

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

WOODHOUSE GROVE SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

12th – 15th March 2007

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Woodhouse Grove School

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

Full Name of the School	Woodhouse Grove School
DfES Number	683/6113
Registered Charity Number	529205
Address	Apperley Bridge, Bradford, West Yorkshire BD10 0NR.
Telephone Number	0113 250 2477
Fax Number	0113 250 5290
Email Address	enquiries@woodhousegrove.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr David Humphreys
Chairman of Governors	Mr Brian Greenwood
Age Range	11 – 18 years
Gender	Co-educational
Inspection Dates	12th – 15th March 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 has accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) 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 CSCI report can be found at www.csci.org.uk.

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

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Woodhouse Grove was founded in 1812 by the Methodist Conference as a school for the sons of Methodist ministers. In 1883 the school was re-founded to admit boys from a wider range of backgrounds. Girls were admitted to the sixth form in the 1970s and the school has been fully co-educational since 1985.
- 1.2 The school's aims endeavour to reflect its Christian ethos as follows:
 - to develop the academic potential of each pupil, successfully and enjoyably;
 - to foster mature, caring behaviour and high standards of social responsibility;
 - to encourage sound judgment, discipline and integrity;
 - to develop talents and skills whether physical, cultural, technical or social;
 - to prepare pupils for the world they will encounter when they leave school.
- 1.3 The school is situated in a 70 acre site in the valley of the river Aire, between Bradford and Leeds and admits boys and girls from the age of 11. The nursery and junior schools, Ashdown Lodge and Bronte House, are both situated a quarter of a mile from Woodhouse Grove.
- 1.4 The boarding accommodation consists of three houses, a mixed junior boarding house, which includes a small number of junior age pupils from Bronte House, and one house each for senior boys and girls. In addition to the newly-built boys' boarding house, the school has recently opened a new sports hall and theatre, together with refurbished science laboratories, and classrooms for teaching humanities.
- 1.5 Woodhouse Grove currently has 710 pupils aged 11 to 18, of whom 103 are boarders. There are 168 pupils in the sixth form. Just under two-thirds of pupils are boys and just over a third, girls.
- 1.6 Entry to the senior school is by reference to reports from junior and preparatory schools, interview, and examination at age 11, although pupils from Bronte House proceed automatically into Woodhouse Grove. Standardised tests confirm that there is a broad range of ability levels amongst pupils entering at age 11. Two-thirds of pupils are above the average range of ability nationally with half of these being well above average. One tenth of pupils are of below average ability. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, results in public examinations at GCSE level will be above the national average for all maintained schools. In the sixth form, tests of developed ability confirm that pupils' ability levels are average for all pupils taking A-level examinations. If they are performing in line with their abilities, results in public examinations at A level will be broadly in line with the national average for all maintained schools.
- 1.7 Pupils come from a wide geographical area, across the North of England. Around one tenth of pupils come from families where English is not the only language spoken at home. There are currently no pupils with a statement of special educational need. About half of the intake at age 11 is from Bronte House and others come from a variety of independent and maintained schools. At present most pupils in Year 11 continue into the sixth form, with leavers moving to local sixth form colleges or entering into vocational courses.
- 1.8 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a good, active education in every sense, for both boys and girls, reflecting its Christian ethos. The curriculum has breadth and challenge. Provision for extra-curricular activities is good, and outstanding in the area of physical development. In this way the school achieves its aim to provide opportunities for pupils to develop talents and skills across all areas.
- 2.2 The school seeks to develop the academic potential of each pupil, successfully and enjoyably. The broad curriculum provided throughout the school plays a significant role in supporting this development. The comprehensive programme of sports activities, together with a good array of creative and cultural activities, complements this provision.
- 2.3 In Years 7 to 11, the curriculum supports pupils' mathematical and scientific development well, alongside the study of at least one modern foreign language. Opportunities for pupils to develop skills in information and communications technology (ICT), and design technology (DT), have been improved extensively since the last inspection. A full personal and social education (PSE) programme has been developed within the curriculum in Years 7 to 11 and operates well. Both parents, in response to questionnaires, and pupils in discussions, expressed a desire for the availability of food technology and dance within the curriculum. The school acknowledges these views and has concrete plans for their inclusion, when suitable accommodation can be created. A good amount of time is provided in the curriculum for pupils' physical development. The curricular arrangements support pupils' development of skills in numeracy and literacy well.
- 2.4 In the sixth form, the curriculum offers a good range of choices to suit the broad ability range of the pupils. Pupils may, alongside a good range of mainstream subjects, study subjects as diverse as media studies, further mathematics and, added recently, psychology. This ensures that all pupils have the opportunity to develop their interests and talents, whether scientific, literary, linguistic or creative. PSE is continued in the sixth form through a series of talks, discussion groups and meetings, compulsory for all pupils, which include such issues as healthy eating, driving skills and drug awareness.
- 2.5 The school has substantially increased the number and range of extra-curricular activities available since the last inspection, building on the already existing, and strong, provision for sporting activity. This has been particularly evident in arts-based activities, where a notable, positive feature is a successful policy to include all pupils, of whatever ability level, who wish to participate. In music, for example, bands at intermediate level give pupils who have limited playing experience the opportunity to make music with others. These pupils are encouraged to take their music making as seriously as those who play in the much more experienced swing band, to the pupils' obvious enjoyment in both cases. The house system, in a new co-ordinated form, provides a similarly effective vehicle for competitive participation in activities for pupils of diverse abilities. The school offers an increasing number of activities which give pupils the chance to extend their interests in academic subjects beyond the classroom, such as the history club for younger pupils. This provision is not yet developed to the point where it offers full opportunities to pupils, particularly in Years 10 and 11, to extend their view of subjects beyond the confines of examination specifications. Opportunities to experience voluntary service in the community are developing well, with almost half of pupils in Year 12 engaged at present.
- 2.6 Arrangements to prepare pupils for the next stage of their development are good, and have been improved substantially since the last inspection. Links between the senior school and

Bronte House are much more clearly defined. These include some shared teaching, and a careful consideration of the transition between the two schools, whilst acknowledging the need for some retrenchment of learning to take place in Year 7, when a significant proportion of pupils enter from other schools. Good and appropriate careers advice is offered throughout Years 7 to 11 through the PSE programme. In the sixth form, senior teachers oversee and administer a comprehensive universities admissions programme linked with effective and caring vocational guidance. These arrangements provide a sound basis for pupils to make decisions.

- 2.7 The curriculum is carefully planned to provide breadth and accessibility. Time is used well in Years 7 to 9, although the arrangements for language teaching currently put some pressure on the time available for teaching in aesthetic subjects. The school is actively reviewing this situation. Setting is used well, to group pupils of similar ability levels together where possible. Pupils felt that they were given a good range of choices in deciding which subjects to follow in GCSE. In the sixth form, the options system allows for combinations of most subjects to be chosen, allowing popular subjects, such as mathematics and business studies, to be taken by those who wish to study them. The provision of a fifth 'block' in the curriculum plan successfully allows time for enrichment studies which are not examination based, or for more able pupils to take extra subjects at AS level. The use of lunchtimes and after school ensures that there is plenty of time for pupils to participate in activities, although, such is pupils' enthusiasm to enjoy the many activities on offer, clashes inevitably occur. Monitoring of pupils' participation in activities is currently patchy, making it difficult at times to ensure that pupils are not over-committed.
- 2.8 The curricular arrangements for pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities, and those for whom English is an additional language, are well defined and operate successfully. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum is flexible, allowing pupils to be given time for support by withdrawing from study of a modern foreign language. In Years 10 and 11 pupils may select one fewer option for GCSE study. In the sixth form, arrangements are made on an individual basis. Arrangements for the academically most able pupils are less clearly defined on paper, but operate successfully through setting, and the provision of up-to-date information about pupils' abilities, which teachers act upon in their lesson planning. The most able pupils in sport thrive through excellent opportunities to play at the highest levels. In the sixth form, extra lessons are arranged for more able pupils, to assist in applications to specific universities.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 Pupils achieve good standards in relation to their abilities in lessons and in public examinations. Boys and girls are equally successful. This builds on the achievement remarked upon in the last inspection report. Pupils perform well in a wide range of activities and some achievements in sports are outstanding. This reflects the school's aim to enable pupils to develop their talents and skills whatever their potential, and in whatever field. Pupils have good attitudes to work and study, although some pupils are unadventurous in their learning.
- 2.11 Pupils understand their work well and develop appropriate skills to a good level. In all lessons and written work seen in Years 7 to 9, pupils demonstrated an understanding of the subject appropriate to their age and the level of achievement was often good or higher. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make good progress towards the demands of GCSE and sixth form pupils' achievement in relation to their abilities is good and sometimes better. Pupils of all ages demonstrate secure knowledge of the subjects they study. Pupils are able to put

- 2.12 Pupils of all ability levels within the school achieve well across the curriculum including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and those for whom English is an additional language. When given opportunities to extend their skills, more able pupils attain high levels of achievement. In further mathematics in the sixth form and in Years 10 and 11 some able linguists can speak confidently in three modern foreign languages. In the sixth form, able pupils in a Year 12 English lesson discussed the poetry of Hardy with flair. Some more able pupils make less rapid progress than they might when given limited opportunities to extend their skills. This was evident in some science lessons in Year 11, where pupils were not often encouraged to look at issues beyond the demands of the examination specification. Pupils with learning difficulties or disabilities make good progress throughout the school.
- 2.13 Pupils' attainment in GCSE is good in relation to their abilities. Results, over the last three years for which comparative data is available, have been well above the national average for all maintained schools in nearly all subjects. Boys and girls achieve equally high standards. At A level, pupils' attainment is good in relation to their abilities; their results, over the last three years for which comparative data is available, have been above the national average for all maintained schools. Pupils' achievement in mathematics and history at A level has been well above the national average for all maintained schools. The majority of Year 13 pupils proceed to higher education at their first choice of destination.
- 2.14 Pupils achieve high, often excellent, standards in the many and varied sporting activities offered by the school, both within and outside the curriculum. During the week of the inspection the under-15 Rugby team reached the final of a national schools rugby competition. In tennis, teams have won the Girls' National Schools championship twice in the last three years. The under-14 cricket team were Yorkshire county champions in 2006. Individual pupils have represented England in many team and individual sports, including football, tennis and swimming. Pupils from the school regularly participate in theatre groups outside the school, including the National Youth Theatre.
- 2.15 Pupils of all ages are articulate. They are able to discuss the ideas behind their work, although sometimes in the sixth form they need prompting to do so in detail. They listen well and intently, particularly to instructions from teachers, and to one another. Pupils are able to reason and argue cogently when given the opportunity. In Years 7 to 9 they were often seen to think for themselves, but less evidence was seen in lessons and written work in Years 10 and 11. In the sixth form, pupils develop the ability to discuss and argue a case effectively, as seen in presentations on war, famine and AIDS in French, and in English and history lessons. Written work is fluent and communicates ideas clearly. Pupils read well, both to themselves and to others.
- 2.16 Mathematical skills are applied effectively across the curriculum in all age groups. This was evident in varied forms; in art in Year 12 it was seen in the understanding of the application of number in the work of Bridget Riley, whilst in physics in Year 13 pupils showed both numerical and graph-related skills in exploring radio isotopes. Some business studies pupils found the application of probability challenging, in questions on decision making.

- 2.17 Pupils' use of ICT is well developed in most areas of the curriculum. It is excellent in Year 7, but is restricted in scope in science in later years, where there is limited development of data logging equipment at present. In some subjects, pupils use ICT imaginatively, for example in project work and research.
- 2.18 Pupils organise their work well. Their files and workbooks are usually methodical and suitably annotated. When instructed, pupils take notes effectively. In some lessons in the sixth form, notes were taken well from dictation, but some pupils lacked the confidence to take notes on their own initiative.
- 2.19 Pupils study and work effectively as directed by their teachers, and do so successfully on their own, when encouraged to do so. The library is often used as a resource for independent research. Teamwork is a strength of the school, operating at a particularly high level in sport, and this was reflected in group work in lessons, as seen in English and science in Years 7 and 9.
- 2.20 Pupils work hard, and perseverance is a notable characteristic of their attitude in all areas of school life. In interviews, pupils stressed their enjoyment in participating in the very diverse programme of activities offered by the school.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.21 The school's aim of creating a caring, accepting and secure Christian community is pursued with quiet integrity, and achieved well. Within this community pupils develop strong moral and social awareness alongside an understanding of their own and other cultures. Pupils develop self-confidence, and an appropriate sense of self-worth, particularly through their sporting endeavours.
- 2.22 Pupils' spiritual awareness is developed effectively through religious studies lessons, assemblies and talks, in an understated yet sincere manner. In all aspects of their school experience pupils are encouraged to think about their attitude to life, and to their work and activities, and their demeanour often reflects a growing understanding of how they relate to those around them. Around the school, many pupils demonstrate quiet confidence in their bearing. Prefects, for example, carry out their duties without undue show. The school's ethos of inclusiveness means that pupils are able to express themselves openly, and with confidence, in the many academic, sporting and creative activities in which they can participate, whatever their level of ability. The sense of community created in this way is echoed in the supportive environment of the boarding houses, where boarders feel that their contributions to school life are valued.
- 2.23 Morally pupils develop well. Pupils' behaviour demonstrates a clear sense of right and wrong, in common with the school's aim to encourage sound judgement, discipline and integrity in its pupils. In the growing number of activities, such as the history club, pupils are encouraged to consider moral issues associated with their interests, which they do with care. Pupils in Year 10 set their own standards of acceptable behaviour when given a new common room, and worked with staff to enforce these. In a Year 11 religious studies lesson, pupils were articulate in discussing attitudes to punishment.
- 2.24 Pupils' social development is good. Their social skills are highly developed in most cases. They are lively yet courteous in their behaviour around the school. The many sporting opportunities in the school enable pupils to grow in self-esteem as well as develop a sense of being part of a team. This sense of working together was evident in music and drama rehearsals and in games practices. The personal and social education course in Years 7 to 11 enables pupils to reflect upon current issues, and develop a good awareness of civic

- 2.25 Pupils' cultural awareness is good, and they effectively use opportunities within and outside the curriculum to develop their understanding of their own and other cultures. They show an awareness of significant figures in other cultures. Pupils discussing the idea of greatness in a Year 7 history lesson on Alfred the Great moved on to discuss the historical significance of African and American civil rights leaders. Regular tours and trips abroad give opportunities to experience other cultures which pupils appreciate and gain much from, such as a rugby tour to South Africa. Opportunities to experience different cultures within the curriculum are good. From time to time representatives of different cultures and religions visit to speak within the religious studies curriculum, but there are fewer opportunities for whole year groups to appreciate such experiences on a regular basis. Pupils regularly participate in charitable activities, such as concerts to raise money for the National Children's Home.
- 2.26 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.27 Throughout the school, teaching is good, encouraging the acquisition of new knowledge. The commitment of all teachers to pupils' development, commended at the last inspection, has been maintained and strengthened. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed, and some teaching was outstanding. Such examples of best practice, particularly with regard to marking and assessment, are not currently shared widely across all departments, a situation which the recently introduced system of faculty heads is designed to address.
- 2.28 Teaching encourages and enables pupils, whatever their ability, to make progress in all areas of the curriculum, including the creative and intellectual, and in activities, particularly in sport. Teachers across all age groups and levels of ability enable pupils to increase their understanding and develop their skills. Teaching makes a marked contribution to pupils' success in public examinations, although some pupils would benefit from a more varied and adventurous approach to teaching which takes them beyond the boundaries of examination specifications. The learning support unit provides excellent strategies for the support of individual pupils' needs, and pupils for whom English is an additional language receive careful guidance and help.
- 2.29 Secure organisation in written work is encouraged in lessons and homework, which gives pupils firm support. There is a growth in the encouragement of independent learning, particularly in Years 7 to 9, and in the sixth form, in some subjects. In history in Year 8, for example, pupils are required to pursue independent project work, with imaginative results. Some other teachers rely heavily on worksheets and dictated notes. Pupils commented on feeling supported by the security of teacher-generated notes, but in some cases this led to a low level of enquiry from pupils in lessons. In the most productive lessons, teachers set tasks which required pupils to make their own discoveries, working at a level appropriate to their ability, as seen in a performance lesson in music in Year 8.
- 2.30 Lessons are generally well planned, and teaching encourages a methodical approach to learning. Teachers have good subject knowledge and an appropriate knowledge of the topics they teach. Imaginative teaching was seen in Year 12 drama, where one half of the class acted as examiners, assessing the performances given by the other half and, in design technology in the sixth form, the decision to avoid the traditional route of using computers to generate design sheets, led to beautifully presented, hand-drawn work by pupils. Teachers

use time well, with most lessons characterised by an atmosphere of concentrated work, borne of teachers' expectations that pupils will behave responsibly and work hard.

- 2.31 Relationships between teachers and pupils are good and productive. There is a good understanding of individual pupils' aptitudes and needs, although occasionally teachers underestimate the potential of pupils, for example in art. Teachers are aware of the results of standardised tests that pupils undertake at regular intervals during their school career, and use these results effectively to plan teaching and to monitor pupils' progress. Teachers' awareness of the needs of those with learning difficulties and disabilities was both marked and sensitive.
- 2.32 The school provides a good range of resources. The quality of resources is good, and outstanding in sports. ICT resources are good, and are used effectively and regularly most of the time. The school library is housed in pleasant surroundings and its stock is adequate. Facilities for art, DT and music are cramped and lack the quality that purpose-built accommodation would provide. The school is aware of this and new facilities are part of the strategic plan, with appropriate financial resources allocated.
- 2.33 Assessment of pupils' work is continuous and helpful, with many teachers giving appropriate guidance to individual pupils verbally in lessons, and in written assessment, and planning future work accordingly. Marking is regular in most cases, and pupils commented that they understood and appreciated this. There is, however, inconsistency in styles of marking and assessment between and within departments. Some marking lacks specific information to guide the pupil, especially when only numerical marks are given, without comments to justify the mark. At its best, giving clear advice, and entering into a constructive dialogue with the individual pupil, marking significantly enhances pupils' progress, as seen in their workbooks in Year 8.
- 2.34 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 provides a high standard of pastoral care for its pupils, and arrangements to safeguard the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent. The school has continued to maintain, and has enhanced, the caring environment identified at the time of the last inspection.
- 3.2 The school states that pastoral care is the responsibility of the whole community. This philosophy is borne out by both arrangements for pastoral care, and the relationships to be seen between staff and pupils, and within the pupil body. The support and guidance offered by staff to pupils is both generous and effective. It facilitates pupils' development, and enables them to develop personally and academically.
- 3.3 Day to day care of pupils is the concern of heads of year, and boarding and day house staff, assisted greatly by the work of the chaplain and school nurses. All work hard and effectively, to ensure that pupils receive high standards of care and support. The role of form tutors in monitoring pupils' programmes of work activities is, however, not always consistently carried out. Many pupils commented appreciatively on the distinctive part played by the school nurses in counselling and caring for pupils beyond the requirements of purely medical care. Formal and informal communication between pastoral staff is good, and staff are kept well informed about pupils through the referral system and electronic communication.
- 3.4 An ethos of mutual respect has been fostered and developed within the school. This is evident in the excellent relationships amongst pupils, and between them and staff. Pupils are tolerant and understanding of one another, regardless of race, gender or background. Whilst few formal structures exist to ensure that different age groups mix, pupils commented that this is not necessary since 'everyone knows everyone else at Woodhouse Grove'. Older pupils help younger pupils through house activities, as mentors in the boarding houses, and by assisting in sports coaching.
- 3.5 There is a clear system to deal with disciplinary matters which may arise. Pupils understand the school's arrangements to promote good discipline and behaviour. They judge them to be fair, and consider that sanctions are operated even-handedly, when necessary. The school aims to give those who get into difficulty as many chances as possible, an approach understood and appreciated by the pupils. A good system of rewards exists, although pupils commented, and the school agrees, that improvements and refinements are needed to ensure that it operates consistently across all age groups. The school's anti-bullying policy begins with the premise that all pupils are valued, and sets out what the school can do, as a community, to curtail and prevent bullying. Instances are rare and pupils stated that, if they do arise, they are dealt with quickly and efficiently.
- 3.6 Throughout the school the welfare of pupils is provided for highly effectively. The child protection officer and staff are all aware of relevant procedures, and appropriate training is undertaken at the required intervals.
- 3.7 All necessary fire prevention measures are in place, and fire practices are held regularly and recorded. The administration of this aspect of safety is excellent. Health and safety precautions are observed throughout the school, including in areas of possible risk, such as science and design technology work areas, and in sports facilities. Risk assessments are carried out for school trips with specific guidance and instruction laid out in an excellent

school policy. The school's arrangements for the registration of day pupils, and for boarders throughout the day and evening, are appropriate and carried out effectively, with unexplained absences being followed up by the school office. The school maintains an up to date and comprehensive admissions register. An appropriate three year plan exists to develop accessibility for those with specific needs, both in new buildings and in the refurbishment of existing accommodation where practical.

- 3.8 A well-appointed medical centre provides a welcoming environment at the heart of the school. The nurses play a central role in supporting pupils' welfare, participating in the PSE course up to Year 11, and in giving talks to sixth formers. This role is appropriately enhanced with regard to the welfare of boarders. A significant number of teaching and non-teaching staff have undertaken first aid training, including nine who have received specific training related to sports injuries. A good choice of hot and cold meals is provided, and concepts of healthy eating are introduced and encouraged through the PSE programme.
- 3.9 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

- 3.10 The school maintains good links with parents, and links with the wider community are many, and evolving continually. These links are a significant element in the school's successful pursuit of its aim to prepare pupils for the world they will encounter when they leave school.
- 3.11 Responses to questionnaires sent out to parents indicated a high degree of satisfaction with all aspects of their children's education. Parents appreciate the rounded education and support given to all pupils, particularly those with learning difficulties.
- 3.12 Parents feel that they are encouraged to participate in the life of the school and highly effective partnerships have been forged. The Friends of Woodhouse Grove association is active throughout the school, and is particularly involved in fund raising and social events. Parents also organise sports clubs, assist in arranging work experience placements, and undertake some careers interviews. Parents feel welcomed by the school, and teachers support events organised by the Friends.
- 3.13 Parents receive interim reports each half term, which give effort and achievement grades, and are sent full written reports at the end of each term. The reporting system has been redesigned recently and there is some variability in its operation. The best reports are informative and diagnostic, but some are rather generalised and do not set sufficiently specific targets for improvement. Coverage of pupils' involvement in activities lacks detail in some reports. Parents have the opportunity to attend at least one consultation evening to discuss their child's progress each year, and they are happy with the organisation and timing of the meetings. They also feel that the school welcomes contact from parents at any time should there be an issue to discuss. The school has a suitable policy for the handling of complaints, which is applied appropriately when necessary, although this is rare.
- 3.14 The school has numerous, and growing links with the wider community, notably with sporting organisations such as rugby league, basketball and swimming clubs. As well as pupils going out to be involved with groups in sporting and cultural activities, the school welcomes groups in to use its facilities. Over 20 pupils in the sixth form currently participate in the Community Sports Leaders Award scheme, and through the Community Sports Partnership Programme they help to run sports activities in four local primary schools. As part of the community service programme, pupils visit nearby elderly care homes, a local residential home for those with disabilities and a school for disabled children. The

opportunity to participate in these activities is appreciated by those pupils who take part, who find the experience positive and rewarding.

- 3.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

The Quality of Boarding Education

- 3.16 The contribution made to pupils' education by boarding at the school is outstanding. Pupils experience the highest standards of care in comfortable surroundings, and enjoy a range of activities which they find stimulating and rewarding.
- 3.17 Within the three boarding houses, relationships between pupils of all ages, and from differing cultural backgrounds are friendly and positive. This includes the small number of boarders from Bronte House, who are well integrated within the junior boarding house. New boarders, especially those from overseas, greatly appreciate having a pupil mentor to help them to settle in quickly. The aims of the school's policy for integration of overseas students are fully met and ensure that those pupils feel welcome, supported and able to play a full part in the academic, social and extra-curricular life of the school. All boarding staff are committed to promoting a caring environment; they know the pupils well, and pupils feel that staff are always accessible. The chaplain, who has responsibility for pastoral oversight of all boarders, and the school nurse, provide an extra level of pastoral care, which is highly valued by pupils. Communication between the boarding houses and academic departments is effective. A forum, with representatives from all ages and boarding houses, gives pupils a voice in the running of their houses, which they feel is listened to carefully. Sixth form pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for helping with younger boarders; senior pupils listen to boarders from Bronte House read, and pupils of all ages sit with one another at tea.
- 3.18 A rich programme of evening activities is complemented by a comprehensive list of visits for boarders on Sundays, including opportunities for pupils of various faiths to go to places of worship. Often these are arranged in response to suggestions made by pupils. The library, art studios, ICT, music and sports facilities are amongst a range of facilities made available at various times to boarders. Boarders from Bronte House commented on how much they enjoyed the evening activities, such as swimming, and the trips they take part in on Sundays. Adequate time is provided for pupils to complete their homework, whilst also allowing them to participate fully in extra-curricular activities.
- 3.19 A strategic programme for remodelling and refurbishment of the boarding provision is making for considerable improvement in the boarding accommodation. The recently opened boys' boarding house is both spacious and welcoming and sixth form boys have individual study bedrooms in an annexe to the senior boys' boarding area. Ample social areas, kitchens and showers are provided in all three houses. All pupils have access to computers, which are connected to the school intranet. Day pupils are welcomed into boarding for short periods, and they feel well integrated into boarding life when they stay. All the recommendations of the last inspection by CSCI have been fully implemented.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Strong and highly effective governance ensures that a good quality of education is offered to pupils at every stage, in line with the school's aims.
- 4.2 The range of expertise on the governing body, together with the structure of their sub-committees, ensures that they maintain excellent oversight of performance in all areas of Woodhouse Grove, together with Bronte House and Ashdown Lodge. Minutes of governors' meetings and sub-committee meetings indicate that governors have an excellent knowledge of the school, its aims, and its future development needs. In this they are well supported by the Board of Management for Independent Methodist Schools, as well as gaining from close links with other schools in the Methodist Foundation.
- 4.3 Governors are aware of their responsibilities, and have a clear recognition of their strategic role. They are deeply committed to the school and its development, and contribute to educational and boarding issues through their discussion of proposals put forward by the headmaster and other members of staff. The successful completion of building developments, that have taken place since the last inspection, are indicative of sound financial planning. Governors have a thorough awareness of their legal responsibilities, for example, for health and safety, and for child protection, which are discussed at appropriate intervals at meetings.
- 4.4 Governors are routinely provided with good quality educational, pastoral and management information by the headmaster. They receive termly reports which are a comprehensive account of the school's activities and achievements, and these are used to inform future planning. Relationships between governors and staff within the school are greatly enhanced by the imaginative annual Governors' Week, when each governor spends a day of the week in school, observing activities in a particular area. These have included diverse aspects of school life, from viewing work in the bursary, to following a group of pupils through their school life, year by year. These observations significantly enhance governors' understanding of how the school operates, form a good basis for future planning and contribute to excellent relations between governors and staff.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.5 The headmaster, supported by the deputy head, provides strong leadership and is backed by a hard-working senior management team. All lead by example in pursuing the school's aims and ethos.
- 4.6 The headmaster displays a passionate belief in the school's vision, to ensure that the community values each pupil for their individual qualities. Academic excellence, sporting achievement and personal endeavour are equally encouraged and given due acknowledgement. The senior management team have distinctive and well-defined roles which are well co-ordinated to ensure the smooth running of the various aspects of the school's life.
- 4.7 Regular communication within the school, and with governors and parents, ensures that the school's needs are identified with clarity by senior management. Communication between Woodhouse Grove and Bronte House is effective, as it is between boarding and other areas of the school. Consultation with staff, through discussion groups, and the sharing of the draft

development plan, ensures that future planning is understood by all staff. Regular reviews of educational needs produce appropriate changes in management structures and policy. A recent change to institute heads of faculties in addition to heads of individual subject departments is intended to facilitate greater consistency in styles and methods of teaching across different departments of the school. Heads of academic departments put policies into practice to good effect, but co-ordinated procedures for assessment and marking are under-developed at present.

- 4.8 The school secures well-motivated teaching and support staff who are supported by an appropriate staff review programme. Issues arising from this process aid the identification of training needs, which are addressed regularly and effectively. Criminal Records Bureau checks are carried out appropriately on all new staff and arrangements for the induction of new teachers are good. Arrangements are in place for newly qualified teachers to be monitored and trained appropriately, and these operate well.
- 4.9 Financial planning in the school is good. A monthly budget meeting chaired by the headmaster ensures that targets are kept in view and that these continue to reflect educational and pastoral priorities. Financial resources are allocated with clear educational benefit to the pupils in mind. This is reflected in recent developments such as the new sports hall, a result of imaginative planning in co-operation with a local professional rugby league club.
- 4.10 The smooth running of the school is enhanced by the hard work of members of the secretarial and support staff, who take a pride in contributing to the development of the school in diverse areas, such as the upkeep of its buildings, and the provision of a safe environment for pupils to live and work in.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The dedicated leadership of the headmaster and senior management team, together with the committed approach of staff to teaching and caring for pupils, enables the school to meet its aim of providing an education which recognises the contribution of all pupils, in whatever field, with success. This is enhanced by the provision of a good range of extra-curricular activities, especially in sport. The school fosters caring behaviour, which is a particular feature of life in the boarding houses. Pupils develop as articulate, confident and friendly individuals. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve good standards in their academic work and many excel in sport. The support and enterprise of the governing body ensure that resources exist to maintain the school's success, and that planning for future development is realistic, based on constant and well-judged consideration of the school's strengths and weaknesses.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection in 2001 the school has made significant progress. Curricular provision for ICT and PSE has improved to become a significant element in pupils' educational experience. The arrangements for careers education and guidance have been considerably strengthened. Transition from Bronte House to the senior school has been made secure and strong links between the two schools in other areas have been established. Activities in cultural and aesthetic areas continue to grow, with many pupils taking full advantage of the opportunities provided. The school's approach to health and safety issues is now highly organised, to good effect. The management of the school has been strengthened by creating a better balance of men and women in senior posts. Accommodation for sport has been enhanced through new, purpose-built buildings and pitches. The school has also benefited from a new theatre, art gallery and from new and refurbished science laboratories. The new boarding house for boys provides up to date accommodation, and has created space for more comfortable accommodation in the other houses. The academic achievements of pupils have continued to develop, with many pupils, of all abilities and ages, achieving academic standards which fulfil their potential.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 No major aspect of the school is weak, but in order to improve its provision further it should:
1. continue to develop the faculty system, in order to encourage the sharing of best practice in teaching and marking, and the use of a broader range of teaching styles.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 12th to 15th March 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 medical centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mr Ian Brinton	Former Head of Sixth Form, HMC School
Dr Stephen Downes	Deputy Head, HMC School
Mr Alan Roberts	Former Head, Maintained School
Mr Stephen Smith	Headmaster, HMC School
Mr David Stockwell	Former Head of Department, HMC School
Mrs Rosalind Wilson	Former Deputy Head, GSA School