

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Pocklington School

The junior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of the School	Pocklington School
DCSF Number	811/6003
Registered Charity Number	529834
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Age Range	11 – 18 years
Gender	Co-educational
Inspection Dates	24th to 27th September 2007

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 this Act, ISI is accredited as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Services and Skills, Children's Directorate and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

The inspection does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Pocklington School was founded in the parish church in 1514 and for many years continued as a boys' grammar school charged by its founder John Dolman to 'develop talents for the benefit of society'. The school includes among its alumni William Wilberforce who attended the grammar school from 1771 to 1776. The school has retained its links with the parish church and for many years had connections with St John's College, Cambridge, to prepare boys to train for the church. More recently, up to 1976, the school had Direct Grant status. Girls started to join in the Sixth Form from 1968 and the school became fully co-educational in 1988. The junior school, Lyndhurst, moved to the main site in 1992.
- 1.2 The senior school at present has three sections or divisions: the Lower School for Years 7 and 8, the Middle School for Years 9 to 11, and the Sixth Form. Typically the number of pupils in each year is close to 100, the current total in the school being 679 (373 boys and 306 girls). The number of boarders remains roughly the same as at the last inspection at 132 (75 boys and 57 girls). At 11+ three-fifths of the entry is from Lyndhurst and two-fifths come from local primary schools. A further 10 to 15 pupils join at 13+ from preparatory schools. A leave of up to 20 after GCSE is replaced by new entrants to the Sixth Form, a small number from Germany and Romania coming just for one year. Pupils joining in Years 7 to 10 will sit the school's entrance examination; those from preparatory schools may take the Common Entrance examination. Most pupils are from East Yorkshire, from families with a professional, small business or farming background. As well as the European group, some other boarders are from overseas, often from Hong Kong or children of service families.
- 1.3 Nationally standardised tests taken by all pupils in the Lower School indicate that a large majority of pupils are in the top half of the ability range nationally and over half in the top quarter. If pupils are performing according to their ability, results in tests and examinations will be well above the national average for all maintained schools. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs but 97 in the senior school are on the school's list of pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities. Of these, 62 receive extra one-to-one support. English is a second language for 27 pupils and 14 of these receive extra help.
- 1.4 Since the last inspection in 2001, as well as an increase in numbers by a sixth, the school has continued to develop its facilities, including a new library and music school, two artificial pitches and more classrooms, including a cookery room an extra science laboratory and a second computer room. The school recently opened a new senior boys' boarding house donated by an old boy of the school.
- 1.5 Pocklington School aims to provide an education which is broad and humane, characterised by a combination of rigour and enjoyment, to contribute to fullness of life for each boy and girl. Humanity is intended to reflect the school's Christian foundation, with an atmosphere which is friendly, sympathetic and open, and an emphasis on pastoral support and communication with families. Rigour seeks to stretch pupils at all levels and boost confidence. The school aspires to provide enjoyment from high expectations, a sense of well-being derived from achievement, from being safe and secure, and from being valued. Fullness of life is intended by taking opportunities and reaching personal, group and community goals. The governors aim to challenge the school to enable each pupil to achieve the highest academic levels of which they are capable and to enjoy a wide-ranging programme of extra-curricular activities, developing life long interests, growing in self-confidence and in the desire and ability to contribute to the community.

- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
1st Year	Year 7
2nd Year	Year 8
3rd Year	Year 9
4th Year	Year 10
5th Year	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 A well-balanced and broad educational experience is provided across a wide range of subjects and activities. The education therefore is consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy, offering the pupils a varied, challenging and all-round education appropriate to their needs. The friendly, supportive community builds the pupils' confidence and encourages them to discover their talents. The well-structured pastoral system ensures that staff know their pupils well and that staff support is available when needed. The school has created a safe environment which promotes good behaviour and high morale.
- 2.2 A review of the curriculum, recommended in the last inspection report, has now been carried out. The curriculum is now well suited to the pupils' needs, and parents, in their response to the questionnaire sent to them before the inspection, declared themselves very well satisfied with the range of subjects on offer. In Years 7 and 8, the breadth of compulsory subjects develops a full range of skills and, in Year 8, pupils are exposed to the modern foreign languages of Spanish and German in addition to French. In Year 9, French and Spanish become alternative core languages and art, design technology, drama, music, German, Latin and Spanish are together in an option system, from which pupils choose four. For all its benefits, including the range of subjects available, the application of this system within a timetable of relatively few periods and the wide ability range in Spanish sets means that some difficulties remain.
- 2.3 The options at GCSE give the pupils good choice and a number of subjects, drama and physical education for example, have been added since the last inspection. The allocation of periods both to mathematics and English in Years 10 and 11 is low, partly also because of the small number of lessons available in the timetable. The implementation of the new modular GCSE courses in the sciences is a result of a school review of its previous policy and now better meets the pupils' needs and abilities, although some are still able to choose only two out of three sciences. The range of subjects on offer in the Sixth Form provides well for differing talents, and includes psychology and photography as popular additional subjects.
- 2.4 The last inspection recommended improvements to the limited personal, social and health education (PSHE) provision and this has resulted in a very well-organised programme, run by a specialist group of staff, as part of the Thursday afternoon activities sessions for Years 7 to 11. PSHE is being developed also at sixth-form level, where it is taught by house tutors and has input from outside lecturers.
- 2.5 The curriculum provides good opportunities for pupils to acquire skills of speaking, listening, literacy, mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and a range of study skills appropriate to their ages. Although the school has greatly enhanced its ICT facilities since the last inspection, the popularity of curricular ICT courses makes it difficult for some subject areas to access the two well-equipped ICT suites, thereby inhibiting the use of ICT for individual investigation in lesson time in some subjects. Although ICT is used well in some subjects to support teaching and learning, in others this is less well developed.
- 2.6 The educational experience is greatly enhanced by the strong extra-curricular programme, which is appreciated by parents and pupils alike. The sporting programme benefits from excellent facilities, and its strength lies both in the high standards achieved and in its diversity, with many opportunities for pupil participation in school and house teams. Music and drama are also strong and here too opportunities to perform both in school and house productions are offered, encouraging participation by pupils at all levels in the school. The Combined Cadet Force (CCF) and the Year 12 Community Action programme, which offers

voluntary service in the community, are strong, and the range of activities on offer both on Thursday afternoons and at many other times in the week is impressive. The many school trips at home and abroad provide cultural enrichment and further academic or sporting awareness.

- 2.7 The careers advice structure was revised for September 2006 and its implementation means that pupils receive a well-co-ordinated programme from Year 10. A professionally qualified careers advisor is supported by a team of staff who oversee the three specific areas of applications to: Oxford and Cambridge; medical and veterinary courses; and GAP Year programmes. Potential vets and medics are identified in Year 10, and in Year 11 all pupils are interviewed and a comprehensive careers report is sent to parents. This report aids pupils' choice of AS and A2 subjects, and provides subject grade targets for which they need to aim. Pupils are encouraged to undertake work experience after their GCSE examinations have been completed. Sixth-form house staff supervise the university applications of their tutees under the general oversight of the director of Sixth Form.
- 2.8 A governors' Academic Committee oversees curriculum matters, and regular planning and review of the curriculum are undertaken to ensure appropriateness and to respond to new ideas. Heads of department produce annual development plans which are considered by senior management and linked to the school's strategic plan. All pupils are assured access to all parts of the curriculum and the activities offered by the school.
- 2.9 The learning support department identifies and offers support to pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, which is much appreciated by parents and pupils. Many of these pupils respond well to the specialist one-to-one support they receive and the guidance they are given in class. However, the support from class teachers, though often effective, is not wholly consistent and liaison opportunities between class teachers and the learning support department are not always used as well as they might be. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are also identified, and supported where necessary with extra tuition, often by withdrawal from other language lessons.
- 2.10 Gifted and talented students are identified from base-line tests and are encouraged to enrol with the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth. A significant internal school prize, the Sands scholarship, is open to academically able pupils seeking entrance to Oxford and Cambridge, involving general and subject examination papers and an interview with an external examiner. Additionally, academic departments are asked to identify those students who show particular talents in their subject areas and to provide extension work to stimulate their interest and raise their aspirations. The scheme is in its early stages and currently its implementation varies in effectiveness across the departments.
- 2.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.12 The level of academic achievement in the school is good and pupils achieve success in a wide range of activities, both curricular and extra-curricular.
- 2.13 Pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects; this is evident across the curriculum both in lessons and in pupils' written work. Impressive work and skills were seen on a number of occasions, for example in music, art, modern foreign languages and drama. Although annual variations occur, no significant difference in the relative performance of boys and girls was apparent in lessons or in pupils' written work.
- 2.14 In public examinations, pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities. Over the past three years, nationally standardised data indicates that progress to GCSE and in the Sixth Form is above national norms in almost all subjects. The trend over the past five years and since the last inspection has been an improvement in the quality of examination results at GCSE, AS and A level. No undue or consistent disparity in the relative attainment of different subjects or curriculum areas was noted. At GCSE and A level, pupils at the school perform well above and sometimes far above the national average for all maintained schools. In 2005, 2006 and 2007, about two-thirds of all A levels have been at grades A and B. Pupils are successful in gaining places at their chosen universities, including places annually at Oxford and Cambridge.
- 2.15 Pupils achieve individual and group successes in a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities and at all ages. Large numbers of girls and boys in the school participate in sport and reach high levels of performance in a range of sports and at different ages, including rugby, cricket, hockey, swimming, tennis, squash, rounders and netball. Some individuals also gain county and international honours in their sport. The success of a large number of pupils in the CCF is a particular feature of the school.
- 2.16 Participation in music is enthusiastic throughout the school – 133 pupils in 2006/7 were entered for Associated Board of the Royal Schools of Music examinations, many achieving merit and distinction, including a number at grades 7 and 8.
- 2.17 During the week of the inspection, the house drama competition was a prominent extra-curricular activity, involving large numbers of pupils of all ages. The house plays are popular and very well-supported events. Joint and individual accomplishments in drama include a group of pupils who were invited to stage a public performance of a mystery play in York during the summer, and successful application to the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Pupils also achieve well in speech and drama examinations, which have been introduced since the last inspection. The school has success in competitions such as the Mathematics Challenge and Olympiad at junior, intermediate and senior level. Groups of sixth formers take part in the Young Enterprise competition, sponsored by local industry, and a group of senior pupils took part in a World Challenge expedition to Namibia during the 2007 summer holidays.
- 2.18 In general, good, positive attitudes to work and study were noted in all curriculum areas. However, in some subjects as yet infrequent opportunities are offered for independent learning and for students to use their own initiative in developing their work.
- 2.19 Many - but not all - pupils express themselves well, both orally and on paper. Pupils are confident and articulate in a wide range of contexts, for example: giving presentations in assembly to a large audience of students and teachers, discussing ideas in a business studies lesson and exploring concepts in an art class. Most pupils respond readily, and often with

- academic confidence, in the classroom. In nearly all lessons, pupils listen carefully both to the teacher and to each others' questions and comments.
- 2.20 In the scrutiny of work across the curriculum, pupils were seen to write fluently and effectively. Some of the work, however, was characterised by a limited written response, typified by worksheets and questions which needed only short answers. Pupils have the ability to apply numerical skills and concepts confidently, evident not only in mathematics work but also in other subjects, for example science and, in particular, physics.
- 2.21 Of their own volition, most pupils are competent and enthusiastic users of ICT. Computer facilities are currently being enhanced throughout the school and the relatively new computers in the library, for example, are in almost constant use. Older pupils and sixth formers use their own laptops in the boarding houses. Less evidence was seen of cross-curricular ICT. Within lessons, the use of ICT is not promoted in all subjects, but it was seen to enhance lessons in several curriculum areas, for example in history, business studies and economics, art and music. The use of ICT during an A-level photography lesson was particularly impressive.
- 2.22 In many lessons, for example in religious studies (RS), history, and English, pupils showed that they could reason, argue cogently and think for themselves. Of particular note was a Year 13 French lesson in which pupils studying "Sac de Billes" assessed the text and conducted literary analysis in French. However, opportunities are not taken often enough fully to develop and extend pupils' thinking skills, or to show initiative and originality in their response to a task.
- 2.23 Pupils were seen to work well both on their own and collaboratively, in groups or pairs. A Year 10 GCSE drama class worked most effectively, both independently and within a group, to develop lighting effects for a variety of scenes. Opportunities for independent work do exist in most subjects: coursework and project work in science are two examples of many. The redeveloped school library – an impressive new facility since the last inspection - is very popular with students. The expertise and commitment of the school librarian contributes in no small part to the success of the library as a resource for learning which is very well used as an area for sustained private study by pupils of all ages. However, the extent and range of individual initiative in their work still appears quite limited; the library is not strongly promoted by teachers and departments to encourage independent learning and enquiry.
- 2.24 Most pupils have good and well-established work habits; their attitude to work is strengthened by clear guidance on study skills from teachers and tutors. During their interviews, pupils of all ages made appreciative comments about the teaching support they received if they had encountered difficulties with a task. Boarding pupils feel able to ask staff on duty for occasional help with homework, if the need arises. Attitudes to study and learning are, therefore, generally good and pupils clearly enjoy their work in many subjects.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.25 Within the school's Christian ethos, pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is strong and is supported by a wide variety of opportunities provided by the school.
- 2.26 Pupils develop well spiritually. The ethos of the school is one of trust and respect for others, encouraging a true sense of self-worth and a community in which all are valued. In terms of faith and personal belief, pupils are offered the opportunity to think beyond themselves through: divisional assemblies; weekly church services with hymns, prayers and a thought for reflection; the 'Ultimate Questions' scheme of work in Year 9 religious studies; the chance to attend chapel with a Eucharist service. The chaplain is seeking to develop further opportunities to express worship, to pray and to discuss faith. Pupils develop a sense of non-material values through a rich variety in lessons, including art, music (the pop cantata 'Adam and Eve' for example), drama and religious studies, with their opportunities for aesthetic and philosophical reflection.
- 2.27 Moral development in the school is also strong, again reflecting the school's aims for a humane education in a community where all are valued and feel secure and confident. The school ethos and codes of behaviour laid down in the school rules underpin the moral development of the individual. In a house meeting, the necessity for rules within a community was discussed and supported by sixth formers. The comprehensive PSHE programme, discussion and debate in many lessons, all contribute to the moral development of pupils. They are challenged to face the dilemmas of those about whom they read and learn in relation to their own experience. This moral development continues throughout the school and sixth formers interviewed showed mature attitudes and opinions, well prepared to move on to the next stage of their lives. Pupils at all levels in the school develop values and convictions for themselves, and have a clear sense of right and wrong, and a respect for others, for themselves, their beliefs and their belongings.
- 2.28 The social development of pupils in the school community is assured. The positive relationships and mutual respect between staff and pupils, and from pupil to pupil, observed throughout the school, and the care provided in the boarding houses, underpin a community where good examples of responsibility are set, and each individual matters and is nurtured. In Years 7 and 8, the charity project initiated last summer to raise money for a school in Kenya, and to be followed through with further fund raising, highlights the pupils' desire to help those less fortunate than themselves, developing their social awareness and furthering the vision of William Wilberforce. In the annual Charity Week pupils have further opportunities to work together to give to others. Pupils relate very well to each other, in lessons, in sport, in the school council, through the school and house prefect system, and through community work in hospitals and primary schools. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and within the community. They learn to consider the needs of others and the benefit of order, and the need for guidelines and rules of behaviour.
- 2.29 An enriching programme of outings and trips both at home and abroad, develops pupils' cultural awareness. Some exchange home visits as they go to develop their linguistic talents by living with a French, German or Spanish family. The varied programme of lessons contributes to pupils' awareness of their own and of other cultures. They learn to reflect on their own cultural awareness in the light of others and are encouraged to look ahead, to university and to the world beyond in: classics by learning about the ancient world; geography by studying other countries in today's world; science and technology by discussing advances made and the dilemmas they may bring; history by discussing slavery and liberty. Pupils are confident that they will have much to offer the wider community from their experience at school.

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

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.31 Teaching is good overall; a significant proportion of lessons observed contained strong features, and some were outstanding. The overall quality of teaching has risen since the last inspection. A few weaknesses were apparent in a very small number of lessons.
- 2.32 Teaching effectively helps pupils of all abilities to succeed in their work. The school supports particularly well the middle and lower ability groups. In many lessons, extension work is prepared for the most able pupils. Those with learning or English language difficulties are withdrawn for specialist support where appropriate. In the classroom, most teachers are aware of this group and are careful to make arrangements for their particular needs, but in some lessons less attention was paid to matching tasks and teaching to the needs of these pupils or to those of the most able, including the gifted and talented.
- 2.33 Teaching at all stages is effective in fostering in pupils an interest in and concern for their work, as was evident in pupil interviews, and in workbooks and files. Some evidence was seen in lessons of pupils being encouraged to think and learn for themselves but this was not widespread.
- 2.34 Much teaching is well planned and the best teaching has a lively pace, a wide range of well-chosen activities and makes effective use of time. However, the few less effective lessons seen during the inspection were the result of too slow a pace, poor time management, or a lack of challenge. Sometimes teaching relies too much on worksheets or copied material.
- 2.35 Nearly all teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils. Teachers invariably have a good knowledge and understanding of the subject matter, and this in turn leads to thorough and often enthusiastic teaching in many areas. Management of classroom behaviour is mainly good with only occasional instances by pupils of lack of interest and disengagement. Pupils behave very well in lessons and in their programme of activities.
- 2.36 Teaching is well supported by a sufficient variety of textbooks and practical resources. ICT provision is good in the main ICT suites and in the business management department, in art, design technology and music, where it is used effectively as a resource; but cross-curricular access to ICT rooms for a class lesson is still difficult to achieve for some departments. Provision of resources in the practical subjects is good and the facilities to support drama and sport are outstanding. The library is now an excellent facility with great potential, which is being developed with skill, success and great enthusiasm by the librarian, although the stock in some areas does not yet sufficiently encourage enquiry and extension work for the more academically minded.
- 2.37 Assessment arrangements are well established and marking policy guidelines are clear. However, there is still inconsistency in the marking of pupils' work both within and between subject areas. Some good practice was seen, for example in history, modern languages, music and RS, where constructive comments and appropriate correction aid improvement and progress.
- 2.38 Internal assessment by tests and examinations is frequent and is supported by occasional nationally standardised testing. The latter is used, for example, to identify pupils who need extra support. This data is well used by tutors in their guidance of pupils and is regularly reported to parents. The school management at senior and department level is beginning to

use assessment to aid monitoring and to assess progress. At present, the approach by, and value to, departments varies and the school has not yet determined a consistent and agreed set of procedures for all to use.

2.39 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

- 3.1 The school succeeds very well in meeting its aim to provide strong pastoral care for all its pupils. Pupils express a sense of well-being and security in an environment in which all feel valued. The school ensures the welfare of its pupils. New arrangements for pastoral care have been made since the last inspection, based on four houses, each divided into three sections with a house head of section and a number of tutors.
- 3.2 The staff are committed to the pupils' welfare throughout the school and provide excellent support and guidance. House staff make sure that their pupils are secure in the school environment and that they are supported both in their academic work and in their involvement outside the classroom. In responses to the questionnaire completed before the inspection week and in interviews during the week, pupils confirmed their confidence in the support provided by housemasters and housemistresses, and by tutors. Parents too are very pleased with the arrangements. The success of the pastoral system is founded on the excellent relationships that are formed between house staff and pupils.
- 3.3 Very good care is provided in each section of Lower School, Middle School and Sixth Form. Particular care is taken over the induction of pupils as they enter the Lower School, which is under the overall supervision of the head of Lower School, starting with home visits by the staff team before new pupils arrive in Year 7. Pupils here also benefit from having senior pupils as mentors and prefects. Pupils are very positive about life in the Lower School and staff gain much satisfaction from the creation of an atmosphere of mutual trust and support. In the rest of the school, the very effective arrangements for pastoral care are under the supervision of the directors of Middle School and Sixth Form and ultimately under the oversight of the deputy head, again supported by trained and committed prefects.
- 3.4 Housemasters and housemistresses provide the backbone to the pastoral system, and are most directly in contact with parents. They are ably supported by their tutors who are in daily contact with their group of pupils. Academic mentoring is carried out by tutors after each assessment period, with the additional help of national benchmarked tests to identify underperformance. This systematic approach, combined with the sure knowledge tutors have of their pupils, ensures that parents are informed in good time of any difficulties and, on a regular basis, of the progress of their children. Boarding staff enhance the support for boarders by providing an extra layer of pastoral care, acting on behalf of parents, for their charges.
- 3.5 New initiatives are explored, so that there is no sense that the system is standing still. Changes and improvements are discussed to ensure that current challenges of teenage issues are met, for example the use of ICT, access to the internet and mobile phones. The school also has the services of a counsellor who is available to pupils who need someone other than a teacher in whom to confide. Relationships within the school are very strong indeed, as is confirmed by both staff and pupils, and was clearly seen in lessons and around the school as well as in the boarding houses. Pupils are courteous, friendly and helpful to each other, and to staff and visitors.
- 3.6 Very effective measures have been taken to promote good discipline and behaviour and to guard against bullying. Behaviour seen throughout the day was nearly always good. Pupils report that anti-bullying measures work well, that few instances of bullying occur and that any that do are dealt with pro-actively and effectively. Poor behaviour is dealt with

constructively using an appropriate hierarchy of sanctions. Rules and sanctions are seen by pupils as fair, and fairly applied. These are supplemented by a well-regarded system of merit awards for good work or helpful behaviour.

- 3.7 The quality of welfare and procedures to promote the health and safety of pupils are effective. Child protection measures are fully appropriate. Both senior and junior school have their own child protection officer who has received enhanced training. All teaching staff have received training and a governor has direct oversight of the arrangements. Admission and registration procedures are appropriate and robust.
- 3.8 The school is well served by a modern, well-equipped health centre staffed by qualified and committed staff. Extra cover is provided for sporting fixtures and the arrangements for first aid and health care are regularly reviewed. School catering is excellent; food is of high quality and a popular range of choices is offered at all meals, including boarders' supper and breakfast, which is open to day as well as boarding pupils. The dining hall, though busy at peak times, is a congenial and pleasant social centre for pupils and staff.
- 3.9 All staff at the school are committed to the health and safety of the whole school community. The system is strengthened by the appointment of experienced staff responsible for health and safety and fire risk assessment. The bursar chairs the Health and Safety Committee, which includes a governor in its membership. Good practice was apparent in the cautions regarding inter-active whiteboard usage, procedures for educational visits and the rigorous assessments undertaken within individual departments: for example drama and physical education and games. The school has in hand, as part of a regular review, a small number of fire procedure and maintenance issues that came to light during the inspection. Health and safety training is undertaken for all staff, and appropriate records kept.
- 3.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.11 The school continues to have strong links with parents and growing links with the community. The school aims emphasise 'communication with families' and the school has sought to increase contacts with parents and opportunities for them to be involved in the education of their sons and daughters.
- 3.12 In the questionnaire completed before the inspection week, parents responded very positively about the quality of education provided for their children; in particular they praised the quality of teaching in ensuring pupils' progress, the range of subjects and activities on offer, and the quality of pastoral care and guidance. Housemasters and housemistresses at each level in the school, and in both boarding and day houses, are regularly in contact with parents. Parents for the most part also find it easy to contact school staff and believe that their concerns are handled well.
- 3.13 A few concerns from a small minority of parents remain about the effectiveness of support from some teachers for those with learning difficulties or disabilities, and about inconsistency in the setting and quantity of homework. The inspection evidence supported these criticisms.
- 3.14 Parents receive well-prepared information about the school and detailed reports about their children's progress and attainments. Attainment and effort grades are sent out at each half-term and end of term; written reports are produced each term; marks cards are sent out after school examinations. Meetings for parents with staff who teach their children are held each

year for each year group, and other meetings are held to deal with specific matters such as subject choice or university entrance. A range of brochures and handbooks for parents are issued during a pupil's school career, and a school magazine and newsletters keep parents in touch with school events. In recent years, parents' views have also been heard directly by governors, for example by responding to questionnaires or in a public meeting called to present to parents the school's current strategic plan.

- 3.15 Links between the school and the local and wider community are being promoted and extended. These include links with a number of local primary schools and sports clubs as well as the school's Thursday afternoon Community Action programme. The school makes its grounds and facilities available for use by local clubs and hosts a number of sports tournaments. Strong links exist between the school and the parish church and other organisations in the town. Members of the local community take part in the school's annual choral concert. The Young Enterprise group is mentored by local businessmen. The school has taken part in the York Mystery Plays and was involved in the service to commemorate the life of William Wilberforce in York Minster. Modern language trips and exchanges provide pupils with experience of other countries and cultures; recently the school's wind band has visited Eastern Europe. Each summer all members of the school are engaged in fund-raising for charity, notably in support of a school in Africa nominated by pupils in the Lower School. The school has an annual bursary scheme to host two Romanian pupils for a year.
- 3.16 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

- 3.17 The quality of the boarding provision is extremely high. The most recent inspection by the Commission for Social Care Inspection was in February 2007. The report highlighted many strengths and a number of recent improvements in the provision. A few recommended actions concerned mainly administrative matters and these now have been addressed.
- 3.18 Although rather less than a quarter of pupils are full-time boarders, the boarding element remains a very important part of the school's provision. This is not only in its own right, for the high quality of the educational experience enjoyed by the boarders, but also for the school as a whole, in the effect of boarding on the strong sense of community and family ethos in the school, and in the structure and shape of its programme.
- 3.19 Within the five boarding houses – two small houses for junior boys and girls up to age thirteen and three larger senior houses, two for boys and one for girls - very strong and positive relationships are established, both among the pupils and between pupils and staff. The houses provide a safe, happy and supportive family environment for their members. Lasting friendships are formed, and pupils' personal and academic development are carefully supported and guided by the housemasters and housemistresses, and their team of tutors, assistants and matrons.
- 3.20 The school offers boarders a very wide range of activities, making full use of the school's facilities during the week, including the library, ICT rooms and the swimming pool. In addition, at weekends, special activities are organised and regular trips are arranged, especially for the younger boarders, to nearby attractions and further afield.
- 3.21 The quality of accommodation and furnishing varies, inevitably, according to the age of the building. The new senior boys' house, which has replaced the original, is a model of modern purpose-built design and fitting; the two junior houses are also in very good condition,

comfortable and attractive. The other two houses are comfortable and well appointed, and are included in the school's programme for decoration and refurbishment. All five houses have good resources appropriate to the age of the pupils, for example computer access in some houses, recreational facilities, kitchens, workrooms and common rooms. Security is a priority and boarders' welfare is assured, whether through the health care provided by the school or the high quality of meals provided in the dining room.

3.22 Pupils are almost unanimous in their appreciation of the boarding provision they enjoy.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The school is governed appropriately and very effectively. The school is a registered charity, in the process of incorporation and governed by a 21 strong governing body, which includes a number of ex-officio and co-opted members. Four are former parents, and three former pupils of the school. Since the last inspection, the governors have reformed their structures to work through a number of committees, covering most aspects of the working of the school; for example, academic, finance, estates, employment and Lyndhurst (the junior school). This system very effectively enables the governors to apply expertise and experience to particular areas, and it allows for close liaison with the school's senior management, providing governors with the information they need in order to monitor appropriately action being taken and decisions being implemented.
- 4.2 Governors are very aware of their responsibilities in regard to the school's educational development and financial well-being, and in ensuring effective provision of the necessary human and physical resources to achieve the school's aspirations. The governors have worked closely with the school on its recent planning process, the outcomes of which they are now working to achieve. Members of the governing body, collectively and individually, have undertaken professional training, and an induction process is provided for new governors.
- 4.3 Through the committee structure, through 'governor days in school' and through governors' individual contacts with the school, good relationships are maintained with staff, who appreciate governors' contribution to the school. Governors are well informed and have a good insight into the working of the school so that they are able to make sound judgments of standards achieved, to appreciate the work done by staff, and to challenge and support appropriately the headmaster and his senior team in their management and direction of the school.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The school is ably led and well managed. The headmaster, supported by the senior management team, provides clear and purposeful leadership which ensures that the aims of the school are very largely being met. Significant changes to the management structure have been made since the last inspection, and effective forward planning and good management is evident at the senior level. The good general education being provided, academic achievement and the quality of the pastoral care so evidently afforded to all pupils are in tune with and endorse the school's ethos, and help the school to fulfil its aims and aspirations. The recommendations made in the 2001 inspection report about forward planning and staff appraisal have been attended to. The positive impact of these changes is already evident.
- 4.5 Members of the senior management team work well together and exert a valuable influence on many aspects of school life. Each member of the team has a clear job description although some roles are still evolving. The management structure has been further strengthened by the recent appointment of a deputy director of studies and directors of the Sixth Form and Middle School. Data to assist in assessing pupils' progress is made available to house staff and heads of department who are encouraged to use it in analysing pupils' needs, tracking their progress and setting priorities. Heads of department have been given guidance about the use of this data but implementation of that guidance is inconsistent and as yet unmonitored.

- 4.6 A comprehensive and clear strategic plan has been developed by the headmaster and his senior colleagues. Consultations have been held at all stages; staff have had opportunities to be involved in its development and are encouraged to contribute to a regular review process. Despite this, not all staff avail themselves of these opportunities and so some do not feel fully involved in the planning process. The content of the plan is evidence that senior managers have analysed every aspect of the school, identifying needs and prioritising what has to be done further to improve the quality of education and to meet the clearly defined aims and objectives of the school. The plan is shared with and fully supported by the governors.
- 4.7 Evidence of the effectiveness of this forward planning is seen in the improved public examination results, the revised systems of pastoral care now in place and the improvements in the school's facilities. Other key areas of the plan are currently work in progress, such as the staff appraisal system, and the developing and strengthening links with Lyndhurst. Strong and valued links now exist between the Lower School and Year 6 in Lyndhurst. A number of heads of department have also found regular meetings with their corresponding subject coordinators to be worthwhile, and more contacts at governor and senior management level have been beneficial to both schools. The planning process is further supported by the development plans drawn up and regularly reviewed by all subject departments.
- 4.8 Appropriate procedures and policies govern all aspects of school life, are published in the comprehensive staff handbook and are under regular review. The procedures for the appraisal of all staff have been improved; a biennial cycle of performance review by and of middle managers is now being implemented. Appraisal reports are monitored by the senior master, and action points identified and followed up. The importance of feedback is recognised. Some arrangements, such as that for heads of department to evaluate the teaching and assessment within departments, are unevenly applied and are as yet monitored less thoroughly. Systems for tracking pupils' academic progress have been significantly improved since the last inspection and serve the needs of the pupils well, but the role of heads of department in monitoring pupils' progress is neither well defined nor consistently acknowledged.
- 4.9 Most departments are administered effectively and some are led and managed well. School policies, such as that on marking and assessment, are reflected in departmental handbooks, usefully emphasising the need for common approaches across the school, although here again application is inconsistent. Through the appraisal system, the development needs of teaching and support staff are identified and opportunities for training are readily made available and are welcomed. An annual performance review for each member of staff with the headmaster provides further opportunity to identify training needs and aspirations for further professional development. Procedures for lesson observation and the monitoring of marking have been introduced but, despite some examples of very good practice, not all heads of department yet take effective responsibility for the performance of their colleagues. The structures for support and monitoring of all the work of heads of department now exist but are not always applied sufficiently robustly, so that expectations of the role are not always clearly understood or consistently exercised.
- 4.10 Housemasters and housemistresses lead very effective and caring pastoral teams, and their work in the support and care of pupils is very good and well overseen. The quality of pastoral care is reflected in the happy and contented nature of the pupils throughout the school, whether boarders or day pupils.
- 4.11 The arrangements for the induction of newly qualified teachers and other staff new to the school are comprehensive and effective, reflecting the school's care for individuals. Appointment of staff follows correct procedures and all necessary checks of suitability are

made. In-service training occurs regularly and all staff are encouraged to undertake appropriate training.

- 4.12 Financial resources are well managed. The bursar works closely with the headmaster and with his colleagues on the senior management team to ensure that educational aims are met within the constraints of financial prudence. Heads of department find that the budgeting system, allied to their planning process, generally gives them the resources they need, although approval for the funding of larger departmental projects sometimes seems more remote to them. The school campus and its buildings are well maintained. A school site development plan is linked to the strategic plan for the school and outlines a programme for the gradual replacement of the older and less suitable buildings. The recent building developments such as the library, the Tom Stoppard Centre and the new boys' boarding house are of outstanding quality.
- 4.13 Routine administration is very good and large teams of staff work very hard to support the teaching and co-curricular activities, to meet the pastoral needs of the pupils and to service the administrative requirements of the school. Their great commitment, together with that of their teaching colleagues ensures that the school functions smoothly as an effective and purposeful community, to which pupils are happy and proud to belong.
- 4.14 The school meets all the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.15 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 Pocklington School provides a broadly based and well-balanced education for all its pupils, and meets its aims of humanity, rigour and enjoyment, contributing to a full and fulfilling life for each boy and girl. The activities programme is impressive and music, drama and sport are particularly prominent. Pupils achieve good academic standards in relation to their abilities and experience notable success in a variety of other pursuits. Pupils' personal development is excellent, fostered by an outstanding quality of pastoral care and good all-round provision for their welfare. The friendly and caring ethos and a strong sense of community are underpinned by the strength of the boarding and the very good relationships at all levels in the school between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves. Teaching and non-teaching staff form a strong team, to the great benefit of the pupils, and bring both good expertise and commitment to their responsibilities. The school is very well led and governed. Management at all levels is effective and the school's administration is secure and efficient.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, a useful curriculum review has been undertaken, including the introduction of a soundly based PSHE programme. A number of curriculum issues have now emerged from the changes that have been made, including the workings of the weekly timetable. The quality of teaching has improved so that much teaching is both effective and of high quality, although pupils' creative and independent learning requires further encouragement. Major new buildings and accommodation have been added, including a new library which provides excellent facilities and accommodation for study and research, and the new boys' boarding house. The management structure and pastoral system have been significantly remodelled to very beneficial effect. Effective planning, a strong appraisal programme and improved links between the senior and junior schools have been introduced. Some aspects of middle management are inconsistent so that the high standards seen in the best departments are not always achieved.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no significant weaknesses but should consider action in the following areas for its future priorities.
1. A further comprehensive curriculum review and audit should include reconsideration of the weekly timetable and number of lessons available.
 2. In its emphasis on raising the quality of teaching and learning, the school should seek ways to encourage pupils to take increasing responsibility for their own learning, and to develop their interest in learning for themselves.
 3. Further work should be done with and by heads of department to encourage, where it is currently lacking, more effective tracking of pupils' progress and the promotion of the highest standards of teaching and learning in their subjects.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 24th to 27th September 2007. 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 boarding houses and the health centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Michael Higginbottom	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Flora Bean	Head of Year, HMC school
Mrs Vivienne Durham	Headmistress, GSA school
Dr Haydn Griffiths	Deputy Head, HMC school
Mr Tim Turvey	Former Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Douglas Walker	Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Peter Williams	Former Headmaster, ISA school