

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Oakham School

Full Name of the School	Oakham School
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Registered Charity Number	527825
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Age Range	10 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	5th to 8th November 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 which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, 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 Oakham School was founded in 1584 by Robert Johnson, Archdeacon of Leicester, to be a free grammar school for boys in the market town whose name it bears. Having served variously as the town and direct grant county grammar school for almost 400 years, the school became fully independent when the direct grant was abolished in 1970 and admitted girls for the first time in 1971. The succeeding decades have seen the school grow steadily so that today nearly 1100 pupils from around the world attend the coeducational boarding and day school, whose buildings now extend over a substantial sector of the town. The school introduced the International Baccalaureate (IB) alongside A levels in 2001. About one third of sixth-form students opt to follow the IB programme rather than A-level courses. The present headmaster has been in post since 2002.
- 1.2 The school is dedicated to the promotion of an holistic education. Commitment to a 'total curriculum' means that the school aims to offer its pupils a broad and stimulating curriculum, in and beyond the classroom, through which they can identify talents and develop interests. The school believes that pupils learn from both academic and non-academic activities whilst recognizing the primacy of the classroom within the total curriculum. The objectives flowing from this vision include the aim to provide high standards of teaching so that all pupils can fulfil their academic potential; a broad and engaging curriculum to stimulate an interest in learning; compassionate and consistent pastoral support; a range of opportunities to develop and pursue interests of a physical, cultural or creative nature; a balanced programme so that all pupils feel valued; opportunities, as a Christian foundation, that encourage pupils to investigate faith, explore moral questions and the spiritual dimension of their lives; expectations that instil respect and consideration for others and promote high standards of conduct; the good governance and management needed to maintain and improve the educational provision for the pupils; the fulfilment of its charitable purpose within the community; staff who benefit from the support of a good employer; proper regard to safeguarding the health and safety and the well-being of pupils; good communications that stimulate the loyalty of the parents and alumni.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection 1080 pupils aged between 10 and 18 years, were attending the school, 513 girls and 567 boys. Of these 202 pupils from 10 to 13 years, 99 girls and 103 boys, were members of the Lower School, known as Jerwoods, and 404 students, 195 girls and 209 boys, were members of the Upper School, as the sixth form is called. A total of 628 pupils were boarders, 303 girls and 325 boys.
- 1.4 Entry to the school is selective. Pupils enter Jerwoods at age 10 or 11, following an examination which comprises written papers in English and mathematics, a diagnostic test of writing and learning skills, and an interview. Attention is also paid to a report from the candidate's previous school. Candidates showing scholarship potential in their entrance papers are invited to compete for an award by undertaking extension papers in English and mathematics and a series of interviews. Pupils may also join Year 9 at age 13 or 14 having sat the Common Entrance examination, the school's own examination in English, mathematics, French and science or the Oakham Scholarship Examination. A significant number of places are available for students to join the sixth form. The entry requirements are a satisfactory report from the candidate's previous school and 7 GCSE passes at grade B or better. However, about half of those joining the sixth form do so from abroad without having taken GCSE examinations. These students may be asked to sit an entry paper and, if their principal language is not English, an English language test. Candidates for sixth-form

scholarships take three examination papers, preferably in subjects that they wish to study in the sixth form, and undergo a number of interviews.

- 1.5 No pupil at the school has a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 147 pupils as being in need of learning support, of whom 83 receive specialist tuition, mostly help with dyslexia. The number of pupils for whom English is not their principal language is 110, of whom 19 receive additional tuition. The remainder are supported by teachers in the normal course of lessons.
- 1.6 The great majority of the day pupils and some of the boarders come from within 25 miles of the school from a range of preparatory and primary schools. About one in seven of the pupils come from overseas, either British families living abroad or foreign nationals, the largest numbers of whom are from the Far East and continental Europe. The latter include a number, particularly from Germany, who enter the sixth form specifically in order to follow the IB programme.
- 1.7 Scores in standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the national average. Where pupils are performing in line with their abilities their examination results are expected to be above the average achieved nationally in all maintained schools.
- 1.8 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 tables.

Lower School (Jerwoods)

School	NC name
Lower 1	Year 6
Form 1	Year 7
Form 2	Year 8

Middle School

School	NC name
Form 3	Year 9
Form 4	Year 10
Form 5	Year 11

Upper School (Sixth Form)

School	NC name
Form 6	Year 12
Form 7	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Consistent with its aims and philosophy, the school offers outstanding educational opportunities which empower pupils to strive for excellence in all that they do. The further development of the ‘total curriculum’ since the last inspection has improved the school’s provision from an already high standard. The education provided offers pupils the chance to explore a full and expansive academic curriculum alongside an extensive exposure to a wide range of cultural, spiritual and sporting activities, and good opportunities to serve the wider community. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire rated highly both the curriculum and the wide range of the activities programme.
- 2.2 The school is excellent in promoting the intellectual, aesthetic, social, physical and creative development of the pupils, offering a well-balanced and broadly-based curriculum at all levels from Jerwoods onwards, which effectively promotes skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. The recent review of the Middle School curriculum has led to an improved balance at GCSE, when pupils are able to choose a wide range of subjects whilst maintaining a well-considered core of subjects. The IB programme has developed further since the last inspection and now runs successfully alongside A-level courses, providing a rich and diverse choice of sixth-form curriculum. Whilst much advice is available about which path to follow for sixth-form study, students currently find some of this confusing and the school is aware of the challenges that remain if the aim of a more equal split between the two is to be achieved.
- 2.3 As part of the ‘total curriculum’, the extra-curricular programme offers an outstanding range of activities for all ages which are pursued enthusiastically by the pupils, who value highly their contribution to learning and social growth. Sport plays a significant part in many of their lives. The quality of coaching is excellent, and the school enjoys a national reputation and boasts many team and individual successes. Equally noteworthy is the eclectic range of activities available on two afternoons a week, when polo and kickboxing vie for customers alongside stone carving and clay pigeon shooting.
- 2.4 Service opportunities abound. Year 9 pupils have a life-skills carousel and in Year 10 and above the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme, the combined cadet force (CCF) and community service all provide excellent experiences for their participants. These both underline the value of, and raise pupils’ awareness of the need for, service. Provision for pupils to engage in the community is wide. Over 100 pupils are involved in a range of service activities from helping in primary schools and care homes to working with the disabled.
- 2.5 Many of these sports and activities, and indeed academic subjects, are complemented by the extensive and often exotic out-of-school trips and ventures; the geographers and linguists have been to Barcelona, divers and biologists to the Tioman Islands, sixth-form scientists and the Duke of Edinburgh’s gold award candidates to Hawaii, the historians to Moscow, the athletes to Bermuda and the artists to New York, to mention only a few. The whole of Year 9 benefit from an annual trip to the First World War battlefields of northern France.
- 2.6 Careers education and higher education guidance are very good, and effective advice is available to pupils on choices and future work. Valuable work experience is undertaken by pupils in Year 11, who also undergo psychometric testing to help them with their sixth-form and career choices, an ‘After Oakham’ course is organised for sixth formers, as well as annual careers fairs. Further helpful expertise is provided by parents through the ‘parent skill-share’ scheme.

- 2.7 The curriculum is well planned to ensure equality of access and opportunity for all pupils. The Jerwoods Academic Committee monitors the appropriateness of both curriculum content and teaching style for pupils in Years 6, 7 and 8. Pupils for whom English is not their first language receive excellent support from the English as an additional language (EAL) department. Such pupils are assessed on entry to the school and then follow individual education plans (IEPs) which are regularly monitored. Those with greater difficulties may also have individual and group lessons as well as the support of the EAL co-ordinator in their English lessons. The learning support department also makes excellent provision for pupils in need of support, initially assessing all pupils to identify those with particular needs and then providing appropriate individual and classroom support, carefully defined in IEPs, to enable them to participate fully in the curriculum.
- 2.8 The most able pupils are stretched and challenged by teachers in the classroom and by individual departments who provide enrichment through societies and trips, as well as through the scholars' society and the 'Project 20:20' initiative to involve pupils with acknowledged leadership skills in life-enhancing overseas projects.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 Across the school, pupils achieve well in relation to their ages and abilities in the subjects and activities provided. They show those qualities of responsibility, independence of mind, motivation and curiosity which the school seeks to develop. The quality of pupils' learning has improved since the last inspection. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils in class are almost always positive. When encouraged, they debate and challenge each other constructively. They settle to work in a purposeful way and work diligently on independent tasks in lessons, but they use on-line resources in the sixth form less than they might. Across the whole school curriculum, the school's aim of a truly holistic education is met, as is the aspiration to nurture talent and encourage pupils to excel. Pupils develop a wide range of sporting, musical and artistic abilities, sometimes to national standards.
- 2.11 The school is strong at monitoring potential differences in the performance of pupils and departments. The Jerwoods Academic Committee scrutinises the performance of pupils in Years 6, 7 and 8. Results at GCSE, A level and in the IB are carefully analysed by subject and when differences in departmental performance occur they are analysed and addressed to ensure consistency. Similar analysis of results by gender has shown little difference in performance between the girls and the boys. Pupils with particular learning or linguistic needs are carefully monitored and supported to ensure that they progress in line with their abilities.
- 2.12 Pupils in Jerwoods acquire a good foundation of knowledge and understanding on which to build. Results at GCSE over the 3 years leading up to 2006 are well above the average achieved nationally in all maintained schools; in some subjects, art, mathematics, modern languages and science, they are far above. Pupils are achieving results that are good in relation to their abilities. No significant differences exist between subjects at this level. Statistical analysis indicates that pupils are making satisfactory, and often good, progress in all subjects up to GCSE.
- 2.13 Results at A level over the same period are also well above the average achieved nationally in all maintained schools. At this stage, too, pupils are achieving good results in relation to their ability, and independent statistical analysis confirms that pupils make good progress in the sixth form. In the IB, in the 3 years to 2006 the average point score was just over 36

against a worldwide average of 30, with around 70 candidates a year. These are good results relative to pupils' abilities.

- 2.14 Pupils' achievements in extra-curricular activities are a strength of the school and the school's aim that pupils should receive a broadly-based education is certainly met at all levels of the school. These achievements range from national rugby success and unbeaten netball teams to success in public music and drama examinations and competitions. Individual sportsmen and women have competed or represented teams at county level in large numbers and some have gone on to compete at national level. Pupils have recently played in national orchestras and participated in the National Youth Theatre. The choir reached the final of the BBC Radio 3 National Youth Choir of the Year in 2006. About 130 pupils a year gain Duke of Edinburgh's Awards at bronze, silver or gold level and others are enthusiastically and successfully involved in CCF or community service activities.
- 2.15 Pupils are articulate and in class they answer and question cogently, using terminology appropriate to the subject. A feature is their quiet concentration on reading and noting tasks in the classroom, where pupils cooperate in establishing a purposeful working ethos. They communicate effectively in both written and numerical contexts.
- 2.16 Pupils are effective in their use of mathematics and apply these concepts where appropriate across the curriculum, for example utilising statistical diagrams in geography and economics with confidence.
- 2.17 The use of information and communication technology (ICT) has improved since the last inspection and pupils employ it across the curriculum in word processing and coursework tasks. The internet is less commonly used as a research and learning resource, especially in the sixth form and the quality of on-line information gathering lags behind the quality of the facilities. Pupils in Jerwoods are encouraged to read for pleasure and the European reading group encourages older pupils to read and discuss literature from across the continent. Pupils use the library well as a quiet working space but reading for pleasure or research is patchy.
- 2.18 Pupils frame arguments and express their opinions and convictions intelligently, showing a good ability to reason and to reach their own judgement. They listen to each other's views well. Occasionally the style of teaching leads them to be passive and accepting but generally they are prepared to challenge and be challenged in a mutually respectful way.
- 2.19 Pupils take notes, study and organise their work effectively both on their own and cooperatively. They expect to take notes in lessons. However, inconsistency in checking notes means that weak note taking is occasionally compounded by lack of supervision. Pupils work well when encouraged to work in pairs, a feature of lessons in most subjects.
- 2.20 Overwhelmingly pupils settle quickly to lessons and get on with the tasks they are given straightaway. They show an eager focus on learning, and the great majority demonstrate a clear enjoyment in their lessons and their schooling. They are cooperative in class and activities, keen to respond to their teachers and punctual with their work.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.21 The school fully satisfies its aim of encouraging pupils to investigate faith, spirituality and morals within a Christian foundation, as was identified at the time of the last inspection. Respect and consideration underpin school life. Pupils display a high degree of social awareness as they go about their daily tasks, exhibiting openness and friendliness to peers, staff and visitors alike. The school benefits from having a cohort of international pupils. Whilst these students feel comfortable and speak enthusiastically of being at the school, their

- presence is not fully utilised to celebrate cultural differences and hence enhance the educational opportunities for everyone, something of which the school is aware and has already started to address.
- 2.22 The spiritual development of the pupils is excellent. They exhibit quiet self-esteem and confidence. They clearly value themselves and each other. This is apparent in the way in which they treat one another and each other's property in the houses, how they listen to one another during lessons and how they interact with adults. They know that they are cared for and valued.
- 2.23 Pupils are extremely well served by chapel life and by the chaplains. The calm, reflective atmosphere and the active participation of the students during chapel services demonstrate the impact and value for the pupils of these occasions. Pupils spoke enthusiastically and openly of 'communion and cocoa', of house communion, of support given to individuals in their personal journey of faith, of their confirmation classes or simply of their enjoyment of singing in the chapel choir.
- 2.24 The chapel mid-week programme is designed to be inclusive of all faiths and opportunities are taken to mark the festivals and feast days of non-Christian religions. The chaplains are keen to support pupils of other faiths in the development of their individual spirituality and provision has been made to give the Muslim pupils their own space and literature. The sharing by Muslim pupils of some aspects of their faith with the wider school community has been appreciated and has enhanced understanding for all.
- 2.25 Pupils' moral development is very strong. Pupils understand the school rules and enjoy their reasonableness, readily accepting they are there for the good of individuals and the whole community. The citizenship programme in Year 9, alongside the give and take of life in the houses and the expectations of the school, develops the concepts of rights and responsibilities and respect for different opinions. Pupils live together in a civilised way and value the guidance given by house staff to enable them to sort out any issues. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire rated highly the attitudes and values promoted by the school.
- 2.26 Pupils display exceptionally mature social skills. They are confident, articulate, friendly, and welcoming. They behave in a sensible way about the site, in their lessons and houses and frequently demonstrate support for each other. They contribute readily to the life of the school by taking responsibility, for example in the CCF, as house or school prefects or as members of the school council, or they contribute simply by enthusiastically taking part in the wide range of school or house-based activities.
- 2.27 Pupils are sensitive to the needs of others. They initiate and respond to a wide range of charitable causes at an individual, house or school level, using imaginative ways of raising money, for example by kicking a football to Ethiopia, albeit by an equivalent number of laps of the house garden. They care about other members of the community and respond with compassion to individual needs.
- 2.28 The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is effective and encourages personal and social responsibility. It is taught as an integral part of the weekly tutor periods, valuably supplemented by specialist instructors where appropriate. Hence some pupils may be having a discussion with their tutor about academic matters whilst others are receiving instruction in a PSHE subject. For example, a small group session on sexually transmitted diseases was seen during a Year 11 tutor period and a large group session on 'men's health' during a Year 10 tutor period. Both of these sessions elicited responsible, mature interest from the pupils. Discussion sessions subsequently held with the tutor enable valuable sharing of opinions and concerns within the peer group. At its best this system is highly

effective but on occasion the tutor follow-up session does not happen, leaving any issues arising from the main session unresolved.

- 2.29 Pupils are developing an adequate knowledge of public institutions and services in England through the newly introduced citizenship programme in Year 9 but the scope of this short course is necessarily limited and students entering the school at a later stage level do not always absorb this knowledge through other subjects.
- 2.30 Pupils' cultural development is good. The culture of other communities is explored in the curriculum, particularly in art, music and drama. A small number of pupils benefit from membership of the European reading group. The many cultural trips and links, such as the links established with a school in Mombasa and the further link with a school in Nairobi which is in the process of being set up, heighten awareness of cultural, economic and social differences. The pupils learn to live in harmony with those from numerous other cultures within the boarding houses, although some educational opportunities are lost by not more actively embracing the experiences of children from other countries to learn about other traditions, cultures and religions. 'The International Society' has made a beginning by celebrating events such as the Chinese New Year and has held a German *Karnaval* party but only a small proportion of the school were involved in, and hence able to benefit from, these worthwhile events.
- 2.31 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.32 Effective teaching throughout the school contributes positively to pupils' learning and progress, as was recognised by the great majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The teaching in most lessons is either good or excellent, a clear improvement on the school's previous inspection, in the pursuit of the school's aim to establish the 'primacy of the classroom'. A very small minority of unsatisfactory lessons remain and the school's aim of achieving the highest possible standards of teaching has not yet been fully met, as the school is aware. Some departments, with mathematics an example, excel at stretching the pupils but this is not yet the case with all. A good range of teaching styles is employed and variety of approach is often evident even within a single lesson, again representing an improvement since the last inspection.
- 2.33 Teaching enables pupils of all ages and ability to make good progress, including those with particular learning or linguistic needs. Good support for individual pupils identified by the learning support department or by classroom teachers as having particular needs enables these pupils to progress well in relation to their abilities. Teachers from the learning support department, often working alongside subject and class teachers in Jerwoods and in some Year 11 classes, offer valuable individual teaching and support to pupils and, by circulating IEPs, ensure teachers understand how to structure their teaching appropriately to help those with learning difficulties. The support for those pupils for whom English is an additional language is effective.
- 2.34 Teaching at all stages from Jerwoods on fosters in pupils a productive work ethic and a sense of responsibility for that work. Pupils are encouraged to complete assignments diligently. Teaching usually challenges pupils to think out answers for themselves. This is especially evident in the sixth form where, for instance, pupils in a politics lesson effectively and thoughtfully debated the issues surrounding prison policies. Occasionally lessons are insufficiently demanding in pace and content, resulting in slower progress than might be achieved.

- 2.35 Lessons are well planned to use the available time and teachers use a good variety of methods and activities. Interactive whiteboards and computer-generated presentations are used confidently to enhance teaching. Many teachers use good and challenging question and answer techniques, directing their questions to ensure all pupils are involved and their understanding can be assessed. For example, in a Year 7 religious studies lesson on Abraham pupils were involved in a well-controlled discussion which encouraged and stimulated well-framed questions from the pupils.
- 2.36 Teachers know their pupils well and adapt their teaching appropriately to meet their needs. For example, in a Year 13 IB lesson, particular care was given to ensure that pupils with English as an additional language understood new historical vocabulary. Teachers generally have positive and constructive relationships with their pupils. Only very occasionally do pupils behave inappropriately in class.
- 2.37 Teachers show good knowledge and understanding of their subject matter. The best lessons, for example a mathematics lesson for pupils in Year 11 on the binomial expansion, reveal excellent subject knowledge effectively employed to enthuse and inspire pupils, with rapid learning a result.
- 2.38 Teaching is well supported by a range of excellent facilities and resources. The well-decorated, spacious and generally modern accommodation provides a good teaching environment. All departments are amply resourced with book and ICT facilities. In most departments, teachers make good use of ICT in the classroom to enhance their teaching but they do not sufficiently promote and encourage the use of internet research by pupils, particularly in the sixth form. The fine school library has an appropriate catalogue of books and video material and a large staff team, who help train pupils in research skills and assist pupils writing major assignments. However, the use of this facility is insufficiently promoted by most teachers.
- 2.39 Marking of pupils' work is regular but the quality seen in pupils' books and files is inconsistent as between departments and different year groups. Despite some helpful protocols stuck into the front of their books to help them, pupils do not always understand the criteria on which marks are based. The best marking is full and unquestionably assists pupils to learn, as in, for example, A-level and IB history teaching when departmental mark sheets are carefully filed to help develop a pupil profile across Years 12 and 13, which can be used to discern need and plan teaching. However, this quality of marking is seen too infrequently.
- 2.40 Classroom management throughout the school is good and underpins a productive work ethos. Teachers and pupils generally cooperate well in establishing a quiet and purposeful atmosphere. The best lessons reveal directed excitement and are the product of stimulating intellectual challenge.
- 2.41 Effective reporting systems are in place to give regular feedback to pupils and parents about performance and progress. Assessments are widely disseminated to teaching staff in order to enable helpful monitoring of progress. The school uses nationally standardised tests to measure pupils' aptitudes on entry to the school and these are used to evaluate pupils' progress to both GCSE and A level. It is aware that the results of these tests could be used more effectively both to refine judgements on individual pupils' progress through the school and to promote overall attainment, but this work is still at the development stage.
- 2.42 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 The school has built on the very good pastoral care noted at the time of the last inspection. The quality of the pastoral care and of the relationships established is now outstanding. Pupils are proud to be members of the school. They value the high quality of the support that they receive from staff, which fully reflects the school's aim to provide compassionate and consistent pastoral care. The generally high standards of behaviour reflect the excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils, and the clear expectations and rules, which are well understood by all. Procedures for safe-guarding pupils' welfare, health and safety, which have been revised in light of the previous inspection report and latest requirements, are thorough and effective.
- 3.2 Pastoral arrangements are excellent. The house structure, with a housemaster or mistress supported by a team of tutors, is very effective in providing close care and support for both day and boarding pupils. Boarding pupils have the additional support of a resident tutor and matron. Pupils in Jerwoods also benefit from the role of their form teacher. Both day and boarding houses provide pleasant, well-maintained and safe environments for pupils outside lesson times. This enables day pupils to take advantage of late afternoon and evening activities. Some pupils mentioned that break and teatimes are too short to return to their houses and be on time to the next lesson.
- 3.3 House staff are committed to ensuring that their pupils are happy, supported and feel properly valued. Pupils and parents appreciate the high quality of care provided by house staff, as was evident from the responses of parents to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Although some parents indicated that the support provided by tutors is more variable, depending on the individual tutor, pupils are very confident that they can always approach their housemaster or mistress for help and advice.
- 3.4 Tutors meet their tutees for a weekly tutorial period and at other times when tutors are on duty. Housemasters and mistresses are responsible for monitoring the pastoral work of tutors, but the tutorial programme, including PSHE, is overseen by the coordinators of year tutors who, in turn, answer to the heads of Jerwoods, the Middle School or sixth form, who themselves directly oversee academic tutoring. Although complex, this matrix of relationships and responsibilities ensures that every pupil has a range of people to whom they relate. Pupils like the flexibility that the structure provides, enabling them to go to the person that they prefer.
- 3.5 Relationships between staff and pupils, and between pupils are excellent. The ethos in the school is manifestly warm and happy, as is apparent from the friendly greetings given to visitors from both staff and pupils. A sense of mutual respect and common purpose is evident in almost all lessons and extra-curricular activities. Prefects, ranging from those in Jerwoods to those in the sixth-form 'Decem', have a recognised role in the integration and care of younger pupils, which they take seriously and which is an important factor in assisting new pupils to settle.
- 3.6 School policies and procedures are very effective in promoting the good behaviour and discipline which are the expectation. Pupils are generally neat and very polite in, for example, holding open doors and only occasionally does the desire to reach lunch or waiting in corridors for rooms to be unlocked lead to less than perfection. The range of policies published in the staff handbook, in the calendar and in pupils' organisers is comprehensive

and houses often have key phrases or codes of behaviour displayed. The school has well-understood procedures for dealing with any incidents of bullying and pupils are confident that they work well and that such incidents are rare.

- 3.7 Measures established for the protection of children are appropriate and effective. Rigorous procedures for the safe recruitment of staff, which comply with the most recent requirements, are now in place. The nominated child protection officer and her deputy have received suitable training. All members of the teaching staff receive refresher training at regular intervals, although non-teaching staff with significant pastoral input have not until now been routinely included in the same training to ensure consistency of practice.
- 3.8 The medical centre provides excellent facilities for day and boarding pupils. Staffed by the sister-in-charge and her team of four part-time nurses and a secretary, it provides an additional source of pastoral support for pupils. The sister liaises closely with house matrons, the school counsellor and the school doctor to ensure the effective medical care of pupils.
- 3.9 Measures to reduce risk from fire are good. External consultants have conducted a comprehensive risk assessment which is regularly reviewed. Good liaison has been established with the local fire officers, who have visited the school. Regular fire evacuation practices are conducted. Members of staff have been trained in the use of emergency equipment.
- 3.10 The school takes its health and safety responsibilities seriously and has established a very good set of policies and procedures. Rigorous risk assessments have been carried out for sport and in departments, and are conducted for all trips. Members of staff receive training in a variety of health and safety skills, including emergency first aid, mountain leadership and minibuss driving. The health and safety officer, a former senior teacher, keeps meticulous records of health and safety issues and reports regularly to the governors. Pupils in Jerwoods are taught about internet safety in their ICT lessons and about the need for care when crossing the roads that traverse the school buildings. The school is aware of potential problems with traffic as pupils move between school buildings and is doing everything it can to minimise risks, particularly by training pupils in road safety.
- 3.11 Attendance and admissions registers are properly and accurately maintained and unexpected absences are followed up promptly. The school fulfils its responsibilities under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act. Meals are nutritious with a good range of choice. Pupils appreciate the quality of their meals and snacks.
- 3.12 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

- 3.13 The school has established strong links with its parents and the local community in line with its stated aims. The loyal and trusting parent body is overwhelmingly supportive of the school, as was also the case at the time of the last inspection. Parents have ample opportunity to visit, communicate with and become involved in school activities. Reporting to parents is good and informative and much improved since the last inspection. The school is a major presence in the town and many of its activities add to the quality of life in the local community. Drama and sports festivals, art and design workshops and the extensive community service programme ensure that pupils involve themselves extensively beyond the school gates, as well as regularly welcoming local residents into the school. An existing link

- with an overseas school is intended to herald the beginning of international partnership development, in line with the IB philosophy.
- 3.14 Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with the school. They cited the broad range of well-taught curricular subjects, the extensive extra-curricular programme and the positive attitudes and values promoted by the school alongside sensitive and careful guidance as their main causes for satisfaction. No aspect of the school's life attracted criticism from more than a small minority of the parents. Some of these parents commented adversely about the amount of homework set at the end of a long day and about the speed of the school's response to parental concerns. However, inspection evidence did not indicate problems in either area that are detrimental to pupils' progress or well-being, or to parental relations. That coursework deadlines at GCSE may on occasion overlap is inevitable but the school makes every effort to minimise this problem with support workshops and well-structured personal attention. The first line for parental concerns is the pupil's tutor, who will involve the housemaster or housemistress at appropriate stages of any investigation. Inspection of records confirmed the care with which serious concerns are handled.
- 3.15 Parents receive much valuable information from the school which enables them to know what is going on and to be fully involved in their children's education. Publications, such as the school magazine, *The Oakhamian*, and the arts calendar, are of a high quality and give a vivid picture of all aspects of school life. Many other informative booklets, and the headmaster's termly newsletter, are sent home and the key development planned for the future is a redesigned website. Parents' evenings are arranged at strategic times, as are the informative workshops held on issues of parental concern. An active parents' committee, with wide representation, meets termly and serves as a valuable sounding board and channel of communication for the headmaster. Parents are also involved in assisting with careers advice through the recently established parent skill-share scheme, which has already created a useful database for providing work experience opportunities, presentations and talks, careers advice and interview practice.
- 3.16 Parents are kept well informed about their children's work and progress through the two methods of academic reporting. Progress reports produced every four weeks consist of effort and attainment grades and brief comments. These enable progress to be effectively tracked and are sufficiently frequent for under-performance to be identified rapidly and rectified. Records of achievement are termly reports containing full comments and advice on work, games and activities, and include targets identified by tutors, housemasters and housemistresses in order to promote achievement. A written pupil self-evaluation is used to encourage further discussion both at school and home. These reports form the basis of discussion at the appropriately timed parents' evenings, enabling parents to play a full and effective role in their children's education.
- 3.17 Parental concerns are treated seriously by the school. Parents are encouraged to voice their concerns, if they have them, as this raises awareness and helps to improve standards. An effective formal complaints procedure is established for both parents and pupils, and the school states the time-scale in which it will respond. House staff are the first points of contact for parents; more serious issues are escalated to senior staff as appropriate and, from the evidence of the written records, handled with due diligence.
- 3.18 The school has worked hard to develop and foster good relationships and links with the local community. It has created a very good spectrum of service activities through its Duke of Edinburgh's Award and community service schemes, and many pupils are involved in this aspect of the school's outreach to the local community. In addition to the regular programmes, two service weekends in October and March involve large numbers of pupils

going out into the community and guests coming into school. One afternoon party alone involved 180 guests being hosted by pupils at lunch and then entertained with a dramatic production.

- 3.19 The school regards itself as being a part of Oakham town. The headmaster's poetry group has productively linked the school with other local schools in a cultural partnership. Regular involvement of the music, art and drama departments in the Oakham Festival and other initiatives involving local primary school children in language projects, music workshops, singing days or the samba project, together with the Wednesday lunchtime concerts in the neighbouring church and the all-year-round arts programme to which all are welcomed, add up to a significant community involvement by a confident and inclusive school.
- 3.20 The school regularly arranges overseas trips and expeditions which enhance the educational experience of the pupils. The development of alliances with overseas schools in Mombasa and Nairobi, beyond those already established for language exchanges and ambitious charitable projects, such as the Christmas shoebox appeal started by a Year 9 pupil, is also planned in order to further the international dimension of the school.
- 3.21 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

- 3.22 A strong boarding ethos lies at the heart of school life and provision in this area is outstanding, fully supporting the school's aims and an improvement on the very good standard reported at the time of the last inspection. Boarders are happy, purposeful, well cared for and proud of their houses. Relationships within houses, and between staff and boarders, are extremely good. Pupils respond well to the trust placed in them over their conduct within the house, around the school and within the town. They appreciate their accommodation and the improvements to many houses that have recently taken place. Although the houses all have their individual ethos, each one provides a safe environment in which its members can flourish. Boarders in Jerwoods benefit from having their own self-contained area of the school and their own extremely friendly and supportive houses.
- 3.23 House staff work hard to create a family atmosphere in each house which provides security and comfort for all boarders. House staff teams meet frequently so that all are kept up-to-date with issues relating to particular boarders. This helps to ensure that all boarders benefit from the very high standard of personal care which is a characteristic feature of the boarding experience. Prefects and other pupils in positions of responsibility provide valued additional support within the house and are good role models for younger boarders. New international boarders are welcomed into their houses and a significant effort is made to integrate them quickly into house life, although a small number of overseas parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire are concerned that the needs of pupils leaving for or returning after long journeys are given insufficient consideration. Record keeping is good in all houses and housemasters and mistresses have been provided with training during 2007, both of which represent improvements since the most recent inspection of boarding standards.
- 3.24 Boarders enjoy a diverse and stimulating range of activities which are designed to suit the particular age group within the house. The boarders themselves play a significant part in identifying and staging the activities on offer during the week and at weekends. Boarders also benefit from the leisure and study facilities within all the houses and the extensive sport, creative arts, ICT and library facilities available within the school campus. The quality of catering for all meals throughout the week is high and boarders eat in the dining hall so they can come together as a community and eat a balanced, healthy meal together. Boarders'

medical well-being is effectively managed, via the house matrons and the staff in the medical centre.

- 3.25 The recent improvement in the quality of boarding accommodation has raised the standard so that it is now consistently high. The fact that the most recent inspection of boarding standards in February 2006 made no recommendations gives clear indication that the school had taken all necessary action from previous inspections and improved the boarding experience for all. The entrance lobbies to the houses are decorated to provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere, often exhibiting examples of pupils work and achievements and thereby encouraging good behaviour and raising aspirations. All houses offer an appropriate range of resources and space to enable groups of pupils to get together in particular areas whilst other members of the house can enjoy quiet space. Access to the computer network and printing facilities within houses is very good, as also is access to the ICT department resources and the library, both of which are open during the evening.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The hardworking, highly committed and very aware group of trustees provide strong and effective governance. The structures and arrangements that the trustees have established are successful in allowing them the good insight into the working of the school necessary to enable them to offer valuable support, advice and challenge to the staff. The work of the trustees contributes significantly to the school's success in achieving its aims, as was noted at the time of the last inspection.
- 4.2 The trustees are alert to the need to keep themselves well informed about changes in their own responsibilities with respect, for example, to the monitoring of child protection and health and safety and are looking to strengthen further their awareness in this area. New trustees are well inducted into their role. Some trustees attend training courses but the provision of on-site training for them is under consideration in order to improve the accessibility of training in pursuit of the trustees' aim to provide excellent governance.
- 4.3 The trustees are conscientious in discharging their duties and play a full and effective role in educational development and financial planning. They, with the assistance of the bursar's department, have ensured both prudent financial management and ample investment in resources and facilities to support teaching, learning and the provision of high quality care. The monitoring of educational development, a function undertaken by the whole board, is facilitated by the comprehensive annual report to the trustees, to which all heads of department contribute.
- 4.4 Relationships with the staff are good and open. One trustee, herself a parent, has an important specific responsibility for being available for and listening to staff. Members of staff have high regard for the role that the trustees play.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 Leadership of the school, both as a whole and in each section, is strong and provides clear direction and focus, as was also reported following the last inspection. The school's characteristic vision is unambiguously communicated by the headmaster and his senior management team, and is understood and shared by the whole staff. This results in the school successfully achieving most of its goals, and often doing so outstandingly well. The inclusion of the well-considered school development plan in the staff handbook is helpful and ensures unity of purpose at all levels.
- 4.6 The senior management team is effective in analysing needs and setting priorities for the school's development, for example their focus on the primacy of the classroom whilst honouring the school's commitment to the total curriculum, and these are made apparent in the school development plan. Although it is not evident how departmental development plans either feed into or flow from whole school objectives as no direct relationship between the two planning processes is established, members of the senior management team show in their self-evaluation of the school a high degree of awareness of the school's strengths and needs.
- 4.7 New appointments to the senior management team and its restructuring have led to some lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities. Detailed job descriptions for members of the senior management team are not currently available to all staff and some teachers and heads of

department are insufficiently clear to whom they are accountable and for what. The current appraisal system, known as staff review, whilst recognising the multiplicity of roles played by all members of staff, does not empower members of middle management to take responsibility and be accountable for performance in their area by giving them a leading role in the process and its follow-up. The formal staff review system places relatively little emphasis upon lesson observation, although open-door teaching and mutual lesson observations by teachers are indicative that the school values good practice in this area. The good provision of professional development, in particular, is appreciated by staff and contributes to the school's progress.

- 4.8 Good procedures and a comprehensive set of policies for the effective management of the school have been developed. Procedures for monitoring compliance with regard to these procedures and policies depend on the clarity of the line of accountability and thus vary in their effectiveness. Monitoring of the quality of marking, for example, is inconsistent across departments. Management by housemasters and housemistresses is good and creates a positive and distinctive ethos in each house.
- 4.9 The senior management team is successful in securing high quality staff and is regarded by staff as highly supportive in enabling them to perform their roles effectively. Rigorous recruitment procedures are in place to check the suitability of teaching and non-teaching staff, including volunteers and trustees. The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and the arrangements established are effective and enable such teachers to acquire fully qualified status. Arrangements for the formal mentoring and monitoring of all new staff, or of those appointed to new roles within the school, are not clearly defined and, although new members of staff feel well supported and able to seek advice, expectations are not always made explicit.
- 4.10 The accommodation, buildings and grounds are of high quality and are very well maintained and cared for by a dedicated team. Financial provision is appropriate and the allocation of resources ample, although it is not always apparent to staff how financial and other priorities are decided.
- 4.11 Administration of the school is efficient and teachers are well supported in carrying out their functions, by a hard-working and committed senior team.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.13 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The distinctive and richly diverse educational experience enjoyed by the pupils, from Jerwoods through to the sixth form, is of excellent quality and fully reflects the school's vision of a total curriculum and the objectives that flow from it. The outstanding pastoral and boarding care provided are based on the strongly supportive and mutually respectful relationships between pupils and staff at all levels of the school. The pupils are courteous, willing and cooperative learners who achieve well in both their academic and extra-curricular endeavours, as is apparent from the good examination results and the high quality achieved in sport and the arts. The members of staff are highly committed and provide an extensive range of opportunities at school and through the many trips and expeditions arranged. The very good attitudes and values promoted by the school's ethos contribute to the strong spiritual, moral and social development of the pupils and are well supported by the parents. The governors and senior staff provide very good leadership and clear educational direction, but some aspects of management relating to accountability and the monitoring of teaching, marking and progress need to be strengthened in order to ensure that the good teaching and aspirations that predominate become universal as the school strives to improve on its already good standards.
- 5.2 The school has made significant progress in most aspects since the most recent inspections of the school, one conducted by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) in October 2001 and an inspection of boarding welfare by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) in January 2003. Subsequent annual reviews of boarding standards by the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) have confirmed that the school has addressed all the recommendations of the NCSC report to their satisfaction. The report following the ISI inspection made five main recommendations. Good progress has been made in all five areas but further work remains to be done in the two relating to the monitoring and appraisal of teaching and to the use of ICT by pupils as a learning tool. This report contains further comment and recommendations in these two areas, whilst recognising the wide-ranging improvements made since the last inspection, notably in the extension of the curriculum, the increased quality of teaching, the enhanced boarding provision and the further development of links with parents through better reporting systems.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 All major aspects of the school are either good or outstanding. In order to improve further the high quality of the education that it offers, the school should:
1. clarify and strengthen lines of accountability, empower heads of department and ensure more effective monitoring of teaching and marking;
 2. encourage more use by pupils of both ICT and books as instruments for independent research and learning;
 3. continue to develop the use of information about pupils' aptitudes obtained from standardised tests to identify underachievement and to promote attainment.
- 5.5 No further action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 5th to 8th November, 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils from all years in the school. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with members of the governing body, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, tutor periods, house meetings and chapel services. Inspectors visited both day and boarding houses and the medical centre. The responses of parents to a pre-inspection questionnaire were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school, including a self-evaluation.

List of Inspectors

Mr Rodney Fox	Reporting inspector
Mrs Glynis Brown	Deputy head, HMC school
Mr Magnus Cowie	Deputy head, HMC school
Miss Theresa Homewood	Deputy head, HMC school
Mr Julian Johnson-Munday	Headmaster, HMC school
Ms Heather McKissack	Senior mistress, HMC school
Mr Andrew Reekes	Deputy head and director of studies, HMC school
Mr Tony Woolstone	Former deputy head, HMC school