

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

NOTRE DAME SENIOR SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

5th – 8th February 2007

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Notre Dame Senior School

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

Full Name of the School	Notre Dame Senior School
DfES Number	936/6163
Registered Charity Number	1081875
Address	Burwood House, Cobham, Surrey KT11 1HA.
Telephone Number	01932 869990
Fax Number	01932 589481
Email Address	headmistress@notredame.co.uk
Headmistress	Mrs. Bridget Williams
Chair of Governors	Mr. Glen Travers
Age Range	11 – 18 years
Gender	Female
Inspection Dates	5th – 8th February 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 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

	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	1
2 THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	2
The Educational Experience Provided	2
Pupils' Learning and Achievements	2
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	4
The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)	5
3 THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	7
The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils	7
The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	8
4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	10
The Quality of Governance	10
The Quality of Leadership and Management	10
5 CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	12
Overall Conclusions	12
Next Steps	12
6 INSPECTION EVIDENCE	13

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Notre Dame Senior School is an independent Roman Catholic school for day girls aged between 11 and 18 years of age. It shares a common 17-acre site, on the banks of the river Mole just outside Cobham, with Notre Dame Preparatory school. The two schools occupy their own premises and are organisationally independent but are linked by a common governing body and mission statement together with a common financial controller, prospectus and various resources. The two schools share the celebration of major feast days.
- 1.2 The aims of the school are:
- to provide a community that is fully inclusive of all faiths and cultures whilst retaining a Catholic ethos;
 - to offer a broad and balanced academic education for the whole person;
 - to light the flame of spiritual awareness which underpins the spiritual, moral, social and academic development of each individual;
 - to teach pupils to accompany each other on the journey through life;
 - to create life-long learners with open, responsible and creative minds.
- 1.3 The school is part of a world wide educational organisation – The Company of Mary Our Lady – founded in Bordeaux in the seventeenth century by Saint Jeanne de Lestonnac, and devoted to the teaching of girls in the belief that they have a unique contribution to make to society. In 2003 the school’s ownership passed from The Company of Mary Our Lady to a charitable trust, and is now managed by the trustees and a board of governors, several of whom are Sisters from the Order. The present headmistress was appointed in 2003.
- 1.4 The school has increased its pupil numbers since the last inspection, and now has 382 girls, of whom 62 are in the sixth form. The school is selective. The results of standardised tests indicate that the ability profile is well above average; pupils’ results in public examinations might therefore be expected to be well above the average for all maintained schools. Pupils are welcomed from all cultures and faiths, with a majority being Christian, though not necessarily Catholic. They mainly come from prosperous homes, but a number of families make significant financial sacrifices to send their daughters here.
- 1.5 The school has identified forty-six pupils as having specific learning needs – mainly dyslexia, and one pupil has a statement of special educational need (SEN). About eight girls speak English as an additional language, though nearly all are more or less fluent in English.
- 1.6 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 offers an all-round education of high quality, fully consistent with the school's aims and philosophy. This ensures that each pupil is a valued participant in a school community that is notable for its spirit of mutual service and support, not just within the school, but also within the locality and worldwide. The curriculum includes Masses, faith based assemblies, prayers at the start of lessons, and religious education for all pupils. The school provides wide-ranging opportunities for pupils within a broad and balanced academic, sporting and extra-curricular educational experience.
- 2.2 The education offered contributes effectively to the pupils' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. It also provides for the development of skills in speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. Food technology and textiles are especially important subjects in a technology curriculum that does not specialise in other areas of technology, for example, in resistant materials.
- 2.3 A comprehensive extra-curricular programme of sport, drama, music and other activities fully satisfies the needs of almost all pupils, including those who are not high achievers in these areas but who enjoy taking part. Records of attendance are kept and notable achievement is recorded and celebrated in assembly. Voluntary work and community service locally and abroad provide good educational experiences for pupils in Years 12 and 13, broadening their understanding of life.
- 2.4 The transition of pupils from one year to the next is carefully managed and leavers are well prepared for life after school. Leavers' self-reliance, sense of responsibility and ability to manage their own independent learning are well developed as a matter of policy, in line with the aims of the school. The careers and university entrance advice, and the help provided on choosing options at GCSE and at AS/A2 level has increased considerably since the last inspection, and is now good.
- 2.5 Equality of access to the curriculum for all girls starting A level courses has been achieved partly by increasing the teaching time available, in accordance with the recommendations of the last report, and partly by arranging the option blocks in accordance with students' preferences, always within a sensible range of subjects. The curriculum now offers appropriate choices at all levels in the school and ensures that all pupils can take part in lessons and extra-curricular activities whatever their level of skill, knowledge or talents, as demanded by the school's aims.
- 2.6 Pupils requiring special provision, whether because English is not their first language or because they have some learning difficulty, generally have their needs well met by one-to-one support when required, and this does not significantly interfere with their other lessons.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 Pupils' levels of knowledge, understanding and skills are good.
- 2.9 Pupils demonstrate a good array of skills, knowledge and understanding in all stages of their academic studies, generally appropriate to their abilities. Pupils can apply their skills and knowledge in all subjects. They have the ability to think critically, which was clearly shown in every year group when looking at texts in English literature, or when, in the sixth form,

they made critical comments on case studies in psychology. Creativity is well developed throughout pupils' work in art, music and drama.

- 2.10 Setting pupils by ability, which takes place in various subjects from Year 8 onwards, helps to direct groups of pupils to reach levels of attainment appropriate to their abilities, through to GCSE and beyond. However, the school does not always target individuals within teaching sets in order to maximise their potential and raise their aspirations to reach for further success. The school already has in place various baseline analyses of pupils' ability, but is not yet using these to their full advantage to enable targeted learning leading to higher achievement. Plans are in place to do this, and some work, for example in Year 11 history, has already taken place to identify the most effective ways of learning.
- 2.11 GCSE and A-level results are good in relation to pupils' ability. At both levels, results have been well above the averages for all maintained schools, sufficiently so as to be in line with the averages for maintained selective schools. Examination results in technical, creative and aesthetic subjects are better than in other subjects. Examination results overall show improvement since the last inspection. The school uses standardised measurements of progress to both GCSE and A level, and in both examinations the progress achieved is good.
- 2.12 Pupils perform well both individually and in groups. Music and drama provide opportunities for ensemble work of high standard, as, for example, in pupil-directed performances of Shakespeare for house competitions and in the choir trip to Rome, while in some sports pupils achieve national recognition. The school's house point system encourages team efforts, and also rewards individual achievement in academic fields. In keeping with its aims, the school gives recognition at all levels of participation, and thus fosters self-esteem, enjoyment and belonging.
- 2.13 All pupils are articulate, and listen intelligently. Good reading habits are encouraged in Year 7 with the introduction of the "Reading Passport", which leads on to the study of some demanding texts in Year 8. History places emphasis in Years 7 and 8 on the development of essay-writing skills, which are further developed as pupils move up the school. Good teaching of spelling, punctuation, handwriting and grammar in English in Years 7 and 8 lays excellent foundations.
- 2.14 Pupils' standards of numeracy are good, and have been reinforced by the numeracy policy introduced in 2005 across the whole school, leading all departments to achieve consistency in their use and application of number. Geographers in Year 7 have found it helpful in improving their map work, while scientists are helped to plot graphs correctly. Year 12 chemists of all abilities showed good progression in chemical calculation.
- 2.15 Information and communication technology (ICT) plays a large part in pupils' learning. In nearly all subjects ICT has been integrated into work schemes, so that pupils quickly become proficient in its use. In geography and history in particular pupils have been encouraged to develop a wide range of ICT skills, and competent presentations using a commercial package were seen in business studies.
- 2.16 In all areas pupils are encouraged to think for themselves, and well-organised and presented files of pupils' work frequently contain examples of well-argued views. Pupils clearly enjoy the encouragement they receive to think independently, and to make a case for the views they hold.
- 2.17 In a number of subjects pupils develop sound study skills, and some well-kept files and effective note-taking were seen. However, the school does not have a coordinated and progressive programme across the curriculum for the development of study skills, and thus

not all pupils have the opportunity to develop skills of the same high order. Good work is being done in preparing pupils for public examinations.

- 2.18 Pupils work with purpose and self direction, showing initiative in a variety of settings. They do this both individually and in groups. This was seen in rehearsals for a Year 10 student drama production, and throughout the work of the art department. Year 9 pupils showed thorough learning and determination to produce work in textiles well above the standard expected for their age, while Year 13 pupils wrote essays set by a teacher away on a trip, without supervision and in silence. Pupils come into class and settle quickly, showing good application and determination in all they do in the school.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.19 The quality of the development of pupils spiritually, morally, socially and culturally is outstanding and shows improvement from the very good standards described in the previous report.
- 2.20 Pupils develop spiritually taking advantage of the many opportunities offered at the school in line with the philosophy of its founder, St. Jeanne de Lestonnac. Her inclusive viewpoint underpins the whole life of the school, ensuring the establishment of a caring ethos, embracing all individuals.
- 2.21 Through a range of opportunities including Masses, pilgrimages, lessons in many areas of the curriculum and, more informally, with both their friends and teachers, girls' experience is true to the school's mission to provide 'a community that is fully inclusive of all faiths and cultures whilst maintaining a Catholic ethos.' Membership of the worldwide Company of Mary Our Lady assists in placing spirituality at the heart of school life. A governors' sub committee - the Lestonnac committee – has been established with the sole object of ensuring the quality of the school's spiritual life remains constant to the Founder's vision.
- 2.22 Pupils develop morally in their ability to distinguish right from wrong. Pupils develop strong views about a range of moral issues, ranging from local, school based concerns, such as the school's carbon footprint, to matters of national and international significance, such as world poverty, the work of the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development, and the morality of the war in Iraq. Personal and social morality is of a high standard. Girls respect themselves, each other and their teachers, in whom many of them expressed complete confidence as people to whom they could turn in times of trouble. The mentoring scheme, involving some members of Years 10 and 12 as mentors, and the 'big sister' scheme, whereby new pupils are each attached to an older pupil, both contribute to the pupil community becoming to some extent self-regulatory. Girls have practical ways to register their concern for the environment, human suffering and a broad range of charitable enterprises, to which they commit their enthusiastic support. They respond eagerly to former pupils visiting the school to talk about humanitarian projects, and were enthusiastic in volunteering to go to Albania in one school holiday to work with pupils less fortunate than themselves.
- 2.23 Pupils develop socially aided by a personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme that is embedded within the form and year assembly system, and is delivered by members of staff who are committed to it. Democracy is among the topics covered in this programme, and pupils learn to value it, as they consider other forms of government and study examples of what can happen in more repressive regimes. After a Year 11 assembly on the Holocaust girls left the hall in a reflective frame of mind, clearly responding to the presentation. Year 10 assemblies were based on various British institutions, and pupils put on an effective 'Suffragette demonstration' persistently interrupted by carefully placed 'hecklers' who

wanted to keep their women from participating in the political process! This proved a very effective and provocative strategy for learning about a British institution.

- 2.24 Pupils develop culturally acquiring an appreciation of their own and other cultures. Encouragement is given to all pupils to play a full part in the life of the school, in line with the philosophy of the Order. On the pupils' visit to Albania they observed Moslem workers alongside the nuns of the community. Within the school curriculum, too, many opportunities arise for pupils to make comparisons between different cultures. Year 9 geographers compared life in Cobham with life in Bolivia, while Year 13 art students made an attractive display comparing digital photographs of a Japanese tea ceremony with someone in Cobham making a cup of tea. In a Year 10 geography lesson pupils responded with great interest to a short video about the 'One Child Policy' in China, and were able to consider its implications across society. Pupils are well prepared for life described in the school's Behaviour, Discipline and Sanctions policy as 'a pluralist society characterised by changing values and uncertain social attitudes.' Through music, art and drama and in many other subject areas pupils' experience is enhanced by opportunities to extend their cultural experience.
- 2.25 The school fulfils its aims with outstanding success in spiritual, moral, social and cultural areas, which constitute a major strength of the school.
- 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 Teaching across the years is good, with the majority of lessons seen during the inspection being good, while just over a third were satisfactory.
- 2.28 In general the teaching enables pupils to acquire new knowledge, make good progress according to their ability, increase their understanding and develop new skills. A good procedure exists for identifying pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, for whom individual education plans (IEPs) are written, and arrangements for pupils to receive individual help from the learning support department are effective. However, in only a few mainstream lessons, particularly in English, drama and music, were such pupils seen to have any special provision. The school's marking policy does not have a specific section on the marking of work for dyslexic pupils, although good practice was seen in some departments. The school is in the process of identifying its gifted and talented pupils, but the teaching is not yet providing sufficient challenge and enrichment for them.
- 2.29 Teaching was most effective when it fostered in pupils the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, made them take an interest in their work and developed their ability to think and learn for themselves. Good examples of all these were seen in a Year 11 art class on different kinds of wrapping which was both inventive and proceeded at speed, and in a Year 8 music lesson which catered for pupils at all levels of musical ability by having numerous different activities going on which were interesting and fun.
- 2.30 The best teaching was when pupil self-assessment and target setting were included. Lessons are well planned but a greater variety of approach and an increased pace would make many of them more interesting. In some lessons the pupils are not encouraged to have high aspirations so opportunities for greater achievement are lost. Teaching does not set quite high enough expectations for pupils in line with the school's mission to 'develop academic excitement through teaching.'
- 2.31 Almost all of the teachers showed a good knowledge of the subjects being taught.

- 2.32 Teaching is well supported by a good range, quality and quantity of resources in all departments. Effective use of resources was seen throughout the school. The Year 12 and 13 exercise gym is also used by GCSE physical education (PE) classes. The ICT provision, which has expanded considerably since the last inspection, is good throughout. All departments take advantage of now having ample opportunities to take classes to the ICT suite and Learning Resource Centre to enable pupils to do independent research, often followed by pupils making presentations to their class of what they have discovered. Most departments now have their own computer and projector, and some have an interactive white board. A trolley of 20 laptops belonging to the science department can be used by other departments when available. The library is well designed, and is potentially a very good resource centre, with numerous computers, but is at present rather short of books. The school is aware of this, and is actively engaged in a programme of expansion.
- 2.33 Pupils' work is marked regularly, with comments which offer much encouragement, but do not always provide a guide to improvement. Thus some pupils are not always aware of what they need to do to improve, or where they are losing marks. Good self-assessment was seen in modern foreign languages and in theology exercise books, and history books contained some very helpful comments. Some of the marking in Year 12 and 13 files seemed to be over generous. The school is in the process of undertaking more in-depth analysis of pupils' performance in relation to baseline tests, to ensure any concerns can be identified and addressed. The introduction of assessment software should give staff more information in all departments, enabling tutors and year heads to track pupils' progress more thoroughly.
- 2.34 The good teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly, creating an atmosphere of high concentration, and thus allowing good progress to be made. Pupils themselves feel sufficiently at ease with each other to call for appropriate behaviour if they feel that others are a little distracting.
- 2.35 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 pastoral care and guidance of exceptional quality, having improved on the good standard of the previous report.
- 3.2 The excellent pastoral care system functions throughout the school, based on the key principles of support and ‘accompanying’ (as in the Notre Dame mission). The form staff are well managed and led by a team of year heads and the assistant deputy head. They meet regularly, but they also make efficient use of email to keep in close contact with each other. Good examples of this were seen in Year 9, where two form teachers job-share, making good communication vital. The pastoral deputy head has her prime focus on policy, but is happy to discuss pupils in detail at pastoral meetings, where all staff demonstrate their detailed knowledge of the background of all the pupils in their care. The entire pastoral team works as a closely integrated unit to provide total care for the whole community. Pupils have commented that they feel secure, well known and cared for by all the pastoral staff.
- 3.3 The school radiates a caring attitude. Relationships are excellent between pupils, and also between staff and pupils. Older pupils happily mix with younger ones, a characteristic fostered by the school’s ‘big sister’ scheme for Year 7 pupils, many of whom feel proud to have an older pupil as a mentor and friend. Again, electronic messaging enables constant contact to be maintained with ease. Peer mentors, drawn from among Year 10 and Year 12 pupils, take over from ‘big sisters’ further up the school. These mentors are trained off-site with an introduction to counselling skills. Peer mentors are themselves supported by having regular meetings with the pastoral staff, who assist them to perform their roles with confidence. Many pupils commented that they liked having peer mentors in the school. Within this caring environment pupils come to realise that they have to take some responsibility for regulating their own lives and behaviour. Year 10 pupils being given some responsibility for ensuring that uniform is correctly worn have realised that their own uniform must come up to standard first!
- 3.4 Policies to ensure good behaviour are in place, supported by the system of rewards and sanctions within the house structure. The school has a good anti-bullying policy, published throughout the school, and pupils are confident that no bullying would be tolerated by staff, while victims would be treated with respect. Some Year 7 pupils expressed the view that no bullying would ever take place in this school.
- 3.5 The school goes to great lengths to ensure the safety, health and welfare of its pupils. Levels of supervision are high at breaks, lunchtime and when traffic is heavy, with caretaking staff joining teaching staff to ensure everyone’s safety. Child protection measures are fully in place, utilising staff with appropriate training. Policies are subject to regular review. Effective measures to reduce risk from fire or hazardous substances are all in place, and the estate manager is fully aware of his responsibilities. Provision for first aid is very good, with all staff trained in first aid, and four staff having the advanced first aid certificate. The school effectively discharges its responsibility to undertake regular electrical testing and safety audits by employing an outside company with this remit. Risk assessments are regularly undertaken.
- 3.6 Many of the parents who completed the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed great support for the care and guidance their daughters receive, a view strongly endorsed by those parents who were interviewed before the inspection began.

- 3.7 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

- 3.8 The school has good links with parents and the community, maintaining the good standard noted in the previous report. Partnerships with parents are taken seriously, with staff time and resources devoted to furthering them. The Friends of Notre Dame (FOND) provides strong financial and organisational support for the school, and works closely with the chaplain and teaching staff. The parental questionnaire showed a very high level of satisfaction with the school, and also that very few parents had any serious concerns. A high proportion of comments spoke warmly of the school and their daughters' experience there.
- 3.9 Parents have good opportunities to become involved in school life, and staff are alert to the many ways of reinforcing this relationship. Teachers from the senior school meet preparatory school parents, and hold regular coffee mornings to further assist links with parents.
- 3.10 Parents are provided with a good range of information about their daughters' work and progress. A Year 10 parents' evening held during the inspection was a friendly and positive occasion, well organised and supported, with pupils' presence alongside their parents adding to the value of the occasion. Regular weekly newsletters keep parents up-to-date with events, and provide a means of celebrating pupils' success. Daily communication between staff and parents is facilitated by the use of notes written into the girls' planners. The school ensures the efficiency of this system by imposing sanctions on pupils who fail to have their planners signed regularly by parents.
- 3.11 Parents receive full, detailed reports on their daughters' progress at the end of each academic year. In other terms they receive rather brief interim reports or they have a parents' evening. Full reports contain details of examination performance, year and set averages, and a written report. This provides encouragement as well as indications of weakness, but does not often contain specific targets for improvement. Pupils are asked to write a self-assessment following their receipt of the report, in which they do set themselves targets, although, depending on the date of issue of the report, such targets are not always followed up by pupil or staff. Interim reports which register unsatisfactory performance are followed up by letters to parents, often with invitations for parents to come in to school to discuss their daughters' progress.
- 3.12 The school handles the concerns of parents with due care. Once alerted to a problem area the school has robust procedures to deal with issues, and an appropriate complaints policy.
- 3.13 The school is exceptionally effective in promoting a range of positive links with the community both locally and in the wider world. The school buildings provide a centre for parish life and a meeting place for local organisations. Weddings are sometimes held in the school chapel. The attractive swimming pool is used by local groups. The school is keen to extend these existing links both within the Catholic community and more generally, and is developing relationships with other local schools. For example, a French dinner was held with a neighbouring boys' boarding school, and there have been joint theatre visits.
- 3.14 As part of their community service, sixth form girls visit a local care home to talk with residents and to sing to them. These informal concerts are appreciated by the audience, who may suggest songs they would like to hear. The girls will research these, practise them, and include them at their next visit.

- 3.15 Membership of The Company of Mary Our Lady provides a group of about 300 schools around the world with which Cobham girls and staff may network. The school's provision of video conferencing facilities, and the pilgrimages to Bordeaux, birthplace of St. Jeanne de Lestonnac, involve staff from all parts of the school with the Order. Girls also have many opportunities for exchanges with sister schools, and Notre Dame has many displays showing the variety of people, places and things the girls have encountered. The Order is celebrating its 400th anniversary this year, and has chosen to build a school in Kinshasa to mark it. This will provide further international links for all the schools involved, and Notre Dame's school development plan has already indicated further growth in this area.
- 3.16 The school meets the regulatory standards for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Notre Dame Senior School is well governed, maintaining the standards described in the previous report. The trustees have a clear oversight of the school, and they have successfully honoured and upheld the school's Catholic mission and its aims and ethos.
- 4.2 The governing body has eleven members, covering a range of disciplines relevant to the school's operations. They meet four times a year, but they variously serve on five sub-committees – education, finance, health and safety (including pupil welfare), building, and Lestonnac (school ethos) – on which appropriate members of school senior staff also serve. A majority of the governors are Sisters of the Order, and one of these Sisters has a significant pastoral role within the school, both for staff and pupils. Governors attend many school functions, and have various social meetings where they meet school staff. Thus the whole framework of governance ensures a close liaison with the school, providing effective oversight, and good support for the school and staff.
- 4.3 Through their contributions to the various committees, governors undertake their responsibilities with regard to educational development and ensure that finances are in place for the provision of educational resources.
- 4.4 Through their presence at school functions, presentations made to them by staff, and the existence of one governor able to provide staff with pastoral support, relationships between governors and staff within the school are good, and provide advice, support and challenge.
- 4.5 The governing body, since coming into being in 2003, when it took over from the Sisters of The Company of Mary our Lady, has sustained the ethos and mission of the school, as set by the founding Order. It has communicated this so well to the school that both staff and pupils have commented that Notre Dame is a special place, with a special ethos.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 Leadership and management in the senior school are good, maintaining the standards of the previous report.
- 4.7 The school's aims and ethos are clearly defined, and management in the school relates to them closely. A governors' sub-committee oversees all school policies and innovations to ensure fidelity to the vision of the founder, St. Jeanne de Lestonnac, and the fact that members of the senior leadership team sit on this committee ensures continuity within the school. The headmistress provides committed leadership of the school. Her deep interest in the welfare of the pupils underlies her determination to raise standards in every way she can. In this she is supported by the deputy heads and senior teachers.
- 4.8 One deputy head oversees curriculum, while the assistant deputy head is responsible for pastoral matters. Both deputies have efficient structures, in the form of year heads, heads of department and form teachers, which enable them to monitor the quality of education and pastoral care provided.
- 4.9 Strategic planning meetings, senior leadership meetings, heads of department and year head meetings all take place regularly, with appropriate agendas and minutes, ensuring the planning and implementation of procedures and policies designed to meet the school's needs. Some of these procedures are still in their infancy, and much work is still to be done in

assessment, especially with regard to its uses for monitoring, tracking and setting targets in relation to each pupil's progress.

- 4.10 The school has drawn up a policy for teaching gifted and talented pupils, but the identification of these pupils, and systematic procedures for their enrichment are not yet uniformly followed throughout the school. The teaching support department is well organised, with regular review and management of its pupils and practices, but without responsibility for the gifted and talented pupils, who are thus without the level of support offered to other pupils with learning difficulties.
- 4.11 Arrangements for recruiting, supporting, developing and motivating staff are effective and management has made appropriate appointments across the curriculum.
- 4.12 Systems are in place to ensure that departmental finances are well managed. The financial controller, in discussion with the headmistress, ensures that pupils' needs are appropriately financed, and that departments run their budgets responsibly.
- 4.13 The administration of the school is efficient, for example in its use of a computerised registration system. Day-to-day running is effected smoothly by a committed secretarial staff.
- 4.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.15 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school has explicit aims and aspirations, and is dedicated to ensuring their realisation in all areas of school activity. It has made great progress since its last inspection in adopting the recommendations of that inspection report. With its small classes and highly committed staff it does much to ensure that pupils achieve good standards in both work and extra-curricular activities. The school does well to achieve GCSE and A level results generally above the level indicated by pupils' ability on entry to the school. Pupils are articulate and well-motivated in their work, while the pastoral care they receive is outstanding. Pupils' personal development, which is clearly evident in their understanding and respect for others and in their interest and involvement in the wider world, is excellent.
- 5.2 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.3 No major aspect of the school is weak, but in order to improve further the education the school provides it should:
1. further refine the systems used to identify the potential of each pupil, and then ensure that lesson planning takes full account of all the information available, in order to challenge each pupil fully;
 2. ensure that the existing good practice used in some departments – whereby targets for improvement are always clearly indicated to pupils – is adopted by all teachers.
- 5.4 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 5th - 8th February 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. 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

Mrs. Jenny McCallum	Reporting inspector
Mr. David Beck	Former deputy head, HMC school
Mrs. Janet Catchpole	Vice principal, ISA school
Mrs. Margaret Connolly	Head, GSA school
Mr. Paul Lunn	Head of upper school, HMC school
Mrs. Rosalind Wilson	Former deputy head, GSA school