



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION
MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL**

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Merchant Taylors' School

Full Name of School	Merchant Taylors' School
DfE Number	919/6036
Registered Charity Number	1063740
Address	Merchant Taylors' School Sandy Lodge Northwood Middlesex HA6 2HT
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Email Address	info@mtsn.org.uk
Head	Mr Simon Everson
Chair of Governors	Mr Christopher Hare
Age Range	11 to 18
Total Number of Pupils	884
Gender of Pupils	Boys
Inspection Dates	25 Mar 2014 to 28 Mar 2014

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in October 2008.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mr George Fisher	Reporting Inspector
Mr Garry Binks	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Dr Richard Brookes	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC school)
Miss Joanne Green	Team inspector (Former Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mr Geoff Hill	Team Inspector (Former Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr Daniel Phillips	Team Inspector (Head of Department, HMC school)
Mr James Priory	Team Inspector (Headmaster, HMC school)
Mrs Clare Sherwood	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Merchant Taylors' is a day school for boys, which was founded in 1561 by the Merchant Taylors' Company. The Merchant Taylors' Educational Trust, a registered charity, is responsible to the Court of the Company for ensuring proper governance of the school which is provided through two principal committees, reporting to the main board. Governors include nominees of the Merchant Taylors' Company. The school is situated to the north of London, around 15 miles from its centre, and occupies a 250 acre site, including 60 acres of playing fields.
- 1.2 The principal aim of the school is to be a strong learning community, which provides first class education in a humane and civilised environment, where breadth of education is valued as much as success at the highest level. The school encourages the personal development of each pupil, fostering self-discipline, moral values, service to others and leadership.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection, a new chairman of governors has been elected, and a new headmaster was appointed from September 2013. The school has extended its local and international links and has further broadened the curriculum, including the introduction of the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). A second all-weather pitch has been constructed. A perimeter road has been built to enable the pedestrianisation of the centre of the school and a design centre is under construction.
- 1.4 Boys enter the school in Year 7 into three forms, with a larger entry into Year 9 where there are seven forms altogether. In total there are 884 pupils in the school, including 281 within the sixth form. The ability profile of the senior school is well above the national average, with all pupils having ability that is at least above average, and almost two-thirds having well above average ability. The school is a Christian foundation but serves a multi-faith community, reflecting the broad ethnic base of the surrounding area. A large majority of pupils come from business and professional backgrounds, but a bursary scheme enables pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend the school.
- 1.5 Seventy-eight pupils are identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom thirty receive additional support. Two pupils have a statement of educational needs. Twelve pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), though none is identified as needing specialist support for their English.
- 1.6 National Curriculum (NC) 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 equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
3 rd Form	Year 7
Upper 3 rd Form	Year 8
4 th Form	Year 9
Divisions	Year 10
5 th Form	Year 11
Lower 6 th	Year 12
Upper 6 th	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Merchant Taylors' School is highly successful in meeting its aims and in satisfying its central objective of being a place of opportunity in which pupils can learn and develop. Achievement is exceptional overall; academically, this is demonstrated by the high levels of performance by pupils in public examinations and within lessons and competitions. Pupils make good progress to GCSE and excellent progress to A level. The able, gifted and talented and those with SEND make progress commensurate with their peers. The broad curriculum which underpins pupils' learning meets the needs of the wide range of pupils' needs and offers choice at all stages. It fully meets the needs of academically able pupils and is enriched by an outstanding range of societies and clubs. The extra-curricular provision is exceptional, and pupils' achievement within it is excellent. Pupils demonstrate excellent learning qualities. They are receptive, alert, highly articulate and well motivated. They show creativity and imagination and are confident users of information and communication technology (ICT). Research skills and independent thinking are evident, particularly amongst older pupils. The quality of teaching is excellent and is notable for its energy and enthusiasm, strong subject knowledge, and the rapport between teachers and pupils. The system for ensuring the professional development of all teaching staff has improved since the previous inspection. Assessment methods are effective and thorough overall, although the quality and frequency of marking remains inconsistent, as at the time of the previous inspection.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent, fostered through the mixed-age tutor groups. Pupils are friendly, happy and self-reflective. They show social and community awareness and the diverse nature of the school promotes a deep-rooted understanding of other cultures. The quality of care provided by the school is excellent and pupils' behaviour is exemplary. Healthy living is successfully promoted and pupils' views are sought effectively through the school council. Measures to promote welfare, health and safety are good and the school's policies and procedures are thorough and carefully documented.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent and highly effective in providing both support and challenge for the school. Governors maintain a clear, strategic role in shaping the development of the school, and in ensuring the safeguarding of pupils. Governors have a high profile within the school, including support for its events. Leadership and management are good; senior leadership is particularly strong, although a flaw in the recruitment procedures led to some staff starting their appointment before all of the necessary checks had been made. Appropriate changes have been made to the process and all staff have now been checked. The system for monitoring the quality of pastoral care has improved since the previous inspection. Academic middle management is good although there is unevenness in the approaches of different departments, as at the time of the previous inspection. Links with parents are excellent and their endorsement of the school was evident in the very positive responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- ensure that all required checks on staff references and medicals are made before they start work at the school [Part 4, paragraph 19.(3) under Suitability of staff and proprietors, and for the same reason, Part 3, paragraphs 7.(a) and (b) under Welfare, health and safety].

(ii) Recommendation for further improvement

2.5 In addition to the above regulatory action point the school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. Enhance the effectiveness and consistency of academic middle management by identifying, sharing and implementing the best practices seen in the school.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievement and learning is exceptional.
- 3.2 At all stages, pupils show highly developed levels of knowledge, understanding and skills both in their academic work and in their extra-curricular activities, amply fulfilling the school's aim for excellence. Pupils are highly articulate, expressing themselves confidently and clearly. They are logical and independent thinkers with good listening skills, seldom needing to be told something twice. They read and write fluently in their own or in foreign languages. They have excellent mathematical skills which they apply confidently to their learning across the curriculum, for example in the sciences. Their skills in ICT are well developed and used very effectively in a broad range of subjects. In many subjects, including art, music and design technology, pupils show high levels of creativity.
- 3.3 Pupils perform strongly across an extremely wide range of activities and competitions. Several pupils are Arkwright scholars for design technology. Pupils have gained organ scholarships, played in the National Children's Orchestra and won national photographic competitions. Excellence has also been seen in the biology challenge and in the Mathematics Olympiad. Achievement in the EPQ is also noteworthy. Many pupils represent the county in rugby, hockey and cricket whilst others are national representatives in their sport. Significant numbers of pupils achieve recognition within The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme (DofE) and there are also successes in the Young Enterprise scheme. The combined cadet force (CCF) is strong, well supported and highly successful. The extent of the pupils' contribution towards the work of charitable organisations is exceptional. Almost all pupils go on to higher education, most going to their first choice of university, with a number achieving scholarships. In 2013 over three-quarters of applicants gained places at highly selective universities.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for 2010 to 2012, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Pupils' attainment in public examinations is outstanding at all levels. Results in GCSE are exceptional in relation to the national average for pupils in maintained schools and above the average for pupils in maintained selective schools. The International GCSE results are higher than world-wide and UK averages. In 2013, 90 per cent of all exams were graded at either A* or A. Results at A level are exceptional in relation to the national average for pupils in the maintained sector and well above the average for pupils in the maintained selective sector. The trend continued in 2013 with 75 per cent of all grades at A* or A, including 31 per cent at A*. Pupils with SEND achieve in line with predictions at GCSE and often exceed prediction at A level. Pupils with EAL achieve on a par with, or above, the grades of their peers.
- 3.5 Pupils' progress is excellent, especially in Years 12 and 13, and most pupils perform well above their expected grades as measured by their attainment at entry to the school. As a result of the high-quality support they receive, the progress of pupils with SEND is also excellent, particularly within Years 12 and 13. Pupils who are identified as being able, gifted or talented make high progress overall, evidenced by their exceptional levels of academic achievement and wider successes.
- 3.6 Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They enjoy studying, relishing the challenges set by their teachers and displaying intellectual curiosity. They are well

motivated with a disciplined and well-organised approach to learning. They are highly receptive to new material, reacting positively to the stimulus and feedback offered by their teacher. Pupils work effectively, either as individuals or with others, and they demonstrate a strong capacity for independent research.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.7 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum is extensive and addresses all areas of learning. It successfully fulfils the school's aims to provide a broad, rounded and rigorous programme for its pupils. The emphasis throughout is on matching the provision to the individual needs of pupils and this, together with some one-to-one tuition, ensures that pupils with SEND and EAL are well supported. A scholars' programme, which includes a series of imaginative, external visits each half-term, helps to provide for able pupils. An effective personal, social, health and citizenship education programme (PSHCE), enhanced through lectures and critical thinking in the sixth form, promotes a sense of tolerance and self-worth, as well as developing analytical skills and greater awareness of issues within society. The academic curriculum has been extended significantly since the previous inspection in response to pupils' needs and interests, incorporating subjects such as electronics, physical education and psychology. Additionally, the EPQ has been introduced, completed to a very high level by nearly one-third of all pupils in Year 13, and this extends their horizons still further, as well as developing independent study skills.
- 3.9 The broad range of subjects in Years 7 to 9 encourages a sense of ambition and a thirst for knowledge, as well as providing opportunities for cross-curricular learning. The curriculum provides an element of choice at GCSE but the opportunities for selecting a modern foreign language are restricted. The emphasis on independent learning, exemplified by the Year 10 research projects, allows pupils to further explore their individual enthusiasms.
- 3.10 In the sixth form, pupils study three or four A levels and the curriculum is designed to enable academic excellence with additional teaching time being allocated as pupils progress into Year 13. Careers education and advice are very strong, with an emphasis on preparation for employment through work experience and a network of links with former pupils. Additionally, the popular careers lectures provide high-quality information about the world of work and each pupil receives individually tailored advice on higher education, something which they find very helpful.
- 3.11 The extra-curricular programme is extensive and pupils take full advantage of the opportunities available to develop their interests and talents, promoting a strong sense of service throughout the school. The regular *Omnia* lectures, delivered by the pupils themselves, are increasingly popular at all levels, successfully fulfilling the school's aims to develop pupils' sense of awe and wonder in the world around them. The vast range of clubs and societies is encouraged by the enthusiasm and energy of staff but is also led by pupils themselves who organise and run societies ranging from the very successful Model United Nations society to the Bocchia Club. The strongly supported DofE, and the CCF, provide excellent opportunities for pupils to take leadership roles. The provision of music, drama and sport is very strong throughout, where success is recognised by the award of colours for the most successful at all stages of the school. The school is successful in supporting the development of the elite whilst encouraging the endeavour of all pupils. The quality of coaching within sports is excellent and enables those with particular talents to be

developed through individually tailored programmes and through the many links with county, regional and national organisations.

- 3.12 Links with the community are outstanding and this fulfils most successfully the school's aims to develop pupils who are active and committed members of society. Strong links with local primary schools and support for residents in local care homes and respite centres broaden pupils' horizons and strengthen the sense of shared purpose throughout the school.
- 3.13 Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire demonstrate an extremely high level of satisfaction with the curricular and extra-curricular provision.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.15 Teaching is highly effective in supporting the school's aims to be a place to learn which fosters a sense of awe and wonder and within which pupils can achieve high academic standards. Teaching is based upon an excellent knowledge of the strengths and needs of the pupils, including the most able, who frequently learn from each other as well as bouncing ideas off their teachers. Routine classroom teaching supports those pupils with EAL, whilst pupils with SEND are very effectively supported by the learning support department, although implementation of subject-specific strategies within lessons is less frequent.
- 3.16 Teaching benefits from very high levels of subject knowledge and a real passion for the subject. This leads to pupils being inspired towards high levels of study and application, particularly in Years 12 and 13 where extension classes provide excellent preparation for university study.
- 3.17 Teaching is well planned so that pupils can build systematically upon their prior knowledge and understanding; lessons are fast-paced and engage the pupils' interests. Since the previous inspection, lessons have been extended in length to one hour and this leads to the adoption of a wide variety of teaching styles with regular changes of activity, often leading to highly-effective collaborative learning. Teaching manages time well so that pupils remain on task and are challenged to remain alert, whilst still allowing opportunity for the consolidation of more complex ideas. Open-ended tasks are used to stretch and challenge pupils beyond the demands of the examination syllabus. There is a strong emphasis upon encouraging pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, and pupils' study skills are consequently developed to a high level, as demonstrated within the extended project in Year 10.
- 3.18 The learning resources available are outstanding. The library is well-stocked and provides a purposeful learning environment, including a dedicated space which is set aside for younger pupils, supplemented by a wide range of resources which are available electronically. Recently introduced reading weeks have significantly increased the amount of reading for pleasure. The virtual learning environment, although recently implemented, is already providing opportunities for further development and more effective sharing of subject-specific resources. Teaching makes full use of the resources, including the development of imaginative materials, and they are integrated effectively into lesson planning.

- 3.19 Teaching is notable for the excellent rapport between staff and pupils which promotes good behaviour and enables pupils both to enjoy lessons and to make progress.
- 3.20 The most effective assessment, including the use of regular testing, enables pupils to measure their own progress and to identify both the areas for development and the study skills required to address them. A wide range of very effective assessment methods is observed, notably the highly detailed written feedback in English and the use of mini-plenaries in history. Each department has its own marking policy, and the quality and frequency of marking remains inconsistent; the recommendation made in the previous inspection that all marking should be brought up to the standards set out in the school's marking policy has yet to be fully realised.
- 3.21 The overall quality of teaching has improved further on the already high levels observed in the previous inspection.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is excellent.
- 4.2 This fully supports the aims of the school to foster caring, tolerant and confident individuals who take responsibility for and pride in their personal development. Pupils' spiritual development is excellent. There is a palpable sense of self-confidence and maturity amongst the pupils who are equally sensitive to the needs and views of others. Pupils of all faiths and those of none are valued and are provided with opportunities to express their beliefs in a variety of ways. The chaplaincy is generally well respected and understood by pupils, who appreciate the whole school assemblies which cater for spiritual diversity. A significant number of pupils from the different faith groups make use of the various services, meetings and societies. Pupils also lead assemblies and these provide opportunities for reflection and debate on challenging issues.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is excellent. They have a strong sense of right and wrong and their exemplary behaviour is seen to underline this. Pupils are rewarded for their positive achievement and conduct through the system of "gold notes", which is popular with both staff and pupils. Pupils are polite and courteous and this was evident throughout the inspection. They have a clear understanding of the needs of those less fortunate in society and lead the charities committee, demonstrating a strong commitment to supporting a variety of ventures. The sustainability committee has recently been awarded a green flag for its considerable efforts in promoting recycling, instituting a 'switch-off' fortnight and maintaining a self-sustaining garden.
- 4.4 Pupils' social development is outstanding. They demonstrate a real interest in and concern for the needs of others through numerous acts of service. This leads to a striking sense of community and excellent relationships throughout the school. Pupils also demonstrate a strong grasp of social, political and economic awareness, for example within tutor group discussions and through the PSHCE programme. Older pupils provide exemplary role models for younger ones as seen in tutor groups, in the prefects' mentoring of Year 7 pupils and where pupils with DofE gold awards lead bronze expeditions. Pupils exhibit a caring attitude and a model sense of duty. For example, 20 pupils from Years 12 and 13 are selected from a long list of applicants each year to help run a week-long residential care camp for teenagers with disabilities.
- 4.5 Pupils' cultural awareness is very strong. The school is highly successful in its aim of celebrating the cultural diversity of its pupils. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils appeared at ease and confidently discussed the development of black culture in 19th century Britain. The Asian Cultural Society, run by pupils, stages a major annual fundraising show. This is supported by all sectors of the school community. Pupils also benefit from a range of cultural experiences, such as lectures, the gap-year programme and visits to art galleries, museums, theatres and concerts as well as trips abroad, for example, to the World War 1 Battlefields, Berlin and China. As a result, pupils understand and respect other cultures and appreciate the achievements of those who come from backgrounds different from their own, so demonstrating a very clear commitment to harmonious relations with the whole community.
- 4.6 Overall, pupils demonstrate an exceptional standard of personal development, which remains a very significant strength of the school. The outstanding levels of

behaviour and the significant generosity shown through so many facets of school life result in well-rounded and mature pupils who make a substantial contribution to the wider society.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Staff provide outstanding pastoral support and guidance. Since the previous inspection an effective monitoring system for pastoral care delivery has been introduced, overseen by pastoral managers. Pastoral leaders support others in providing a pupil-focused system. Guidance on careers and university application is rigorous and thorough.
- 4.9 Relationships between staff and pupils, and among the pupils themselves, are positive and highly respectful throughout. Tutors exercise a key role in supporting their tutees, and older pupils within the mixed-age groups provide additional support and advice for younger ones. The counselling service and medical centre are examples of the additional support which is available, thus ensuring that there is always a member of staff to whom pupils may turn.
- 4.10 Nutritious meals provide for a variety of dietary needs and promote healthy eating. Pupils make use of extensive opportunities for physical activity, leading healthy lifestyles. The highly effective provision within the PSHCE programme places emphasis on pupils to make informed decisions, and to understand the potential consequences of irresponsible behaviour such as plagiarism.
- 4.11 The school succeeds very well in promoting good behaviour and excellent standards were evident throughout the inspection. Bullying is dealt with swiftly and in line with the school's clear procedures. Pupils are confident that incidents can be reported, and will be dealt with. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small number of pupils reported inconsistencies in the application of the systems for rewards and sanctions by teachers. Although understood by all, inspection evidence shows that the rewards system is not applied evenly across all subjects and year groups. However, sanctions are applied consistently and in line with school policy. The school has a suitable plan to improve access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.12 In the pre-inspection questionnaire a small number of pupils reported that their views were not always listened to but inspectors found no evidence of this. Rather, the divisional school councils ensure views are listened to and considered and election to these committees is prized.

4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.13 The school's arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good.
- 4.14 These arrangements make a strong contribution to the pupils' personal development. The safeguarding policy is comprehensive but there has been a failure to ensure that, in all cases, all of the necessary checks on staff references and medicals were completed prior to appointment. As soon as this was drawn to the school's notice, immediate action was taken to deal with the gaps. As a result, by the end of the inspection, all required checks had been completed and recorded for all staff currently working at the school. All staff receive effective child protection training which is appropriate to their role and is updated regularly. There are good

links with Hertfordshire Safeguarding Board. Pupils feel very safe in the school environment. The needs of all potentially vulnerable pupils are monitored very carefully.

- 4.15 All necessary measures are taken to minimise the risks from fire and other hazards. Full and detailed records of fire evacuation drills are maintained, and all of the main areas of the school have designated and suitably trained fire marshals. Call points, fire extinguishers, emergency lighting and electrical equipment are regularly tested and maintained by qualified personnel. Risk assessments associated with the premises, and with school trips and activities, are appropriately detailed, identifying the hazards and the controls needed to minimise them. Since the previous inspection a perimeter road around the school site has been constructed, and this has had a significant impact in enhancing the safety of pupils.
- 4.16 The medical centre, where well-qualified nursing staff are available to assist any pupil who becomes ill or sustains an injury, ensures that the welfare of pupils, including those with SEND, is a priority. Suitably qualified staff with first-aid training are readily available throughout the school.
- 4.17 Attendance is registered appropriately through an electronic system. Lateness and absence are recorded centrally. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained, and correctly stored for the previous three years.
- 4.18 The school's commitment to the welfare of its pupils is evident in its approach to safeguarding, crystallised within the structured programme of "Safe at Taylors".

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governance strongly supports the aims and ethos of the school and provides highly effective oversight. Governors are strongly committed to the school and have a wide range of professional backgrounds and relevant expertise which they readily share to the benefit of the school, for example within education, law and finance. The education and finance committees are very effective in ensuring that governance discharges its responsibilities for academic standards, financial planning and investment in staff and resources.
- 5.3 Longer-term planning is informed by an annual strategy meeting and governors have been fully involved in the construction of the school's improvement plan. Governors also have a very clear understanding of the daily workings of the school; for example, some are linked to individual departments and many sit in on lessons to understand better the classroom experience of the pupils. Governance exercises a very thorough role in monitoring the work of the school and regular reports from school staff enable governors to keep fully abreast of developments. Detailed documentation and comprehensive and sharp-minded discussion characterise the governors' meetings and ensure that there is always both support and challenge for the school.
- 5.4 New governors have a thorough induction programme, and many also undertake further training of relevance to their role on the governing body, for example with regard to safeguarding and welfare, health and safety. There is a formal annual review of the safeguarding policy and procedures.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.6 Leadership and management make a strong contribution to the promotion of the school's ambitious aims. The school's ethos of being a place of learning and opportunity is reflected in the very high quality of pupils' academic and extra-curricular achievements. It is also manifest in the excellent standard of pupils' personal development, particularly in the maturity of their self-reflection as learners and in the warmth of their consideration for each other. The school has a clear sense of its purpose in enabling pupils to flourish in a scholarly and caring community.
- 5.7 A vision for the school's continuing development has been articulated in a detailed strategic improvement plan for the next three years. This was preceded by an extensive consultation process with pupils, parents, governors and staff. The energetic approach to self-evaluation by the senior leadership is shared by staff at all levels. Members of staff responsible for each aspect of provision in the improvement plan are clearly identified, along with an indication of the timescale for a successful outcome. Where appropriate, roles within the senior leadership team have been re-defined to support the plan's delivery. Long-term planning for the

school site is guided by educational priorities and supported by strong financial management. Academic departments support whole school aims in their planning. Since the previous inspection, a teaching and learning group has been established under strong leadership, including pupils alongside staff. The group has a clearly defined role to research, develop and share good practice, and is contributing effectively to the whole school aim to be a learning community focused on innovation and excellence. As a result, the quality of teaching is even stronger than at the time of the previous inspection.

- 5.8 The school has made significant progress in monitoring the management of pastoral care since the previous inspection. The structures for pastoral care in mixed-age tutor groups and horizontal year groups are well organised and complement each other in ensuring pupils' progress and well-being. Pupils report that they feel happy and well supported by the school. Pupils' academic progress is monitored closely and reported on regularly. Policies for the day-to-day management of the school are carefully reviewed and implemented effectively.
- 5.9 Inspection evidence revealed inconsistency in the effectiveness of academic middle management, with some, but not all, academic departments using work scrutiny and lesson observation as regular features of their sharing of best practice. The standard of marking is also variable. The school has already identified a more formalised approach to work scrutiny and lesson observation as action points within its strategic improvement plan.
- 5.10 The school is successful in attracting and retaining high-quality and well-motivated staff. It has established clear job descriptions and expectations for staff, both teaching and non-teaching, following a thorough evaluation of staff roles. Arrangements to train staff to ensure the pupils' welfare, and for health and safety, are implemented effectively, including the training of all staff in safeguarding procedures. However, there has been a failure to ensure that all necessary pre-appointment checks have been carried out on all staff. The school has developed a rigorous action plan to ensure that correct recruitment procedures are followed, with all checks now completed for the small minority of staff involved. The induction of new staff is comprehensive and well managed, enabling staff to contribute positively to the ethos and success of the school.
- 5.11 Since the time of the previous inspection, professional development has been extended to all teaching staff. Opportunities for training are responsive to individual teachers' needs and strongly promoted through the staff review scheme, contributing to a culture of progressive improvement. Support staff are fully integrated into the life of the school and make a significant contribution to the quality of educational provision through their enthusiasm, commitment and efficiency. Since the previous inspection, a thorough review of support staff roles has brought fresh impetus to the appraisal system, providing regular opportunities for self-evaluation, training and development.
- 5.12 Parents greatly appreciate the quality of education and support provided for their child, as the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire shows. Parents also value the quality of personal communications and the fact that any concerns are dealt with promptly. The school has a clear complaints procedure and any concerns or complaints are logged appropriately.
- 5.13 The school maintains excellent relationships with parents in accordance with its aim that all its activities centre upon the development, in partnership with parents, of

impressive and aspirational young men. Recently held parental meetings, chaired by senior leadership, have been well received by parents who appreciate being updated on new developments and having the chance to discuss any issues which they wish to raise. The tutor system also plays a highly effective role in the exchange of information with parents.

- 5.14 Since the previous inspection parents have become even more actively involved in the life of the school. The Friends of Merchant Taylors', the school's parental support group, comprises a series of committees relating to water-sports, hockey, cricket and rugby as well as music and drama and these support and encourage the activities of the school. The ladies' association is a social group that raises funds for local charities and runs the second-hand clothes shop. Together, the parental groups constitute a strong link with the school's extra-curricular programme and charitable aims. They are also very effective in offering guidance to parents who are new to the school.
- 5.15 Termly reports and grade information enable parents to gain an excellent overview of the work their child has covered, his attitude and progress, as well as outlining areas for further development. However, in a small minority of subject reports the balance between these aspects is uneven as the information on the pupil's progress and on setting clear targets for improvements is outweighed by a description of the work covered.
- 5.16 The school's website provides parents with helpful information on school policies and forthcoming events and enables parents of prospective pupils to gain a clear overview of the educational opportunities. The weekly newsletter, *Scissorum*, offers an outstanding insight into cultural and sporting activities as well as information about forthcoming events. It is effective in complementing the annually published school magazine, *The Taylorian*.

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