes, not least the appointment of a new headmaster and well-planned, important additions to the school's building provision, for example, the addition of a new library, and the current improvements for art and music. The chairman of the council knows the school well and he and his fellow governors have been effective in overseeing and enabling these improvements. Regular meetings of the school council take place; the full council is served by a finance and general purposes committee and the scope of the council has been recently expanded by forming two sub-committees, on marketing and academic matters.
- 4.2 In recent years the governors have become more involved in the daily life of the school, visiting lessons and having presentations from members of staff on aspects of school provision to further their understanding. This has enabled them to form good relations with staff and to provide support and challenge.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.3 The leadership of the headmaster is highly effective and he is ably supported by his senior staff. The success of the school's leadership is reflected in the quality of much of what the school does. Responsibility is delegated, team-work is encouraged and decisions are effective. This has led to good provision in all areas of the school's current work, so ensuring that the aims of the school are met. Systems for effective management are in operation. Appropriate groups meet and discuss school development within a positive and democratic atmosphere. Needs are analysed and priorities set through the school development plan, which is comprehensive but does not define specific targets with dates and personnel responsible. Senior staff form the leadership group, but there are other groups that consider pastoral and academic matters. Teachers feel that their views are considered and that they are well supported by the leadership group.
- 4.4 The financial management of the school is very good. The bursar facilitates good practice and keeps the headmaster and governors fully informed through his reports to the finance and general purposes committee, which in turn briefs the school council on financial matters. Careful and prudent financial management has allowed the school to invest significantly in improving its facilities. This has resulted in pupils having very good well-maintained accommodation and teachers having modern and plentiful resources. All this is highly significant in affecting the quality of education.
- 4.5 The management of almost all departments is at least satisfactory and in many it is good. The management of the sixth-form lacks a wider vision of what constitutes a broadly-based curriculum.
- 4.6 Careful monitoring ensures that the leadership group is well informed about aspects of the school's provision. For example, the director of studies facilitates the evaluation of the work of academic departments. This includes a review of teaching and consideration of the departments' examination results, and leads to useful reflection and the setting of targets for improvement for heads of department. There is a positive and honest approach to self-evaluation.
- 4.7 Efforts are being made by the leadership group to improve the quality of teaching further. All teachers have been observed and are expected to observe others teaching.

Academic appraisals are carried out on all departments and teachers are required to set themselves specific targets for improvement. A purposeful start has been made to this ambitious programme.

- 4.8 Staff who are new to the school, or to teaching, are very well supported through the use of an induction programme; this includes regular meetings, lesson observations and targets for improvement. New staff are valued and integrated well into the life of the school. Further support for all staff is given through a useful and comprehensive appraisal system, which has been redeveloped under the present headmaster.
- 4.9 Some aspects of the school could be improved further by identifying the best practice and ensuring that this is applied consistently across the school. There are such examples in the reports written for parents, departmental handbooks and the quality of teaching.
- 4.10 The administration of the school is good, resulting in smooth day-to-day operations.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Bloxham School has strengths in all areas of its work and is successful in meeting its aims. The school prides itself on creating a small and friendly community and in this it succeeds very well. It is particularly strong in its provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, the quality of boarding education, and pupils' pastoral care, welfare, health and safety. This is the result of highly effective leadership by the headmaster, a strong sense of corporate identity, and well-developed governance and management. As a consequence of good teaching, pupils achieve well in the GCSE and at GCE A level. Pupils are very well behaved and have a positive attitude to learning.
- 5.2 Areas needing further attention include ensuring that all pupils receive a guaranteed entitlement in careers education and guidance, PSHE and ICT. The reports sent to parents lack consistency in their quality.
- 5.3 Good progress has been made since the last inspection of 2000, particularly in providing pupils with high quality facilities, such as a new library.
- 5.4 The school complies with almost all of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils, but does not at present meet Standard 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils).

Next Steps

- 5.5 The school has no significant weaknesses, but to improve from its good base it should:
1. widen the range of teaching styles used so that pupils have more opportunities to show initiative and to take responsibility;
 2. ensure that the curriculum is planned and audited so that all pupils are guaranteed appropriate provision in careers education and guidance, personal and social education, and ICT;
 3. broaden the curriculum for pupils in the sixth form, through such activities as work experience and community service;
 4. ensure that pupils with learning difficulties are given effective support in lessons;
 5. improve the quality of reports sent to parents so that it is clear what their children know and what they need to do to improve.
- 5.6 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) preserve the contents of the admission register for a period of three years [Regulation 3 (9)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 9 to 12 October 2006. 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 chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the medical centre. 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.
- 6.2 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of three Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspectors over three days.

List of Inspectors

J Tierney	Reporting Inspector.
A Silcock	Former Headmaster, HMC school.
A Price	Staff Development Co-ordinator, HMC school.
G Best	Headmaster, HMC school.
E Bye	Deputy Head, HMC school.
B Edwards	Head of Sixth Form, HMC school.