

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Eastbourne College

Full Name of the School	Eastbourne College
DCSF Number	845/6014
Registered Charity Number	307071
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Age Range	13 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	22nd to 25th September 2008

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.

CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Characteristics of the School	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	2
	The Educational Experience Provided	2
	Pupils' Learning and Achievements.....	4
	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	5
	The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment).....	6
3.	THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	9
	The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils.....	9
	The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	10
	The Quality of Boarding Education	11
4.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	13
	The Quality of Governance	13
	The Quality of Leadership and Management	14
5.	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....	16
	Overall Conclusions	16
	Next Steps.....	17
6.	SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE	18
	List of Inspectors	18

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Eastbourne College is a boarding and day school for boys and girls aged from 13 to 18. Situated in a residential district in the town of Eastbourne, East Sussex, it was founded as a boys' school in 1867 by the seventh Duke of Devonshire and other prominent local citizens. In 1969, the school admitted girls into the sixth form, and in 1995 it started to take them at the age of thirteen. While welcoming pupils of all faiths and none, the school's religious affiliation is to the Church of England. It was last inspected in October 2002.
- 1.2 The college sets out to be a happy, inspiring community providing challenging teaching as well as supportive pastoral care. It strives to offer an holistic education of three strands, the academic curriculum, the co-curricular (extra-curricular) programme and the unspoken curriculum. The unspoken curriculum comprises the personal development of pupils, particularly through the way in which they are treated and in the way they are expected to behave. The school encourages outcome from activity, not activity for its own sake, and it sets out to give pupils the best possible preparation to lead, serve and achieve personal fulfilment in their adult lives. It endeavours to provide a unique, coherent, co-educational boarding experience for all, boys, girls, boarders and day pupils. It sets great store by its five key values: the pursuit of excellence, participation, integrity, courtesy and kindness.
- 1.3 The number on roll is 629 (384 boys, 245 girls) of whom 311 (192 boys and 119 girls) are boarders. Those in the sixth form (Year 12 and Year 13) number 278 (169 boys and 109 girls.) Year groups in the sixth form are slightly larger than those in Years 9 to 11. The majority of pupils entering the school in Year 9 at the age of thirteen come from feeder preparatory schools in the south-east of England. The school also admits a significant number of pupils at the age of sixteen into the sixth form. A small proportion of the pupils, around one in twelve, are from overseas. Socially, pupils are accommodated in houses: six for boys, of which three are day and three are boarding houses, and four for girls, two day and two boarding. Each house numbers around 60. The school gives means-tested financial help to a substantial minority of pupils.
- 1.4 In ability, pupils range from average to far above average, but are mostly in the category well above average. If pupils are performing in line with their ability, they will achieve results well above the average for pupils in maintained schools. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs (SEN). The school identifies 70 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 30 receive specialist tuition in its centre for learning support. In identifying and assessing their needs, the school has regard to the national code of practice for SEN. The school has 41 pupils who do not have English as their principal language. It gives these pupils specialist tuition in English as an additional language (EAL), and often continues this, on a reduced scale, throughout their time in the school. The school also identifies a number of pupils who are especially able. It seeks to provide additional learning challenges for them, without singling them out for particular attention.
- 1.5 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 gives its pupils an excellent range and quality of education. It succeeds in offering a full boarding experience to all pupils, boarding and day. They have an extended day and a full programme of lessons and games on Saturday. From Monday to Friday, the school expects the day pupils, as well as the boarders, to undertake most of their prep, their homework, at school, and it encourages them to involve themselves in other evening and weekend opportunities. The school succeeds in ensuring that pupils take full advantage of all that the school offers, and that at the same time they maintain a balanced approach to school life.
- 2.2 Pupils successfully aspire to and achieve academic excellence. The academic curriculum is balanced, broad and appropriate. In their responses to a questionnaire sent out in advance of the inspection, parents indicated that they overwhelmingly approve of the education that the school offers. They like the range of subjects taught, and they especially approve of the co-curricular programme.
- 2.3 The 2002 inspection team judged the curriculum to be appropriate. It was managed effectively. It was not, however, as broad as it should be and it lacked balance at certain stages. In particular, provision for several unexamined, but important, subjects was inconsistent: teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) was inadequate, religious education (RE) was not taught in Year 10 and personal social and health education (PSHE) was not taught in Year 11.
- 2.4 The school now offers a wider range of subjects. In the last six years, it has introduced several new subjects and courses. Year 9 pupils have one lesson a week each of ICT, RE and PSHE. After Year 9, however, only those pupils who choose to take the subject at GCSE or A level have formal lessons in ICT. In Years 10 to 11, pupils follow a course in life and learning skills, which includes RE and PSHE. Religious studies (RS) is now an examination option at GCSE and A-level. The design and technology (DT) department, which moved into new premises in 2003, offers product design courses in textiles and architecture. The art department has introduced courses in film and photography. Each year, one or more languages, currently Mandarin and Portuguese, are taught in activity time. Choosing from a wide range of sports options, almost all pupils have four afternoons of games, and a substantial minority take physical education (PE) as an examination subject.
- 2.5 The school continues to manage the curriculum effectively. It is clearly explained for the benefit of pupils and parents and is almost entirely accessible to all pupils. The academic assistant heads and other staff monitor it thoroughly. From this year, Years 10 and 11 pupils will sit International GCSE (IGCSE), rather than GCSE, papers in English and mathematics. Following their internal analysis of the effectiveness of sixth-form courses and examination results, the school has also recently decided that, except in mathematics, Year 12 pupils will no longer sit A-level modular examinations in January.
- 2.6 Tailored to meet the choices and needs of pupils, Years 10 and 11 timetables, as well as those for sixth-form pupils in Years 12 and 13, are exceptionally flexible. Pupils in these years are more or less guaranteed their first choice of options. This is made possible, in part, by limiting the number of subjects in which pupils are grouped by ability to the core subjects of English, French, mathematics and science.

- 2.7 The curriculum takes particular account of the needs of abler pupils, including those whom the school considers gifted or talented. The school aims to meet the needs of these pupils through the differentiated learning programme. This offers them, firstly, an accelerated timetable. The accelerated languages programme now allows able linguists to study three modern foreign languages in the time normally allocated to two. Furthermore, able pupils take mathematics, French and Latin a year early in Year 10. Many of these pupils then take an additional language or classical civilisation in Year 11, while able mathematicians begin work towards AS mathematics in the same year. Secondly, the school offers a wide range of enrichment activities and societies, for instance the Hayman Society which introduces abler pupils in Years 9 to 11 to the concepts of debate and intellectual enquiry. Scholars and other gifted and talented pupils are also encouraged, and in some cases expected, to take part in cultural visits and expeditions, in this country and abroad. Thirdly, it is hoped that staff will meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils by setting them extension activities in the classroom. This has yet to happen to the extent that the school wishes.
- 2.8 The needs of EAL and LDD pupils are well met. Overseas pupils joining the school at the age of thirteen initially have up to eleven lessons a week of specialist tuition, individually or in small groups, in place of English, French and geography. Although many begin to attend all mainstream classes within their first term or two, a minority will continue to have EAL lessons. Pupils with LDD also have specialist lessons, either individually or in small groups, from staff in the centre for learning support, who have prepared an individual education plan (IEP) for each of them.
- 2.9 The last inspection team noted a number of weaknesses in careers' provision. Arrangements are now much improved. The careers centre has a full set of brochures and other resources. The careers master and other staff provide comprehensive advice. As part of the life and learning programme, they offer a structured programme to pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Year 11 undertake work experience and, along with those in Year 12, attend an annual careers convention. Those in Year 13 applying for university receive advice on interview technique.
- 2.10 Its scope made possible by the extended day and full week, the co-curricular programme remains a distinctive and outstanding feature of the school. It includes a full games programme and a wide range of junior activities. A high proportion of the pupils take part in art, drama, technology and music. In particular, approximately one in four has at least one individual music lesson each week. The school also places great emphasis on service activities, for example in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, the service at school (S@S) programme, and on its various charity initiatives. The school is well represented in local competitions and festivals. Pupils take part in a full range of house competitions, and many attend events at weekends and in the holidays. In all these activities, as the school intends, day pupils are as fully involved as the boarders.
- 2.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.12 As they did at the time of the last inspection, pupils do well in lessons, in external examinations and in activities. They fulfil the school's aim that pupils should attain academic excellence and be thoroughly prepared for adult life. Pupils apply themselves to their studies. They articulate their ideas confidently, orally and in writing. Parents are wholly satisfied with the learning and achievement of their sons and daughters.
- 2.13 Pupils think critically and creatively. Year 12 life and learning pupils, debating abortion, intelligently contrasted the rights of the mother and the unborn child. Pupils express themselves well, in drama for example, both when directing a play and listening to instructions. The good levels of knowledge that they possess are shown in their written work. They listen carefully to each other, and they express their views articulately. The editorial of the school's weekly news-sheet, *Links*, published during the inspection, revealed a perceptive pupil view of the pressures on staff and pupils during the week of inspection.
- 2.14 A few pupils engage in independent research, often using the computers, books, journals and other information in the Cavendish learning resource centre. A Year 12 pupil interviewed had ably undertaken his own internet research on the Venezuelan president, Hugo Chavez. Year 11 and 13 drama pupils wrote their own imaginative and reflective analyses of the characters they were studying.
- 2.15 Many pupils show mathematical competence, for example in the drawing and interpretation of graphs in science. Biology, music and DT pupils use subject-specific software capably, and many studying physics are skilled data-loggers. In most other subjects, staff and pupils make little use of ICT. Pupils undertaking a sixth-form mathematics project used graphical calculators, but did not think of printing their graphs. In their weekly ICT lesson, Year 9 pupils follow an on-line tutorial course. Many do not pursue this rigorously and so do not develop their skills accordingly.
- 2.16 Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds acquire skills and knowledge that equip them for the courses that they follow and that will serve them well as adults. Scholars and those identified as gifted and talented enjoy and benefit from the various societies, events and visits to which they are invited. LDD and EAL pupils progress well and achieve good results. These pupils follow, or return to, the full curriculum, as much and as quickly as possible.
- 2.17 Pupils do well, often outstandingly well, in public examinations. The disparity between the attainment of girls and boys in public examinations, which existed at the time of the last inspection, is no longer apparent. At GCSE, pupils achieve results that are, on average, far above those of pupils in maintained schools and that are in line with those of pupils in maintained selective schools. They are good in relation to their abilities. At A level, results are well above the average for maintained schools and they are a little better than those in maintained selective schools. They are, therefore, also good in relation to pupils' abilities. Individual pupils often achieve outstanding results. Several have gained a full set of top grades at GCSE while, in art and physics for example, individual candidates have gained results that are acknowledged by the examination boards to be among the best in the country.
- 2.18 Pupils learn well. Despite the absence of bells to mark the beginning and end of lessons, pupils arrive promptly and settle quickly to work. They are keen to achieve and they persevere. They find it easy to seek additional help from staff and from older pupils. They take and maintain notes carefully and well. The majority clearly enjoy their work and they take pride in it. Year 13 history of art pupils displayed particular enthusiasm for their study of early sixteenth century churches.

- 2.19 In class, pupils often work responsibly and effectively in groups and pairs. Pairs of Year 10 biology worked together successfully on DNA modelling.
- 2.20 Whatever their ability, pupils continue to enjoy the co-curricular programme. Their only complaint is that it is often too difficult to decide which activity to choose. Many achieve individual success. In the last two years, 29 music pupils have achieved grade eight passes in Associated Board music examinations. In the last three years, nine pupils have won Arkwright scholarships for their work in DT.
- 2.21 Teamwork is the essence of much that pupils do and achieve. In their first term, all Year 9 pupils take part in a drama production directed by members of Year 12. Older pupils in the Combined Cadet Force (CCF) play a key part in training those in Year 10. The public speaking team have won the regional Rotary Youth Speaks sixth-form challenge in successive years. School games teams are similarly successful. Hockey is especially strong: the girls' under-14, -15, -16 and 1st X1s are girls' county champions, while the boys' under-18 hockey side also regularly wins the county cup.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.22 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent. The importance of personal development is embedded in the unseen curriculum. The school amply fulfils its aim of giving pupils the best possible preparation to lead, to serve and to achieve personal fulfilment in their adult lives. The pupils in turn learn to live by the key values of the pursuit of excellence, participation, integrity, courtesy and kindness. The school continues to build on the strengths, noted by inspectors in 2002, in the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness.
- 2.23 The school successfully nurtures pupils' spiritual understanding. Boarders attend school chapel each Sunday; day pupils attend two Sunday services each term. The chapel is a focus for the development of spirituality, symbolising not only the corporate life of the school, but also its function as a place for individual reflection. The chapel choir greatly enhances the beauty of liturgy and worship in chapel services, so assisting other pupils both to reflect on human issues and to develop their understanding of the Christian faith. The chaplain, other staff and, from time to time, pupils in one of the houses or those in the Christian Union challenge them to reflect on their knowledge of themselves and of the wider world. In many subjects, including the evolving life and learning course, pupils develop a sense of awe and wonder and an understanding of the numinous. Drama pupils produced sensitive work on bereavement and euthanasia. Pupils in a Year 12 RS class thoughtfully considered theological and philosophical propositions relating to the possibility of spiritual life after death.
- 2.24 Pupils steadily acquire qualities of altruism and moral maturity. Teaching staff, especially pastoral figures such as the chaplain, the housemasters and housemistresses, tutors and prefects, set an example that successfully develops pupils' understanding of what it is to be responsible and morally mature. Within the curriculum, the life and learning course encourages pupils to learn, serve, trust and respect each other, as well as those outside the school. Year 9 pupils, preparing to take part in the forthcoming production of *Oh! What a Lovely War*, thought seriously about violent conflict. Year 12 English pupils discussed the implications of social stereotyping and the deliberate exclusion of others from a group. Through attending lectures given by guest speakers, pupils in Years 12 and 13 greatly increase their understanding of social, ethical and moral issues.
- 2.25 The social development of pupils, emanating from the house system, remains excellent. By interacting with their peers and with adults, in school and outside it, pupils become aware of

their communal responsibilities. They display the integrity, courtesy, kindness, and consideration for others, for which the school stands. Prefects discussed ways of enabling Year 9 pupils in their houses to overcome any problems in settling. They and other older pupils value the opportunity to exercise pastoral care and to arrange events for younger pupils, house concerts for instance. Membership of the school council affords opportunities for elected pupils to suggest ways in which the lives of all pupils can be improved. By taking part in the S@S programme, for example the long-established and popular Monday Club for the elderly, many older pupils learn to appreciate social needs outside school. In life and learning and in RS classes, pupils learn about aspects of citizenship which prepare them to take their place as responsible adults.

- 2.26 Pupils take the many opportunities presented to them to develop their cultural awareness. In particular, through their own paintings on display, through musical and theatrical productions, as well as the various enrichment activities they attend, pupils gain a deep appreciation of culture. Within many diverse subjects, pupils acquire a broad understanding of different economic, cultural and political systems. The presence in the school of pupils from other ethnic and religious backgrounds provides an additional cultural perspective. Pupils imbibe these differences, and consequently add an understanding of other cultures and nations to their knowledge of their own. The school also organises frequent exchanges to European countries, recently to Africa, New Zealand and South America. Pupils enjoyed and benefited from hosting touring opponents, in both boys' rugby and girls' hockey, from a school in Chile.
- 2.27 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.28 Teaching remains good. It enables pupils of all abilities to acquire knowledge and make progress according to their ability, to increase their understanding and to develop their skills. As a result, the majority of pupils achieve the academic excellence for which the school strives.
- 2.29 In the main, teaching fosters in pupils the application of intellectual, physical or creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think for themselves. To increase creativity and the use of a greater variety of teaching styles in the classroom, the school encourages peer observation by staff. Teaching to a Year 13 economics set demonstrated effective use of questioning and supplementary questioning as a means of encouraging pupils to think for themselves. Teaching successfully required pupils studying German in Year 13 to express their opinions and to empathise in the target language. Many recently-arrived teachers have brought new ideas and teaching methods to the classroom. Working in pairs, members of a Year 13 geography class, studying types of farming throughout the world, were in effect teaching each other. In a small minority of lessons, teaching lacks imagination. Pupils are occasionally required to undertake routine tasks that could, in some cases, be done more effectively on worksheets or computer.
- 2.30 Teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly and to enjoy their learning. In drama, Year 10 pupils, preparing for a performance on Van Gogh, clearly enjoyed practising different narrative styles; they applied what they had learned to different character portrayals.
- 2.31 Most teaching is well planned. It includes a variety of teaching methods and provides suitable activities for learning. Year 12 history pupils were invited to list 'push' and 'pull' factors causing westward expansion in nineteenth century America. Many lessons have clearly stated objectives, which are often displayed to the class. Teaching normally makes

good use of the first few minutes of each lesson, to recapitulate topics and skills already covered before introducing new material. Teaching at the end of single lessons, however, is often rushed, so that pupils do not always have time to note in their planners details of the prep that will be required of them before the next lesson. On the other hand, towards the end of a double lesson, teaching occasionally finishes prematurely and pupils are then invited to begin their prep.

- 2.32 In general, teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the pupils. Regular formative assessment and the recording of this on each pupil's electronic record card (eRC), enables teachers to assess and adjust on a regular basis. Teaching generally takes into account the ability and attainment of different pupils. A Year 9 Latin class were divided into three ability groups, each of which was set an appropriate task. On occasions, however, teaching does not differentiate in this way.
- 2.33 Teaching enables pupils with LDD or EAL to learn quickly. Overseas pupils make rapid progress, and so often join mainstream classes after only a short period of specialist EAL tuition. A Year 12 pupil with EAL voluntarily undertook mathematics extension work on harder questions, for which she was commended. Pupils with LDD receive sympathetic and flexible individual tuition, which also enables them to maintain progress alongside their peers. Subject teachers are issued with copies of the IEPs of these pupils. Most take into account the difficulties faced by these pupils and have appropriate expectations of them. Tutors quickly note and act upon problems experienced by those with EAL, LDD or other pupils, often as a result of the three-weekly eRCs. Heads of department do not always effectively monitor the implementation of IEPs.
- 2.34 Almost all teaching demonstrates strong subject knowledge and understanding. Many teachers deal confidently with questions outside the lesson plan. Teaching in modern foreign languages makes consistent and confident use of the language being studied.
- 2.35 A wide range of resources is available to support teaching. Nearly every classroom has an interactive whiteboard and a computer. The biology, physics and music departments make particularly good use of these and similar audio-visual resources. In several other departments, however, staff do not yet make the most of their whiteboards for teaching. Older pupils are often asked to undertake mundane tasks, drawing graphs or copying tables of numbers by hand for example, that they could, with a little more training, do more quickly and accurately by computer.
- 2.36 Teachers mark clearly, analytically, and accurately. The positive advice and encouragement that they give is appreciated by the pupils, who in turn learn from these corrections and comments. The pupils also like the "Show Hsm" annotation that indicates good work to be shown to a housemaster or housemistress. In combination, teacher assessment, pupil self-evaluation and consultation with tutors are regularly used to set future targets. Continuous assessment in textiles is especially effective.

- 2.37 The school evaluates pupil performance methodically. The two assistant heads, for curriculum and for teaching and learning, thoroughly monitor pupils' examination performance against internal and national norms.
- 2.38 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 continues to have full regard to the pastoral care, and to the welfare, health and safety of its pupils. Provision remains good overall, while the quality of pastoral care, in particular, is excellent. Pupils feel secure and able to take advantage of all that the school has to offer. The school achieves its aim of creating a community centred on the key values of mutual respect, integrity and kindness.
- 3.2 The school has a clear framework to ensure thorough and effective support and guidance for pupils. Teaching staff keep detailed records of pupils' academic attainment and progress on the intranet, and many house staff make frequent and effective use of the full pastoral information that they have collated.
- 3.3 Each pupil's house, boarding or day, is the focal point of the pastoral structure. The housemasters and housemistresses, whose rôles are clearly defined yet all-encompassing, are pivotal figures in the day-to-day life of the school. They are in constant touch with their house tutors, a rôle which almost all members of the teaching staff fulfil. The pupils themselves recognise that the house staff and tutors play a significant part in their development as young people.
- 3.4 An atmosphere of mutual respect permeates the school. Relationships between the pupils are of high quality, older and younger year groups treating each other with respect. Many younger pupils seek advice from those who are older. Pupils see the school rules and procedures as fair. They say that bullying is rare and that, when it happens, it is dealt with swiftly and with understanding.
- 3.5 The school has proven systems for recording accidents and other incidents. The medical centre welcomes boarding and day pupils needing nursing care. When pupils are injured or unwell, the school's medical team keeps parents fully informed. A good proportion of the staff have received training as first-aiders. Pupils are able to consult, in confidence, a well-qualified counsellor.
- 3.6 The school's child protection arrangements are effective. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place, and they are well understood by staff and pupils. The annual induction procedure for staff new to the school includes child protection training, and training has also recently been provided for all staff. When he has received additional training shortly, the new deputy head will assume responsibility for child protection. Until then, the previous deputy head, now the foundation and development director, remains the nominated child protection officer.
- 3.7 Admission and attendance registers are meticulously maintained. Pupils' attendance is recorded in houses three times a day.
- 3.8 The dining hall serves healthy, nutritious, and high quality food, catering for a wide range of tastes and special diets. The movement of pupils in the dining hall is well managed.
- 3.9 Detailed risk assessments have been completed for all school activities, including educational visits. Thorough and detailed risk assessments for fire and other hazards have been completed. Regular whole-school fire practices take place, as well as fire drills in the different houses. The school fire officer provides training for staff, especially those who are resident. Although located in a quiet residential area, the school is aware that its buildings

are flanked by roads that pupils cross at all hours. To improve safety, it has recently persuaded the town council to modify the pavements on routes most used by its pupils, and it is trying to negotiate new access arrangements for motor vehicles. Although risk assessments are in place, several have not been prepared by the staff who have to carry them out, and a few subject staff have yet to implement measures, recommended by outside agencies, that would reduce risks further.

3.10 As required by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, the school has drawn up a plan reviewing the accessibility of its buildings. This takes into account likely future development.

3.11 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

3.12 The school has excellent links with parents and with the community. These help to fulfil the school's aim of encouraging pupils to participate locally, as well as preparing them to lead, to serve and to achieve personal fulfilment in their adult lives.

3.13 As they indicated in their replies to the questionnaire sent out in advance of the inspection, parents are overwhelmingly satisfied with the education and support provided for their sons and daughters. They like the balance and breadth of the curriculum. They believe that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and views. They appreciate the quality of the pastoral care provided, particularly by the house staff, and on the standards of behaviour that the school expects. Parents also say that, if they are in a position to do so, they have ample opportunities to be involved in the life of the school.

3.14 Parental attendance at concerts, plays and other events, many of which are also open to the public, is high. The school publishes details of these events, as well its full range of sports fixtures, in the White Book, the school calendar, as well as on its website.

3.15 The Old Eastbournian Association, which is run from the school, maintains strong links with former pupils. The Eastbourne College Society holds events for friends and supporters of the school both at the school and further afield. The Eastbourne College Foundation sets out to raise funds to enhance the facilities of the school and to provide scholarships and means-tested bursaries to deserving pupils.

3.16 The school gives parents plentiful information. Every three weeks or so, parents receive, almost always via the internet, an eRC outlining the recent effort and attainment of their son or daughter. Staff write full academic reports at the end of the Michaelmas and Summer terms. These include a summary from house staff and from the head. Parents' evenings take place twice a year for pupils in Year 9 and once for those in Years 10 to 13. Staff and parents, especially parents of day pupils, use the student planners, in which pupils record their prep, as a further channel of communication. Other information for parents and pupils, key telephone numbers and the anti-bullying policy for example, is clearly publicised elsewhere. Each term, the head sends a newsletter drawing attention to school policies, forthcoming events, and recent achievements. The school prospectuses are clear and informative. New pupils and their parents receive useful additional advice and information.

3.17 Parents agree that the school handles their concerns with care and sensitivity. Their first point of contact is their son or daughter's respective housemaster or housemistress. The school has a clear policy by which parents may register a complaint. In recent years, no parent has taken a complaint to the final, panel-hearing stage.

- 3.18 The school maintains particularly strong links with the local community. It has close contact with local churches, music groups and other organisations. Several subject departments have developed their own links. For example, the classics department provides free tuition in GCSE Latin to pupils at a nearby maintained school, the drama department holds workshops for local children, and musicians perform regularly at various venues throughout Sussex. Although many of these activities undoubtedly add to pupils' experience, the school makes clear that it undertakes them first and foremost for the benefit of local people and children.
- 3.19 The school places a strong emphasis on serving the local community. The S@S programme extends to local schools, nursing homes and charities. Each term at the town hospital, the chaplaincy team arranges a service, led by pupils and broadcast on hospital radio.
- 3.20 Several organisations use facilities at the school, a local triathlon club training in the swimming pool for instance. Pupils take part in many fund-raising ventures, locally and further afield. Their genuine concern for others has recently been demonstrated by the considerable sums they have raised for disadvantaged children in different parts of the world.
- 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 As far as possible, the school does not distinguish between boarding and day pupils. The five boarding and five day houses have, in the main, spacious and attractive accommodation. Pupils see these houses as their immediate and important family unit. Day pupils, as well as boarders, play a full part in the school's extended day and full week. They generally enjoy having to do their prep at school, rather than at home. Thus, the school succeeds in providing a coherent and excellent co-educational boarding experience for boys and girls, boarders and day pupils.
- 3.23 Within the houses, staff and pupils enjoy close and mutually supportive relationships. As far as possible, they respect each other's privacy. In times of stress or concern, boarders have no difficulty finding a member of staff with whom they can talk. Younger pupils often seek advice from those who are older. Most houses adopt mentoring systems to help new pupils settle in to the school. One house, for example, selects senior pupils to be 'guides' and 'sages'. Pupils of all ages regard the policies and protocols in their houses as fair and sensible.
- 3.24 The school encourages pupils to keep in touch with their homes. Most boarders do so by means of e-mail, which is available in the houses, or by mobile phone. Although a few houses no longer have phone booths for use by pupils, those needing or wishing to make a landline call can do so in private, by arrangement with house staff.
- 3.25 Pupils say their life is full, and they certainly do not complain that they are bored. The school has a wide range of facilities open in the evenings and at weekends. Boarders, as well as many day pupils, take advantage of the learning resource centre, the music technology department and the drama studio. The houses generally have ample social amenity space and, to encourage relaxation, they provide casual board games, as well as televisions and DVD recorders. The houses also organise many worthwhile out-of-school activities, including charitable events. One house recently raised a large sum for the Terrence Higgins Trust. Throughout the year, houses regularly organise sixth-form and house dinners, concerts and plays.

- 3.26 In general, boarding accommodation is of high quality. Most rooms are of good size, and they have adequate heating, ventilation and lighting. The ambience of communal rooms has been greatly enhanced by the provision of new furniture. Most boarding pupils in Years 11 to 13 have individual study-bedrooms. Each house has a tuck shop and kitchen. The school has a rolling programme of refurbishment. Since the last inspection, a girls' boarding house has been extended and refurbished to provide en-suite accommodation for girls in all years. Work has just begun to improve a boys' house.
- 3.27 The school's boarding was last inspected by the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) in June 2004. The CSCI team judged that the school provided a well-structured and supportive environment, facilities were well maintained, and the pupils were positive. They recommended that the school should make minor procedural improvements to medical centre procedures, that the school nurse should support matrons in managing medication, and that the school should check more carefully the references of those appointed to resident posts. These matters have since been rectified.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The school continues to enjoy outstandingly good governance. Members of the council, the governing body, are mindful of their status and responsibilities as trustees, and they maintain a strategic overview of all that the school stands for and does. They take a close interest in the school, but they also understand the importance of the relationship between themselves and the senior management. They allow the head and the senior management team (SMT) to lead and manage the school.
- 4.2 In accordance with the terms of the school's memorandum and articles, the governors report to the members of the Eastbourne College association at the association's annual meeting. The nineteen members of the council ensure that the school provides a good standard of education, and that it maintains its reputation for quality staff and resources. Between them, the governors possess extensive and relevant expertise and experience. Many have close connections with the school; most are former pupils. Although a few are unable, by virtue of their current commitments and postings, to visit the school or to attend meetings regularly, they possess skills and experience that are of value in the longer term. A small number of former governors also attend council meetings, by invitation and without trustee status.
- 4.3 The chairman of council, his vice-chairman and the treasurer work closely with the head and the bursar. Four committees monitor the performance of the school and plan for future development. In particular, the finance and general purposes committee exercises close control over expenditure and budgets. A further committee, for nominations, meets to recommend the election of new governors with the skills and experience that the council desires. As clerk to the governors, the bursar writes detailed but succinct minutes of all meetings. While the council appreciates its collective responsibility for such matters, one of their number takes a particular interest in matters relating to child protection, for which he has had training, and for health and safety.
- 4.4 Governors are well informed. At the start of many committee meetings, governors hear presentations from staff on educational and other issues affecting the school. Depending on the agenda, different members of the SMT attend council or committee meetings from time to time. The council approved the realistic strategic development plan for 2007 to 2012.
- 4.5 Most governors, especially those who live locally, visit frequently, know the school well and make themselves known to staff. The school holds an annual dinner to which governors and staff, as well as their spouses and partners, are invited.
- 4.6 The school organises training for newly elected governors. The chairman, vice-chairman and several other senior governors, especially those who serve on the governing bodies of other schools, are abreast of the latest thinking on public benefit and other current issues. Many of their colleagues, however, have not attended a training course recently.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.7 The school continues to be outstandingly well led and managed. It has achieved much in the last three years. Teaching, administrative and support staff combine to enable the school to offer an education of high quality.
- 4.8 The head, after three years in post, has assembled a strong and enlarged SMT. The members of the SMT, all of whom have detailed job descriptions, possess complementary skills. All play a full part in the three strands of the curriculum. The head leads with passion, foresight and enlightenment. His management style is consultative and clear. He delegates widely to those in the SMT, but he maintains close contact with each and so maintains a shared sense of priority and purpose. The strategic five-year plan, for 2007 to 2012, was drafted by the SMT, offered to the staff for comment, and approved by the governors. Teaching, administrative and other staff respond positively to this approach.
- 4.9 The last inspection report commented on the small number of female staff, especially in senior posts, and recommended the appointment of more who would be rôle models for the girls. Of the seven men and three women now in the SMT, only one of the women holds an academic post. More women, however, have been appointed to both teaching and pastoral middle management positions. In particular, housemistresses have been appointed to all the girls' houses. Senior girls confirm that the school now has enough female staff in key positions to provide them with examples of leadership.
- 4.10 The school gives much thought to future improvements. Heads of academic departments meet regularly. Each is now implementing a four-year departmental development plan, the progress of which is monitored by the two academic assistant heads. Housemasters and housemistresses meet each week under the chairmanship of the deputy head.
- 4.11 The SMT maintains a full set of relevant policies and procedures, and constantly monitors their effectiveness. They maintain them on the intranet, and so ensure that they are up to date. The intranet, which includes pages that are only accessible to staff, is a valuable and well used management tool.
- 4.12 Before it confirms the appointment of staff, the school takes all necessary steps to check their identity and suitability. It applies these procedures, as appropriate, to volunteer staff and the small number of support staff supplied through agencies.
- 4.13 The school has effective schemes for supporting each newly qualified teacher (NQT) and other staff new to the school. The newly appointed assistant head (teaching and learning) has overall responsibility for NQTs. These staff are well supported by both academic and non-subject mentors. The school is aware that the demands it makes on its staff are considerable, and that in their first year in post new staff can over-reach themselves. For all staff, new and established, the school has recently refined its appraisal system. Staff appreciate this frequent, light-touch approach to their professional development.
- 4.14 Routine administration is excellent. The school runs smoothly, office staff meeting all reasonable requests speedily and with a smile. They keep administrative information secure, but make as much as possible available on the intranet. The bursar and other administrative staff work closely with academic staff to ensure that, through careful and prudent management, high quality resources are available to support teaching. Teaching and residential accommodation is well maintained. The school greatly values the work of its support staff, and they take pride in their contribution.

- 4.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.16 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 By giving its pupils a coherent, full and challenging boarding education, Eastbourne College amply fulfils its principal aim. Its day pupils, as much as its boarders, make the most of all that the school offers. It is, as it sets out to be, a happy and inspiring community that successfully emphasises the key values for which it stands. The staff fully embrace the ethos and aims of the school. They wholeheartedly support the three strands of the curriculum for which the school stands. They play a full part in teaching a broad and successful range of academic subjects; they contribute unstintingly to the co-curricular programme; and they are wholly committed to the unseen curriculum, the well-being and personal development of their pupils. The pupils achieve academic results that are good, and sometimes outstandingly good, in relation to their ability. The differentiated learning programme provides exciting additional opportunities for gifted and talented pupils, and increasingly it provides encouragement and support for pupils with EAL and those with LDD. Pupils enthusiastically take part and achieve high standards in the very extensive co-curricular programme. They develop values and standards that are exceptional among young people, and they display a purpose and maturity that does them great credit. They appreciate the support that they receive, they applaud the efforts and achievements of their fellow pupils, and they are quietly proud of their school, which maintains excellent links with both parents and the wider community.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, the school has consolidated its position and enhanced its reputation. It has improved its facilities, and it has refined its policies and structures. It has increased its numbers, and it has sustained boarding in particular. Boys now achieve results that are as good as those of the girls. In the last three years, the school has seen many staffing changes. Senior staff are capable, they are quickly growing into their new responsibilities, and they have begun to work effectively and corporately. Self-critical, they are keen to raise standards in all areas yet further. The school has made progress towards the appointment of female staff to key posts, heads of department and housemistresses in particular. It now provides good careers guidance. Through the newly introduced life and learning course, it offers pupils in Years 10 and 11 a fuller course of PSHE and RS. ICT, however, still does not play a large part in teaching or learning. Although expectations are low in a small minority of lessons, the quality of teaching is good overall.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has many strong and distinctive features. It has no major weaknesses. It should now take the following steps.
1. Improve teaching and learning by:
 - developing imaginative and varied teaching techniques to provide challenge and stimulus to pupils of all abilities, especially those who are gifted and talented;
 - making greater use of ICT, and training staff to take full advantage of the interactive white boards in the classrooms.
 2. Ensure that staff take greater responsibility for assessing risks, and implementing measures to reduce risks, in their own departments.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 22nd to 25th September 2008. 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 David Beeby	Reporting Inspector
Mr Mark Allbrook	Head, HMC school
Mr Alan Bougeard	Head of Middle School, HMC school
Mr Andrew Cleary	Director of Music, HMC school
Mrs Roxanna Harrop	Head of Department, HMC school
Mr Gary Moss	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Janice Reid	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Rosalind Wilson	Former Deputy Head, GSA school