

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

GREAT WALSTEAD SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

March 20th – 23rd 2006

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Great Walstead School

Full Name of the School	Great Walstead School
DfES Number	938/6203
Registered Charity Number	307002
Address	East Mascalls Lane, Lindfield, West Sussex RH16 2QL.
Telephone Number	01444 483528
Fax Number	01444 482122
Email Address	admin@greatwalstead.co.uk
Headmaster	H.J. Lowries
Chairman of Governors	M.J. Olliff-Lee
Age Range	2½ - 13
Gender	Girls and boys
Inspection Dates	20th – 23rd March 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 Great Walstead School is set in its own spacious park and woodlands outside the village of Lindfield, close to the commuter town of Haywards Heath in West Sussex. The school caters for boys and girls from 2½ to 13 years, the youngest of whom attend part-time, and it provides a popular boarding facility during the week.
- 1.2 The school was founded as a boys' boarding school, in Enfield, Middlesex, in 1925, and moved to its present site two years later. In 1960, day boys were accepted, and in 1977, the first girls joined the school. The handsome Victorian mansion, which formed its original core, now houses the administrative offices, form rooms for the oldest pupils and the boarding accommodation. Over the years, the school's increase in numbers has been matched by thoughtfully-planned additions to the academic, recreational and ancillary accommodation. The latest of these developments is a performing arts centre adjacent to, and augmenting, the facilities of the chapel. Walstead House, the early 17th-century farmhouse of the estate, where the boarders used to live, stands nearby, and is now the headmaster's house. The present head retires this year after 15 years in post, having run a boarding house with his wife for three years before that.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, there were 412 pupils in the school, of whom 176 were girls and 236 boys, and up to 44 pupils were occasional boarders. 61 children out of 109 in the Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) were part-time. The rest of the pre-prep (Years 1 and 2), and the juniors (Years 3 and 4) comprised 85 and 89 pupils respectively, and the seniors (Years 5 to 8), 129. Parents' backgrounds are a broad mixture from the local professions and businesses, with a sizeable proportion commuting to London, and a strong connection with the airline industry at Gatwick.
- 1.4 Entry to the Foundation Stage is non-selective, and pupils entering at Year 1 and above are informally assessed to ensure that they can comfortably fit in to their age group from both academic and social standpoints. Results of standardised tests taken in all year groups show that the pupils occupy the full ability range, but that their average ability is above the national average. Within this context, however, about one-fifth of pupils receive specialised support for a range of learning difficulties, although none has a statement of special educational need, nor English as an additional language.
- 1.5 Pupils proceed to senior schools, which are mainly local, via entry examinations at 13+, although a small proportion, mostly girls, take examinations to enter their senior schools at 11+.
- 1.6 The foundation of the school has a strong Christian element embodied in its mission statement, which has been maintained by the four successive headmasters in its history. Amongst the school's aims are the promotion of hard work and high achievement in a happy, well resourced, atmosphere, where moral and spiritual values are a foundation for life, and where each child is valued as a very special individual.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school, as is the practice of the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The education provided by the school is good and fully supports its aims and philosophy; the breadth of provision and its enrichment, noted in the previous report, have been maintained. The Christian, caring environment aspired to in the school's mission statement is apparent in its daily life and work. The specific aims of the school, to encourage hard work and high achievement, are met through the clear commitment of teachers to pupils as individuals. The school itself is a cohesive community which provides a curriculum, facilities and extensive grounds that offer its pupils the opportunity to develop their talents through a wide range of interests.
- 2.2 The school's curriculum is broad and generally well-balanced, and makes a significant contribution to pupils' well-rounded development. In the lower forms, it is appropriately aligned to the National Curriculum, and then progressively takes note of the requirements of the Common Entrance examination to independent schools. The curriculum is enhanced by French from Reception upwards, information and communication technology (ICT) as a separate subject from Year 1, and Latin, which is begun in Year 5. Design and technology operate on a carousel system, so that elements of cookery, needlework, pottery, drama and technology are all suitably included. Sporting and aesthetic subjects are given good recognition within the timetable. The concept of the 'outside classroom' is very well promoted in the Foundation Stage, and all year groups enjoy educational and recreational benefits by learning and playing in the extensive woodland and grounds, which the school has developed as a valuable resource.
- 2.3 The school has a commitment to equality of access for all pupils, and extensive, related documentation, including well-developed schemes of work and policy documents for each subject support this. Curricular development is good and well-organised. Planning takes place through a system of regular, weekly meetings, which take account of all age groups within the school. Additionally, heads of department carry out a thorough annual audit, which identifies needs and substantially contributes to educational planning for the next year.
- 2.4 The taught curriculum of all age groups is enriched by talks from visitors to the school, and by educational trips and visits away, to historical sites and for longer periods to France. Pupils' personal development is further enhanced by the very good opportunities provided for them to pursue their broader interests in activities and clubs organised outside the daily timetable. The range of musical activities offered is a strength of the school, and the importance of speech and drama is acknowledged by the school's participation in grade examinations, and also a performing arts week, which allows a large number of pupils to display their achievements and talents. Chess, ballet, extra art and team fixtures add further to the out-of-class opportunities on offer.
- 2.5 The school makes very good provision for the identification and support of pupils with learning difficulties through its Learning Support Department. The school's policy is firmly based on the code of practice, and it is thoroughly reviewed annually. All pupils in Reception are assessed, using a respected commercial system, with an emphasis on early recognition and support. If appropriate, an individual education plan (IEP) is then drawn up for a pupil, which is reviewed termly and linked to meetings with teachers and parents, who are suitably involved at an early stage. Communication between the department and teachers is very good. Teachers are kept continuously informed about pupils on the register via the

school's intranet, and through weekly meetings with the special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) and her assistant. In addition, an agenda item at every staff meeting allows any issues arising from particular pupils to be raised. Although support for those with IEPs is generally provided by considerately arranged withdrawal with one of seven part-time members of the department, a recent very successful innovation has been the introduction of learning support assistants in class. Part of their work is to encourage pupils to feel secure in the mainstream classroom, and confident in applying strategies and techniques, which they have learned in the department itself. A group session is also held weekly in Year 1 to develop pupils' essential skills, based on a modern, well respected system.

- 2.6 Pupils leave Great Walstead well prepared for the next stage of their education. Many will have visited their future senior schools in their final year, and parents are helped to understand the next stage of education through meetings held at Great Walstead with the heads of local senior schools. Senior pupils at the school are further prepared for the responsibilities of adult life in their appointment as prefects and monitors, in which they are helped to understand the duties and responsibilities of leadership, and the skills needed for mediation.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 The quality of pupils' learning and achievements has improved since the last inspection, and are in line with the school's aims "to encourage hard work and high achievement in a happy atmosphere". Throughout the school, pupils' achievements are consistently good in relation to their ages and abilities in a wide variety of activities, both in and out of class. No significant difference was seen in the relative attainment of pupils in different classes or subjects, or between pupils of different abilities, and all were equally willing to apply themselves conscientiously to the tasks set.
- 2.9 Pupils make good progress in developing their skills and understanding in all subjects and activities. As they move up the school, they are increasingly confident in using them to improve their attainment. In a Year 7 French lesson, learning and using new vocabulary, pupils were bold and not afraid to make mistakes; they approached the task with enthusiasm and evident enjoyment. Pupils appreciate the stimulation of original material in creating their own work, in art for example, where they paint 'in the style of', or in the high standard of writing seen in Year 4, where pupils' letters and poems based on the events of 1605, produced a real sense of historical period and tension. The annual creative writing competition encourages all pupils, of whatever ability, to 'try their luck', and the results are very good. Pupils' aptitude and enthusiasm for public performance are seen in the numbers taking awards in speech and drama, and music. An excellent example was seen during the inspection, in the very high standard achieved by the juniors in their 'circus' show. Pupils' awareness of their own, and others' standards, and their ability to apply criteria fairly are very good. In a Year 8 physical education (PE) lesson, pupils assessed their own and others' performance in a series of interval training activities, the programmes for which they had devised themselves.
- 2.10 Pupils are very well prepared academically for their next stage of education. Over the last three years, all have achieved success in gaining entry to the senior schools of their first choice, through Common Entrance and other entry examinations. Additionally, an average of nearly three-fifths of leavers at the end of Year 8 have won scholarships to these schools, both academic, and for music, art, drama and sport.

- 2.11 Pupils' literacy skills are good; they are confident in using them, and clearly enjoy it. The development of these skills begins well in the Foundation Stage. In writing about Mothering Sunday, Reception children used well-formed handwriting and high-frequency words were spelt correctly. Pupils throughout the school speak confidently, and listen well in lessons, so that as they grow older their discussions in oral sessions are constructive and fluent. The standard of their reading is also good. In a Year 3 English lesson about myths and legends, pupils read with understanding, to find evidence by inference and deduction, of How the Squirrel got Its Stripes.
- 2.12 Pupils' numeracy skills are also built upon strong foundations, and pupils progress well, so that, for example, by the time they are in Years 7 and 8, they are very competent in manipulating algebraic formulae and use circle properties with confidence. Their numeracy skills are frequently well applied in other subjects, such as in geography, for example when reading temperatures from thermometers, or using compasses and following grid references. Pupils undertake their own investigative work successfully. In science, pupils in Year 3 undertook an investigation shining light through different materials, to see which were opaque, transparent or translucent. Pupils also make very good use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum for investigative or original work.
- 2.13 Pupils develop competent skills and positive attitudes for work and study. They have good relationships with each other and their teachers, and they show enthusiasm for their work. They are articulate, reasoning and arguing clearly, and expressing themselves confidently and succinctly, as in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, where they used clues on cards to produce a scale drawing of a garden. The good standard of co-operative work, which exists throughout the school, also helped them to work out the order in which the cards could be used most productively. Pupils listen and work well independently, including taking notes. Their personal organisation is good. Presentation of work is generally of a high quality, although standards deteriorate a little in some subjects when pupils are working frequently on printed work sheets. Pupils arrive promptly to lessons, and settle quickly and quietly to work. They concentrate well when given a difficult task, as seen in a Year 4 art lesson, making masks, where they persevered with the difficult task of ensuring the framework would be strong enough to take the heavy skin of plaster of Paris.
- 2.14 Pupils' standards in out-of-class activities are always good and frequently excellent, and they participate in these with enthusiasm. In music examinations, and those for speech and drama, a great proportion pass at the highest levels, and pupils also gain success in regional and national competitions, or perform in prestigious ensembles such as the IAPS orchestra. Pupils excel at chess, where the school has one national and five county players, of whom four are champions. In sport, too, pupils shine both in teams and as individuals representing their school in a variety of disciplines, for example at a national level in fencing, when playing for the county at cricket, and as academy representatives for football and rugby.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.15 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is outstanding, and this, especially in its social aspects, presents an improvement on the already good standards found in the last inspection. The school's aims to lay "a strong moral and spiritual foundation for life, to enable all pupils to become responsible and caring members of the community" are very well met.
- 2.16 Pupils' spiritual development is extremely good. It is fostered in a number of ways that are linked to the school's Christian ethos and values. In regular chapel services and assemblies, pupils reflect on, and explore, the spiritual aspects of life. In a senior school chapel service,

pupils thought about forgiveness, and in a Foundation Stage assembly, they offered suggestions about making a 'fresh start' after considering the theme of Easter and new life. The fostering of pupils' spiritual values is extended through the taught curriculum. In religious education (RE) and personal, social and health education lessons (PSHE), they are helped to understand themselves and their emotions; they develop the clear ideas that everyone is different, and that people have different values and beliefs. The school provides good insights into other faiths, so that pupils know about Divali, or Chinese new year celebrations. In a Year 5 art lesson, pupils were encouraged to explore ideas about themselves and their relationships in preparation for their compositions, and in their original writing for history, pupils in Year 4 empathised with the lives, attitudes and beliefs of ancient Greeks. Pupils' appreciation of the world around them and their delight in it are positively fostered by the school in exploiting its woodland areas. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 spoke of how they enjoyed making secret camps in the woods, and the inspectors were impressed with the respect shown by different groups for each other's creations.

- 2.17 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They know the difference between right and wrong, and understand that, for example, bullying will not be tolerated. They appreciate very well that if people are to live together in harmony there must be rules, and they respect the Golden Rules and the Code of Conduct, which are displayed in their form rooms. Staff are very good role models in the way they treat pupils, so that the ethos of mutual trust and respect between staff and pupils is very strong. During the school day, as a matter of course, pupils support each other well and respect each other's feelings; they have a very good appreciation of intangible attributes, such as forgiveness, honesty and respect. As part of the PSHE curriculum, they have opportunities to discuss topics such as modern moral dilemmas, peer-pressure and substance abuse, government and democracy. They are also given opportunities to show concern and compassion for those less fortunate than themselves in practical ways, through their fund-raising for charity, such as the rebuilding of a school in Sri Lanka after the tsunami, or through supporting a Bolivian child through the Tear Fund.
- 2.18 Pupils develop extremely well socially, and as soon as they start at school, community life is emphasised. They learn to share equipment, to wait for their turns to speak in discussions and to value others' opinions and ideas. Pupils become increasingly aware of the benefits achieved in working co-operatively with others, in plays, sports teams and musical activities for instance; the residential trip to France and the leaver' week in Wales support and promote their maturing social skills. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to accept responsibility, and they do so eagerly. Younger ones take turns in delivering the daily register to the office, and in Years 3 and 4, pupils enjoy being lunch orderlies or in helping to serve and clear away afterwards. Pupils appreciate that as representatives on the school council they can have an effect upon the way the school is run, for example in having a muddy area of path spread with gravel. Prefects are expected to set high standards, and they take their duties very seriously, having formally accepted their responsibilities in a chapel service.
- 2.19 Pupils' cultural development is noteworthy; the breadth of the curriculum provides very good opportunities for them to study both their own cultural heritage and the diversity of others. Pupils appreciate the opportunities they have to take part in dramatic productions and concerts, or in the public speaking competition. The school provides regular opportunities for exploration of other customs, languages, music or art. In a Year 8 music lesson, pupils demonstrated their knowledge from other periods and other cultures. The French exchange visit, and the South African cricket tour are further examples of the valuable experiences pupils have of other modern societies. Visitors to the school also extend the cultural experience through all age groups; for example, in the Nursery, children

enjoyed looking at a kimono and some Indian clothes brought by a parent. Often, all these experiences are exemplified in vivid classroom displays of pupils' work.

- 2.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.21 Teaching throughout the school is good overall, and it fully promotes the school's aim to encourage hard work in a happy atmosphere. In a quarter of lessons seen, the teaching was outstanding, which is a notable improvement since the last inspection. However, although educational documentation sufficiently covers various aspects of teaching, and subject policies include approaches to it at some length, no single document specifically draws together the school's practice.
- 2.22 Teachers have high expectations and provide challenges that are well matched to the ages and abilities of all pupils, including those identified as requiring learning support, so that they effectively build upon their existing knowledge and understanding. Lessons are well planned and linked to subject schemes of work; they are taken at a brisk pace, with well-judged variety and timing of activities and strategies, so that pupils' interest and enthusiasm are effectively maintained. In the most successful, the promotion of pupils' thinking and reasoning for themselves is well-managed, as in a Year 4 geography lesson, considering sound pollution produced by traffic, where pupils' individual research was very well motivated, and led to a clearly increased understanding of environmental issues. Because teachers have good knowledge of their subjects, they take advantage of incidental opportunities to broaden the scope of a topic, and so deepen and broaden pupils' interest and understanding. In the best lessons seen, learning objectives were clearly explained and instructions anticipated possible difficulties or problems, as seen in a PE lesson where Year 5 were learning the complicated skills and techniques of volleyball. Because of the good quality of teaching they receive, pupils of all ages are well-behaved and motivated, and their relationships with each other and their teachers are very good.
- 2.23 Teachers use well-chosen resources of good quality, and some produce their own to a high standard; these are very well matched to the requirements of their lessons. However, in some lessons an overuse of worksheets limits the opportunities for the development of pupils' independent learning and extended writing, and the more able pupils are not sufficiently challenged. Teachers make good use of the school's ICT facilities, such as the interactive whiteboards in most classrooms, or the ICT suites, and of multi-purpose facilities such as the chapel or sports hall. In their use of the school's outdoor environment, particularly its woods, teachers also acknowledge an important part of the educational experience which the school can provide, and which supports and promotes its aim to make use of the country environment.
- 2.24 The good quality of the school's assessment was noted at the last inspection, and its development has continued with the aim of making the best and most appropriate use of improved tests and of electronic methods for analysing, storing and accessing the results. The school recognises the value of tests in establishing individual's academic potential, and identifying possible learning difficulties at an early age. Teachers' formal assessment is integral to planning in the Foundation Stage, where the school establishes a clear baseline assessment, using well respected tests. In Reception, all children are assessed diagnostically, and their progress is continually monitored by the stepping stones profile to the Early Learning Goals. In Years 1 to 8, the school uses standardised tests to monitor basic skills such as spelling and reading ages, and tests linked to National Curriculum targets, to

measure progress and to assist subject curricular planning. In Years 4 and 7, the school has recently begun to use commercially produced standardised tests, which are also compatible with electronic interpretation and storage systems, so that data for all pupils is beginning to be available on the school network, and pupils' differing abilities can be easily identified and their progress properly monitored. At present the system is used in mathematics and English to inform planning, and to help target setting.

- 2.25 The school's assessment, recording and reporting policy has been carefully reviewed, and contains a very full and clear section on marking. A scrutiny of pupils' books during the inspection showed that teachers are not consistently following the policy, and although the school itself has recently reviewed samples of work, it is not made clear how marking is monitored to ensure teachers' compliance. However, the best marking demonstrates a genuine personal interest in pupils' work; it praises, raises self-esteem and sets targets for future progress, which are well-matched to pupils' abilities. Notably good practice in some subjects involves the use of self or peer-assessment, and pupils' own target setting, complemented by teachers' comments. In discussion, Year 7 pupils said that they found this system was particularly helpful.
- 2.26 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 has built upon the good quality of its pastoral care, support and guidance for all pupils identified at the last inspection, so that it is now an excellent factor in promoting their well-being and happiness, security and confidence. The quality of care fully supports the school's aim, "To value each child as a very special individual".
- 3.2 Staff know their pupils well and relationships between them are mutually respectful and trusting. Pupils say that they are absolutely certain to whom they can turn if they have a problem, and that they are confident of a sympathetic ear and helpful support. Additionally, the high quality of staff attitudes and communication with each other positively encourage very good social behaviour amongst pupils; pupils enjoy being together and are tolerant of each other's backgrounds and preferences. The arrangements for the daily care and support of staff for their pupils are of high quality. In the Foundation Stage, pre-prep and junior departments pupils are supported by staff working as a team, and by their class teachers, and in Years 5 upwards they are allocated a tutor in addition, whom they meet at regular intervals. The tutors themselves meet together once a term with the deputy head and the head of girls, which ensures coherence and consistency in policy.
- 3.3 The school's written policy on behaviour is an all-inclusive document which sets out clear guidelines for staff and provides useful advice for them in the many different circumstances of school life where they need to understand and promote good behaviour in their pupils. It embodies good teaching and classroom practice, and sets out high expectations of pupils' response. The school's rewards system reinforces and encourages good behaviour. Pupils understand and implement the behaviour policy very well, and they respect the school's Golden Rules and the Code of Conduct. They are eager to gain stickers, which are visible evidence of good behaviour and attitudes, or of academic effort, and the points obtained are included in the house point totals.
- 3.4 The school's child protection measures are extremely good; they are underpinned by a well-developed policy, clearly written to inform and assist staff. The headmaster is the 'designated person' and staff with specific responsibilities have received proper training. The school's policy against bullying is equally clear and acknowledges the importance of parental involvement.
- 3.5 The school's health and safety arrangements are thorough and most effectively implemented, and represent a clear improvement since the last inspection. The health and safety committee meets three times a term, and has proper representation from administrative and teaching staff, and governors. The scope of policies supporting health and safety is very wide, including those for major incidents, bombs and terrorist threats. Those particularly germane to the school's circumstances have been very carefully and effectively produced.
- 3.6 Careful measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. A large proportion of staff have basic first aid training, and ten are trained to the Health and Safety Executive First Aid at Work standard. The school benefits from a well-qualified matron who provides an exceptional level of care to ensure that a safe and healthy environment is provided for all pupils. Both the surgery and the sick bay are very well equipped. Records of pupils' visits to matron are carefully documented, so that tutors and form teachers can be alerted quickly if she feels that there is a pastoral care issue, rather than a medical one.

- 3.7 The school's provision for lunch is adequate, and takes note of pupils' preferences. Menus are arranged on a four-weekly cycle which ensures a good variety, but within the menus there is little choice; although there is an option of fruit or dessert, the range of fresh vegetables is insufficient, and the food is not attractively presented.
- 3.8 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

- 3.9 The school's links with its parents and the community are strong, and this has been maintained since the last inspection. The school encourages parents to have as much contact as possible, and it promotes various links with the local and wider community. These relationships strongly contribute to the school fulfilling its aims.
- 3.10 Parents receive a wide range of good quality information from the school. The prospectus, website and the new parents' packs are very helpful, and the school also arranges useful meetings for parents, both prior to their children joining the school and when they reach various landmark stages in their school careers. At the beginning of the year, all parents receive details of the curriculum and topics to be studied in each subject. Termly calendars and regular newsletters keep parents up-to-date about events, and celebrate pupils' activities and successes. The school magazine is an entertaining production, which gathers together the highlights of the school year in all age groups most successfully, and with contributions from all sections of the school community.
- 3.11 Written reporting and formal staff/parent 'consultations' are well-spaced throughout the year, and arranged to complement each other. Parents from Reception upwards receive full written reports at the end of the autumn and summer terms. Years 5 to 8 have an interim summary halfway through the autumn, and a spring 'exam' report. In addition, parents are encouraged to approach teachers when they have queries. However, a small minority throughout the school felt, in responding to the questionnaire, that feedback about their children's progress was not sufficiently offered. A selection of written reports was scrutinised during the inspection and it was found that the school's relatively new policy for them is not followed consistently, since monitoring is not yet effective. Whereas some reports are appropriately detailed, helpful and thorough, many do not give enough information about the progress the pupil has recently made, nor do they give sufficient indication of aims for the future.
- 3.12 Parents responding to the questionnaire showed extremely positive approval for most aspects of the school's provision. They particularly appreciate the academic opportunities, the quality of the teaching and the promotion of worthwhile attitudes and values. A few parents felt that the school did not provide worthwhile help regarding special educational needs, but inspection evidence showed that the school's arrangements are very good. A small number of parents queried the efficiency of the school's arrangements to deal with their concerns. Here it was found, that although all issues are responded to quickly, and the headmaster or other senior staff are involved when appropriate, staff respond inconsistently when parents follow the school's policy and bring their concerns to form teachers in the first instance.
- 3.13 Parents are given many worthwhile opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children and in the activities of the school. Reading record books and diaries inform parents about their children's achievements and homework. This also provides good opportunities for easy contact with form teachers and tutors. Parents are invited to support the school in a variety of ways, such as helping with school trips, listening to younger pupils

read, sharing a particular skill or talking about their profession. Parents are welcomed at open mornings, plays, formal and informal concerts and to chapel services. The Friends of Great Walstead Association is very active, and seeks to welcome all parents into the school community by arranging a variety of social events, for both adults and families; for example the very successful Bonfire Night, the December Bazaar and the Summer Party. During the last year alone, they raised £12,500 for the school and various external charities, amongst them the Chailey Heritage School and the Tsunami appeal fund.

- 3.14 The school has many links with both the local community and further afield, and these make a valuable contribution to the high quality of pupils' personal development. An annual concert and tea party is held for senior citizens from the local area. Visits are made to residential homes by the choir, and by pupils from the junior school. The school grounds and facilities are used by the local football club, various church groups, and for the annual scouts' service. Local services, such as the police and fire crew, visit to talk about their work to pupils, and these visits support and enrich the work undertaken in the classroom. The Christmas bazaar features craft stalls of locally produced wares. The school has good links with the local Rotary club, particularly through public-speaking competitions. Pupils' global horizons and their understanding of how charities actually work, are extended through an ex-pupil of the school, who works with Isubilo, a Christian charity in Zambia which gives help to poor and sick children. Collections are made of articles such as shoes, clothes, and pencils, which are then sent out for these children to be given. Since the tsunami of 2004, the school has regularly supported the Golden Stable Charitable Trust, which works to rebuild schools in Sri Lanka.
- 3.15 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

- 3.16 The school's provision for boarding is excellent, and it represents a continuing development in aspects of the quality of its provision since the last inspection. Boarding arrangements fully support the aims and ethos of the school.
- 3.17 Relationships amongst pupils are very good; they are comfortable in each other's company and say that they like boarding very much. Pupils speak warmly about the staff who look after them, saying that they would know immediately whom to approach with a problem, adding that they rarely encounter any, and that they feel confident about the support and advice they would receive.
- 3.18 Relationships amongst the boarding staff are especially good, and staff are self-assured in their roles. The boarding guidelines policy has concise and well-considered statements about relationships with children, and child protection issues. A partner document, which contains information about boarding staff appointments and outlines induction and training procedures, further underpins the high quality professional and friendly relationships in the department. The boarding staff are very successful in striking a balance between providing light, well-judged discipline, effective supervision and a homely atmosphere.
- 3.19 Boarding routines and the range of activities provided complement the exceptional quality of pastoral care very well. In the evening, after prep and work sessions for seniors, staff cultivate a homely style of supervision, reviewing and signing homework diaries for example, and snack is provided before bedtime, which occurs in a relaxed, calm atmosphere. Boarders like the freedom of choice provided during the evening's free time, to be able to choose whether to socialise in the common areas, or make use of the school's recreational

facilities, such as the sports hall. A ‘high spot’ of the arrangements is Flat Night when all of them spend a significant time with the head of boarding and his family, watching a film, chatting, and having a light snack together. Arrangements to support ‘school’ activities, are well-considered and personally orientated, so that, for example, instrumentalists have designated practice time before breakfast, and Year 8 nominate certain staff to call in and ‘nag’ them about their revision for key examinations!

- 3.20 The accommodation for boarders is comfortable, and makes efficient use of the upper floors of the Victorian main building. Pupils like the environment and look forward to being there. As in other aspects of boarding, the school gives them very personal attention; everyone, if they want, has their own home duvet covers, and groupings in girls’ and boys’ quarters take note of age, siblings and friends. Furnishings are adequate, and boarders can decorate dormitories with posters and other personal items. Their common areas are good; upstairs, comparatively small and cosy, and downstairs with plenty of space and well equipped for relaxation and recreation. Toilets and showers are modern and suitably private. Matron’s surgery and the sick bay, which are also available for day pupils, are well furnished and equipped to high standards; they are very well managed by competent staff. Staff accommodation is integrated within the boarding area, including that for the head of boarding and his family, so that all resident staff are both easily accessible in an emergency, and can also readily contribute to the very good quality of the boarding atmosphere.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The high quality of the governors' contribution is a strength of the school, and the strong support for its aims, and interest in its development, noted in the last report, has been very well maintained. In addition, the organisation and membership of the governing body has been effectually expanded and adapted, so that the range of experience and expertise is well suited both to support the school's needs and securely promote its future development.
- 4.2 Governors are very effectively deployed, so that they have responsibilities according to their special qualifications, for example in finance, building, the law or education. Board members also include current and past parents, and two ex-pupils. A notable feature, very relevant to the school's aims, is that an ordained governor has responsibility for pastoral and welfare aspects. Over the years, the school and its governors have carefully considered and provided for its needs in terms of facilities and accommodation, so that these are very good, and shortly to be augmented by a building specifically designed for the performing arts, and skilfully integrated with the existing facilities.
- 4.3 Governors meet as a full board once per term, and they are kept well informed of school routine matters, and of emerging issues, through full written reports from the head, who also has frequent personal contact with the chairman. A strong aspect of the system is the use of small working groups of governors to consider issues in detail and advise the full meetings. These might often include appropriate school representation as, for example, recently in considering ICT. Governors pay close attention to their own training, which has been very good and strongly relevant to the school's needs and development over the last three years, for example in considering crisis management, or the Charities Bill, and managing the school's extensive estate.
- 4.4 Governors' managing of the school's financial management is very effective, and the bursar is fully part of all their business. The finance sub-committee, which meets once a term, and often twice in the autumn, confines itself exclusively to financial issues on which it very effectively advises the main board. The school's accounts are formally reviewed termly, when budgeted forecasts and actual results are scrutinised; the headings clearly reflect the school's operation in detail and facilitate extremely well-founded and dependable decisions.
- 4.5 Governors' ability to participate at different levels in school affairs is enhanced by the majority living within a convenient distance of the school. They know their head and staff very well, and bring, in their areas of individual expertise and experience, the ability to listen to, advise, support and challenge them through the eyes of a 'critical friend'. Their understanding of, and support for, the school's activities, is broadened by their contact with staff, either formally on working parties or committees such as those for food or health and safety, and more informally, via an invitation to staff lunch at the beginning of each term, and by regularly attending a variety of school events throughout the year.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The quality of leadership and management is good. The senior management team (SMT) under the experienced and respected leadership of the head, and with the committed support of all staff, make a significant contribution to fulfilling the school's stated aims. Significant improvements have been made to areas of weakness identified in the last inspection report,

- such as teacher appraisal, or in-service training (INSET). However, work to improve the monitoring of teaching and learning, also recommended in the last report, has still to be completed.
- 4.7 The areas of responsibility of the head, his deputy, who is also the head of boarding, and the bursar are well defined, and enable them to function effectively in their roles. They provide good overall educational direction and promote effective communication at all levels in the school. Having agreed on priorities, members of the SMT have worked harmoniously and productively in reviewing key educational policies, and in creating new ones. However, the lack of sufficiently defined accountability in their roles limits senior management's ability to implement and monitor these developments properly. The result is that, although the SMT regularly review policy, the important task of ensuring compliance across the school, and so continue whole-school progress into areas of good practice, is not carried out effectively, and some policies are applied inconsistently. Therefore, although progress has been made since the last inspection, further work remains to be done.
- 4.8 The SMT is broadened into a general management team, most significantly by the addition of the heads of juniors, pre-prep and Nursery. However, the potential of these comparatively large departments to contribute significantly to policy is not sufficiently acknowledged in the structure of meetings, which, although they are held regularly once-a-week, take place as two separate groups. The capability of experienced key staff throughout the school to analyse its needs together, prioritise decisions and then put them into practice, is not therefore effectively exploited.
- 4.9 The school development plan is well-balanced and clearly focused to support both the school's Christian ethic and its emphasis on pupils' personal development; it also identifies areas of development for staff, premises and accommodation, and marketing. However, it is not clear which key staff are designated to manage the plan's objectives, or how governors will provide input, nor are links to success criteria or financial considerations clarified, so priorities are not therefore easily verified.
- 4.10 The school has had success in recruiting well-qualified staff, who are also well-attuned and committed to its aims and ethos. INSET shows good variety and imagination, and the frequency of in-house training, including twilight sessions, is impressive. In this respect, the school has effectively exploited the ability of its own staff to provide INSET. Staff are also well supported and motivated through formal professional review, which is linked to the profile of an individual's aspirations, the aims of their department, and the school's own aims.
- 4.11 The school's financial resources are very well managed through the bursar's department. Over recent years, the responsibility for managing subject budgets has become increasingly that of subject co-ordinators, and the quality and sufficiency of resources are very good, and in many cases, excellent. Co-ordinators are expected to make realistic requisitions as a result of their annual audit, and the system works well. It has built-in flexibility and reserves in emergency.
- 4.12 The school's administration is very good. Although nominally controlled by the bursar, departments have good autonomy and operate very efficiently. Teachers and staff throughout the school make effective use of its ICT network in communicating with each other and in accessing a wide range of data. All service departments are in-house and work as a committed team, which fully supports the school's aims. The school office efficiently handles day-to-day and routine matters, and also provides a very good channel of

communication with the wider world. Daily, it provides a helpful welcome to potential and existing parents, their children, pupils, and teachers alike.

- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 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 Great Walstead is a purposeful school with many strengths, which successfully fulfils all its stated aims. In this, it is supported by the high quality of its governance and non-teaching departments, including boarding, and by the positive approval of its parents. The school provides a happy environment within a Christian ethic, in which pupils succeed well over a wide range of activities. Pupils develop exceptional relationships between themselves and with their teachers. The quality of teaching is good overall and sometimes outstanding. Teachers are well-qualified, and highly committed to valuing each pupil as an individual. The management of the school is good, although work already begun to strengthen the monitoring and implementation of educational policy in key areas has yet to be concluded. The location of the school, its grounds, buildings and facilities are of high quality, and contribute substantially to pupils' achievements and personal development.
- 5.2 The school has successfully built upon the many strengths noted in the last inspection report, and made important improvements in its arrangements for welfare, safety and health. However, the work begun to tackle the weakness in the extent and quality of educational management has not yet been effectively concluded.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. In order to further improve the good quality of education it provides it should:
1. Redefine the composition, structure and functions of the senior management team.
 2. Review the roles and responsibilities of key managers.
 3. Clarify procedures for monitoring and implementing all main educational policies.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 20th to 23rd March, 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 governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the sick bay. 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 two Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) inspectors over two days.

List of Inspectors

Mr. T. Andrews	Reporting Inspector; former head of IAPS schools.
Mrs. E. Coley	Former head of an ISA school.
Mr. H. Davies Jones	Retired head of IAPS schools.
Mrs. V. Goode	Retired head of IAPS junior school.
Mrs. V. Maddocks	Head of science at an IAPS school.
Miss B. Marshall	Head of English at an IAPS school.