

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Lavant House

Full Name of the School	Lavant House
DCSF Number	938/6139
Registered Charity Number	307372
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Headmistress	Mrs Marian Scott
Chair of Governors	Mr Richard Hoare
Age Range	3 to 18
Gender	Girls
Inspection Dates	11th to 14th February 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.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Lavant House is a day and boarding school for girls from 3 to 18 years of age. It was founded in 1952 and became an educational charity in 1966, when governors, who act as trustees, were appointed. It merged with Rosemead School in 1995, and in 2004 expanded its age range to include girls of 3 and 4 years of age. The headmistress has been in post since 2001. The school has a Christian foundation of the Anglican tradition. It welcomes girls of all faiths, as well as those of no faith. It occupies a Grade 2 listed building, suitably adapted, with additional modern purpose-built accommodation, on a site of approximately 14 acres including netball and tennis courts, playing fields, an outdoor heated swimming pool and a gymnasium. Lavant House Stables are adjacent to the school site, though not owned by the school, and girls may take riding lessons.
- 1.2 The aims of the school are to provide pupils with a challenging and positive academic education within a caring community, to enable each individual to develop her abilities to the full and acquire a set of personal values. It also aims to provide individual and personal attention to assist pupils to develop confidence and self esteem and to prepare them for their adult lives in a rapidly changing society.
- 1.3 Currently 162 girls are on roll, about a third more than at the time of the last inspection. Seven pupils are under the age of five, five of whom are part time; 35 pupils are in Years 1 to 6, 96 are in Years 7 to 11 and 24 are in the sixth form. In total, 26 pupils board, of whom four are juniors aged 8 to 11. The results of nationally standardised tests show that the ability range is wide and the ability profile of the school is in line with the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in public examinations will be in line with the average of all maintained schools. A number of pupils leave after GCSE, and some pupils in the sixth form enter from elsewhere, some from abroad.
- 1.4 From Year 1 prospective pupils are assessed informally before a place, if available, is offered. Pupils are assessed academically for the senior school. Four pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN) and a further 27 are identified by the school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). Nine pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). Girls leaving at age 16 go on to sixth forms in other independent schools or to colleges of further education. Most of those leaving at 18 go to university.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used by the junior department and throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the senior school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Form I	Year 7
Form II	Year 8
Form III	Year 9
Form IV	Year 10
Form V	Year 11
Lower VI	Year 12
Upper VI	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Pupils enjoy a good educational experience at Lavant House, improved since the last inspection. They reap significant benefit from the individual attention they receive in the small classes throughout the school. In fulfilment of its aims, the school enables each individual to develop her abilities within a caring community.
- 2.2 Extensions to the buildings since the last inspection form a backdrop to improving provision. The new facilities include an art studio, a careers room and a junior library, together with classrooms and extensions to the boarding accommodation. Other developments since the last inspection include expansion of the age range to include a Foundation Stage for 3 and 4 year olds; improvements to the physical education curriculum to include hockey as well as netball and rounders, and the expansion of sixth form provision.
- 2.3 The Foundation Stage curriculum fully encompasses all the Early Learning Goals (ELGs) expected for children to achieve by the age of five. Once these are achieved, the curriculum throughout both sections of the school is based on the National Curriculum and allows pupils to acquire and develop literary, mathematical, scientific, aesthetic, social, physical and technical skills to progress both in academic and non-academic areas.
- 2.4 Good opportunities exist from the start, through appropriate challenges in the classroom, to develop basic skills of literacy and numeracy as well as skills of listening and speaking, and for this development to continue through the school. French is taught from Year 1, Latin from Year 7 and Spanish is an option from Year 9. Opportunities for developing practical and creative skills are plentiful. However, design and technology (DT) is not given a separate allocation of time, though DT approaches are found within the art allocation for several year groups, especially in the junior department, and textiles education is available in the senior school. Provision for physical education is supplemented in the senior school by the Community Sports Leader Award programme.
- 2.5 The school's Christian foundation is reflected in the strong provision for personal development. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) places appropriate emphasis on each aspect. This permeates the entire timetable in the junior department. In the senior school, separate weekly PSHE lessons are allocated. The warm ethos throughout both sections of the school, with pupils who are confident and enthusiastic advocates of their school, is the direct result of the school's conscientious focus to encourage pupils to develop a set of values for life, by staff who show commitment to the school's philosophy.
- 2.6 Cross curricular work is included throughout the school. Though this approach is more developed in the junior department, some examples were evident in the senior school and an excellent example in the sixth form involved literacy, information and communication technology (ICT), history and art, in work comparing the paintings of Braque and Picasso.
- 2.7 Supporting the work of the main curriculum is a good range of extra-curricular activities, the majority for senior school girls and boarders, though a reasonable range of extra activities is provided for the small number of girls in the junior department. The provision ranges from the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme to jazz dance and debating. Horse-riding facilities adjoin the school and are very popular. When pupils reach Year 10, work experience opportunities are offered. Extensive enrichment comes within the school environment, in the local area and further afield through visits and speakers, extending pupils' experiences and opportunities from the earliest age. Pupils in the junior department were buzzing with

enthusiasm following a recent residential trip to London that included visits to television studios and the British Museum.

- 2.8 Preparation for the next stage of education is good. Informal liaison is strong between departments, so that pupils moving up to the next age group or section of the school are assured of a smooth transition. Year 10 pupils report they are particularly pleased with the thorough preparation they received in preparation for their GCSE choices when in Year 9. Sixth-form girls were pleased with the preparation for sixth-form life provided in Year 11. The broad curriculum throughout the school, including careers education that makes good use of the newly developed careers room, prepares pupils well for the world beyond school.
- 2.9 The curriculum is carefully planned, develops logically, and is clearly set out. All pupils have access to all opportunities, and the wide range of activities and experiences assists them in preparation for their adult lives, in keeping with the school aims. The schemes of work and policy documents are in most respects of suitable quality. The best schemes provide the very things the weaker ones do not: clear learning objectives, attention paid to good use of resources and adherence to relevant whole school policies, such as the marking policy.
- 2.10 The few pupils who have EAL are provided with good additional support on an individual basis, though this sometimes impacts on subject-specific provision for those who are in the sixth form, when, due to lack of fluency, the support given in A-level subject lessons sometimes focuses on basic vocabulary rather than subject learning.
- 2.11 Information about pupils with SEN and those whom the school has identified with LDD is usefully and regularly updated and disseminated and includes standardised statistical data about the progress and potential of each girl, together with details of any specific weaknesses. This assists the school to provide well for these pupils. The needs of those the school has identified as being gifted and talented are met in a number of ways: additional academic challenges are provided in lessons; a gifted and talented lunchtime club operates in the junior department. Those with musical or sports talents are given further opportunities.
- 2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.13 Boarding and day pupils alike achieve high standards by the time they reach GCSE, in relation to their abilities. They are well grounded in the knowledge, skills and understanding of their academic subjects, in keeping with the school's aim to develop pupils' abilities to the full. Inspection evidence shows that standards attained by the end of Year 6 and Year 11 are higher than at the time of the last inspection. Girls achieve well, too, in a range of extra-curricular activities. Sixth-form standards are in line with ability. Some pupils leave at the end of Year 11, and some new pupils, some with EAL and needing substantial language support, enter at this stage. Throughout the school pupils are enthusiastic about and enjoy their studies and activities, and they learn together with mutual encouragement and respect. Most are well motivated, self-confident learners.
- 2.14 Pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding in their subjects and activities. In both sections of the school they display good creative thinking and understanding, for instance in their original and imaginative artwork and in science. But the skill of critical thinking and the habit of working things out for themselves are relatively undeveloped because pupils lack sufficient opportunities.
- 2.15 Pupils of differing abilities achieve equally well in relation to their capacities. In both sections of the school, weaker pupils and those with learning or language difficulties progress well, as do the more able.
- 2.16 In the junior department most children achieve the six ELGs before the end of their time in Reception, and before the age of five. National tests are not taken, but the standard of work observed is good in relation to pupils' ability. Girls in Year 2 write imaginatively, for instance writing an account of escaping from the Fire of London, using evocative phrases such as, 'I heard the sizzling...' In Year 6, pupils write expressively in a variety of styles. Pupils soon become highly articulate. They listen well and express their opinions competently. One good example was in a Year 5 and 6 music lesson, where pupils listened attentively to each other's opinions. Well-developed reading skills further their learning. ICT skills are well-developed and pupils use their ICT skills in some other subjects, though little evidence was seen of ICT being used for research. Numeracy skills are well-developed. In a Year 6 science lesson on chromatography, the good level of pupils' knowledge and use of accurate measurements of length and volume ensured the experiment was a success.
- 2.17 These good standards are maintained in the senior school. Senior pupils write fluently in a range of genres and for a range of purposes. Pupils show confident speaking and listening skills and can argue a case cogently. They are numerate. In a Year 8 mathematics lesson, they showed well above average skill in calculations involving circles, using ICT to create bar charts and pie charts. They show high levels of skills in other subjects, for example, practical skills in science and fieldwork experience in geography. Though little independent learning was observed, a strong example occurred in a Year 7 religious education (RE) lesson, where pupils prepared to work on their own leaflets to explain the traditions of Sikhism.
- 2.18 As pupils embark on the preparation for GCSE in Years 10 and 11, they show excellent learning skills across the range of subjects studied, helping them to achieve well. Results at GCSE over the last three years are well above maintained school averages and high in relation to ability. From the start and right through to GCSE, pupils achieve well compared with their ability levels across the entire curriculum because excellent levels of care and support ensure that individual attention is given to each girl. At A level, the very limited number of entries and the change in the nature of the cohort at this stage render comparison with the national average inappropriate.

- 2.19 No significant differences were observed in attainment between different groups of pupils, except for those with EAL in the sixth form, where sometimes, much of the lesson is taken up in language support rather than extension of subject knowledge, so that progress in subject understanding is more limited.
- 2.20 Sports teams are chosen from all age groups from Year 4 upwards. Success is significant in individual and group competition, in hockey, netball and rounders, especially considering the small number of girls from whom teams need to be chosen. Each year a significant number of pupils achieve success in activities, such as the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and the new debating group, which achieved a second round place in a national competition recently.
- 2.21 One of the reasons for academic success is that pupils organise their work very well and present it neatly. They begin to write their own notes early, for instance in science in Year 6, they write up their experiments using their own words. In the senior school, work is presented well, it is easy to follow, and pupils make individual notes, for instance in history and geography. Pupils are very good at working with each other. They collaborate well at all levels in the school. Even in the Foundation Stage, the five year olds help the three year olds with their computer work. Sometimes, lessons do not start promptly, but once pupils do arrive they clearly expect to settle and to learn. Pupils are well motivated towards their learning. Concentration levels are high. Most pupils, of all ages, clearly derive considerable enjoyment from their work and activities, and persevere.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.22 Good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is evident through the supportive quality of relationships at all levels within the community. This strongly promotes pupils' personal development, improving on the quality reported at the last inspection and assisting the school to meet its aim to enable each individual to acquire a set of personal values that will fit them well for their future.
- 2.23 From the youngest age, pupils are encouraged to appreciate the world of nature, for instance, by exploring the school grounds. Pupils develop well spiritually in this way, and through the Christian ethos that permeates school life for boarding and day pupils alike. They attend services at local churches at the end of each term as well as on occasions such as Harvest Festival and Easter. The rector takes assembly in the senior school occasionally. In keeping with the aims, pupils show self-confidence and self-esteem as well as increasing in self-knowledge, whatever their cultural and religious background. Religious education lessons and school assemblies reinforce this development strongly.
- 2.24 Due regard is placed on developing awareness of the cultural heritage of Western Europe as well as further afield, through music, art and literature, so pupils are able to talk knowledgeably, for instance, about what makes African drumming African, and write about the style of various European artists. A lovely assembly during the inspection included high-quality solo performances of American and Italian songs coupled with introductory explanation by the performers showing their awareness of the cultural differences. Recent trips to Paris and Barcelona have also encouraged cultural understanding, and pupils who are from other ethnic backgrounds explain and share their traditions.

- 2.25 Moral development is good. Pupils know the difference between right and wrong. Pupils are well aware of the school rules; they respect them and understand that they exist for the benefit of the school community. In interviews, junior and senior pupils typically said, 'The rules are sensible: they are for our safety'. Rules start with being polite, in the Foundation Stage, where children were delighted to explain why Goldilocks' behaviour was impolite in the traditional story, and even the youngest know it is right to say, 'Excuse me please'. Commensurate with their ages, their good understanding of moral issues and respect for the law are carefully nurtured throughout the school. By being involved in raising money for charities, especially for children's charities, pupils clearly demonstrate well-developed understanding of their obligations to those who are less fortunate than themselves.
- 2.26 The school provides many opportunities for pupils to learn to play their part in the community. As a result, pupils show strong social awareness. For instance, the school councils (one for juniors and one for seniors) are well-developed groups whose members in the senior school are democratically elected. Their debating and persuasive skills are evident in changes they have achieved, for instance in the variety of food provided. The PSHE programme is one means through which pupils discuss matters concerning school life and the community with their teacher and each other, developing their understanding and awareness. For instance, they discuss the effect on the community as a whole if people don't pay their taxes. They respond well to opportunities to take responsibility, such as looking after the school's pets, and they take positions of responsibility, too, for instance as head of boarding, head girl, and as house captains in both sections of the school, and even 'leading the line' in the Foundation Stage.
- 2.27 Elements of citizenship, including beginning to acquire knowledge of public institutions and services in England, are included through PSHE, through history and geography, among other subjects, and contribute effectively to their good understanding of how society functions. The annual formal sixth form dinner, the outings and parties, especially enjoyed by the boarders, and the range of charitable giving undertaken, all play their part in developing pupils' broader view of the world in which they live, and their social development.
- 2.28 Pupils' cultural awareness is closely intertwined with their spiritual development at Lavant House. Pupils explore the way values and beliefs affect peoples' lives through the RE lessons. Year 9 pupils showed insight in the way they described how customs are marked in different faiths. Such exploration of values occurs in other subjects, such as PSHE and English and is often in relation to other cultures. Within the boarding community the traditions of pupils' various backgrounds are discussed with sensitivity, interest and mutual respect, so that pupils' good cultural understanding is linked successfully with their spiritual awareness. Besides these examples of pupils examining the variety of cultures that are in the school, they show sound understanding of the diversity of the community that is Britain today, and a well-developed understanding of their own culture, commensurate with their ages. Experiences of the music, art and literature of many cultures are included in school life, such as visits to museums, theatres and art galleries.
- 2.29 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.30 Teaching and assessment are good overall. Lessons observed showed some inconsistency in quality, though work over the last six months in pupils' books showed a more reliably good picture of teaching and learning quality, improving on the standard at the time of the last inspection. Teaching assists pupils to achieve high standards by developing strong personal qualities in pupils, such as confidence and enthusiasm. This is in keeping with the school aims and prepares pupils well for adult life. A significant improvement in performance evaluation has taken place since the last inspection. The school has adopted more rigorous procedures to ascertain how its pupils are performing against national criteria. However, target setting is not fully effective, and too few opportunities are provided for pupils to develop independent learning skills and think things out for themselves.
- 2.31 The good range and quality of work in pupils' books shows that the majority of lessons include features that assist pupils to make at least good, and often rapid, progress, though this slows in the sixth form, where the cohort changes and the proportion of EAL pupils increases.
- 2.32 Though in the majority of lessons, teaching encourages pupils to apply themselves purposefully to their work, few teachers, in either section of the school, encourage independent learning or make pupils think. Physical and creative effort are often successfully encouraged very well indeed, and combined in an enjoyable way, as in the dance routines pupils devise. The new senior art room is a lovely setting in which display is used very well by staff to inspire and stimulate creative effort. Throughout all sections of the school, creative effort is in abundance in the high-quality displays teachers have encouraged pupils to produce.
- 2.33 Many examples of pupils showing great interest and enthusiasm for their work were observed, from all age groups. For instance all the Foundation Stage and Years 1 and 2 were very enthusiastic in physical education, to improve their throwing and catching skills, and in music, the older girls, from several year groups, were enthused by the African drumming workshop they attended.
- 2.34 Teachers expect pupils to behave responsibly and to work hard and give them every encouragement to do so. In most lessons behaviour and learning attitudes are good. The small classes create a warm and caring atmosphere in which to learn. In the best lessons, throughout the school, where work is geared precisely to ability, teachers are rewarded by enthusiastic learners who behave very well in the positive learning environment.
- 2.35 In the junior department planning of lessons includes clear lesson objectives and pupils are encouraged to meet their individually-known academic targets. This is an improvement since the last inspection. In the senior school, lesson objectives are often couched in terms of activities to be covered, and not clearly stated to the pupils, so that it is harder for pupils, and teachers, to measure progress. Management of class time is therefore less effective, because the format of explaining learning objectives, and evaluating success, is not habitually followed. The best lessons include a good variety of teaching methods and inspire pupils by their brisk pace and encouragement to learn, for instance in a Year 11 Spanish lesson, where pupils showed good thinking skills, and much enjoyment, working out prices and quantities in their food buying, using the Spanish language well. However, the teaching is sometimes excessively prescriptive and thinking skills are not promoted sufficiently.
- 2.36 Throughout the school, teaching responds well to individual needs and builds upon previous learning. The work of the learning support department has improved significantly since the last inspection and is excellent. Strong, directed support is given to pupils with LDD by the

classroom assistants. Good information is disseminated by the learning support staff. Because classes are often very small, plenty of individual attention ensures that all needs are met.

- 2.37 In the senior school, in some lessons, overly directed teaching predominates. This limits the development of independent learning. Teachers' own knowledge of their subjects is generally good in all sections of the school. The quality of resources in many subjects is good and teachers use them effectively. The interactive whiteboards were used in some lessons observed. The attractive setting and extensive grounds provide a supportive backdrop for a range of activities and are used well. For instance, the Year 5 work on poetry about spring involved an excursion into the grounds.
- 2.38 In most subjects in all sections of the school, pupils' work is regularly and consistently marked according to the school's marking policy. Marking at its best is supportive and points the way forward. As is appropriate for younger pupils, marking is often immediate and oral. Regular assessment of learning takes place throughout the school, for instance through end of unit tests, and this assists teaching because any gaps in understanding can be quickly dealt with. The information from the stringent evaluation of performance against nationally standardised data is disseminated to all staff. In some subjects this valuable material is used well by teachers, though specific academic learning targets are not, as yet, provided to pupils in the senior school, so they are not enabled to take responsibility for their own learning.
- 2.39 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 Pastoral care, and provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety are good overall, maintaining the position noted at the time of the last inspection. Within that, welfare, health and safety matters receive satisfactory attention, and the pastoral care that staff provide for their pupils, whether day or boarding, is outstanding. Positive relationships which promote effective learning assist the school to meet its aim to be a caring community in which its pupils will be well prepared, through their personal development, for their adult lives.
- 3.2 Pupils report that they feel well supported in and out of the classroom, that they have numerous adults to whom they can turn, and they say that they are treated fairly. Staff take their pastoral duties seriously and the recent appointment of a senior teacher as their line manager has clarified lines of responsibility. A typical comment from pupils of various ages, is, 'The teachers are kind and caring'. Though the form teacher is the first port of call in the formal structure of responsibility, pupils are just as likely to call upon the assistance of their subject teachers, or members of their house, such as older girls, for guidance and support. This is typical of the caring ethos that permeates the school. Boarders readily turn to boarding staff for help and advice.
- 3.3 The staff handbook gives guidance on the various pastoral roles. The improved pastoral management structure supports staff well in the fulfilment of their care responsibilities. Form teachers throughout the school are supported by a member of staff with specific responsibility for pastoral care, appointed since the last inspection. Other staff have separate responsibilities, for instance the school counsellor, nursing staff, and the co-ordinator for educational visits.
- 3.4 One of the main strengths of the system is the small school environment in which everyone, staff or pupil, knows everyone else, and, as pupils say, 'looks out for them'. As a result, pupils know to whom they can turn, confident that something will be done. Liaison between the main boarding staff, who are also teachers in the school, and the day to day school life, is particularly effective. The quality of care provided by the boarding staff was commented upon favourably in the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire.
- 3.5 Good relationships, based on mutual trust, exist between staff and pupils, and among pupils of the school. Pupils' typical response on being asked: 'What is special about your school?' was that 'it's fun. Everyone knows everyone so you have lots of friends'.
- 3.6 Pupils are familiar with school procedures and clear about what to do if they have concerns. Measures to promote responsible behaviour are clear, and focus on encouragement and positive reinforcement through the award of house points. The order mark system for misdemeanours and poor work is regarded as fair. Pupils of all ages enjoy accumulating points to contribute to the winning of a termly cup. The anti-bullying policy operates effectively because the school makes sure that all know the procedure and that concerns will not be brushed aside. Pupils and parents say that bullying rarely occurs. They are confident that they know what action they should take if it should occur.
- 3.7 The school takes proper care to safeguard its pupils from harm. The senior mistress is the child protection officer. Effective procedures for child protection are in place and all staff, including non-teaching and ancillary staff, have undertaken appropriate training. Suitable information is in the staff handbook. A governor has designated responsibility as child protection liaison officer. Safeguarding procedures are in place.

- 3.8 Satisfactory measures have been taken to minimise the risk of fire and other hazards. Recommended action is currently being taken in response to the recent fire survey. Regular fire drills are carefully recorded. Pastoral staff oversee their delegated responsibility for risk in regard to trips and visits. This helps ensure a systematic approach so that the assessments are carried out effectively, though paperwork is kept in several locations so procedures are not always clear to all staff concerned. Risk assessments of all kinds, mostly thorough, are in place. Risk assessments for trips and visits and for practical lessons such as science, are carried out and all risk matters are overseen by the governing body through a designated health and safety and risk assessment liaison officer, lending clarity to the lines of responsibility.
- 3.9 Sound general provision for health and safety is in place. The school pays appropriate regard to the relevant guidelines, assisted by outside agency expertise where it believes this is necessary. Copies of medical records are readily available to authorised persons, to assure effective awareness. First aid boxes are located around the school and a good number of staff are trained in first aid. Nurses are on site daily, and suitable arrangements are in place for girls who are ill, whether boarders or day girls. Admissions and attendance registers are completed accurately and arrangements are in place to follow up unexplained absence promptly. Due attention is paid to the access requirements of those with disabilities. The school has a suitable access plan.
- 3.10 The school actively promotes a healthy lifestyle. It provides suitable opportunities for pupils to take part in physical education and exercise, indoors and out. Pupils' awareness of the importance of healthy eating is developing, and they commented favourably on the quality of the nutritious school meals. The PSHE programme and other subjects, such as biology, provide drug awareness education and good instruction on healthy eating.
- 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 established outstanding, warm and supportive links with the parents and strong links with the community, significantly improving on the quality identified at the time of the last inspection. As a result, most parents are highly satisfied with the education and support provided for their children.
- 3.13 Many parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Their responses show very strong support for the school's work in most respects, particularly in terms of the help and guidance it gives to their children and the worthwhile attitudes and views it promotes, and the way it handles any parental concern. A very small number of parents think the extra-curricular activities are too limited.
- 3.14 The inspectors examined this concern and found good range of activity is offered, particularly for boarders. Younger day pupils do have a more limited range but this is reasonable, considering the small total number of pupils to be catered for by their teachers. Senior pupils are pleased with the range they have to choose from. Many day pupils live at a considerable distance from school and are dependent on transport provided, but they are invited to some of the provision for boarders.

- 3.15 The school positively encourages parents to be involved in the work and progress of their children, for instance by welcoming support at school events, concerts and matches. Parents of the younger pupils have ready access to staff, and the headmistress, at the start and end of the day. Consultation evenings, a parents' association, events such as the Summer Barbeque and the Christmas Fair, occasional events such as hairdressing sessions, all contribute to a good picture of regular opportunities to be involved.
- 3.16 The school provides parents with regular information including a comprehensive reporting timetable and newsletters. The web site is very informative and regularly updated. Reports offer updates on progress and good quality advice for a number of subjects. The monthly grade card for sixth formers and the written termly reports provide an excellent means of keeping their parents up-to-date on their daughter's progress. Records show that concerns raised by parents are dealt with swiftly and informally. The comprehensive formal complaints procedure is readily available to parents, though they have not yet had occasion to use it.
- 3.17 The school has strong and extensive links with the local community and shares its facilities and expertise. For instance, it extends its examination facilities to external candidates; netball coaching sessions are held for pupils from local schools; a lacrosse 'masterclass' is provided for local gifted and talented pupils; senior pupils run a weekly netball club for pupils at a local maintained sector primary school; and the weekly drama workshop includes outside pupils. The school is a venue for national music examinations for all local entries. Charitable giving is a further community link.
- 3.18 Pupils enjoy competing in team sports such as hockey and netball and achieve regular success. The school enriches the pupils' experience with many outside speakers and visitors, such as an opera workshop group, authors, and careers talks from former pupils, describing their professions. Visits out of school, such as the junior department residential trip, which included a visit to television studios and the British Museum, and the senior ski trip including parents, greatly enrich pupils' education.
- 3.19 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

- 3.20 Boarders experience a caring ethos fully in keeping with the school's aims. Development since the last ISI inspection has provided separate sleeping areas for junior boarders. The overall quality of boarding remains good, as before. No recommendations emerged from the last Commission for Social Care Inspection report in 2004, when all the standards were deemed to have been met.
- 3.21 Boarders at Lavant House enjoy their sensitive and supportive boarding environment. The happy ethos endeavours to develop a family atmosphere. The senior housemistress and assistant housemistress, who also teach in the school, ensure that all those who care for the boarders, know their charges well, and that any concern about individuals is quickly communicated to school. Plenty of contact time between staff and boarders assists in the provision of a supportive environment when girls are away from home. Positive relationships exist between teaching staff, boarding staff and parents. This results in boarders who not only feel valued but clearly are valued.
- 3.22 The role of head of boarders, a sixth-former, has developed since the last inspection, and all the sixth form boarders are more involved with the juniors, to encourage the family, home-

from-home feel. This is an improvement since the last inspection, and provides the setting for the nurturing of excellent relationships and preparation for family life as adults.

- 3.23 The range of activity available in the evenings and at weekends is wide and responds to the girls' requests. Boarders particularly enjoyed the recent day trip to France and the younger boarders were bursting to tell inspectors their personal highlights of the trip. Closer to home, they enjoyed a trip to '*Oliver*' performed by a theatre group that uses the school for rehearsals.
- 3.24 The accommodation and resources have improved overall. Requests for maintenance are swiftly followed up. The school has been proactive in identifying further development for improvements.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Governance makes a good contribution to the successful achievement of the school's aims, helped by astute chairmanship and a commitment for governors to undertake pertinent training. As a result, they are fully aware of their responsibilities, which are therefore efficiently executed.
- 4.2 Suitable sub-committees take responsibility for finance and general purposes, for health and safety and for education. The clearly defined roles of the various separate groups facilitate good, effective oversight of the school. Governors with experience in primary education ensure that the voice of the junior department is heard. The reporting arrangements are clearly defined and appropriate, and provide governors with timely information, which helps to ensure that governors are appropriately involved in educational development and financial planning. The longer-term development now receives good attention, an improvement since the last inspection. Regular meetings occur between the chair and the headmistress that assist the governors to be fully informed about the school. Wide-ranging arrangements are in place for regular formal and informal meetings with other staff so that positive and constructive relationships are promoted. Senior members of staff are invited to appropriate sub-committee meetings; governors observe lessons; they are invited to many functions in the school, including the annual sixth form formal dinner. These arrangements help the governors to be proactive in providing good support and to identify ways to improve and develop the school.
- 4.3 The specifically defined roles now allocated assist the governors in discharging their responsibility for child protection, health and safety, and risk, and help assure pupils' welfare.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 Leadership and management are good. This is reflected in the high standards pupils achieve in GCSE and in their strong personal development. These aspects have improved since the last inspection and response overall to the main recommendations of that inspection has been good. The school has managed its expansion to include a small Foundation Stage very well, and everyone has worked hard to remain focused on the aims, so that the school's essential caring character remains its strength.
- 4.5 Clear educational direction and leadership are provided by those with management responsibilities, as reflected in the quality of education, the care of pupils, and the fulfilment of the school's aims and ethos. The direction and leadership that the headmistress and her senior team provide are sensitive and responsive. This assists the school to provide a good quality of education in a thoroughly happy and caring atmosphere with strong emphasis on personal attention in keeping with its aims. The leadership focuses firmly on high standards of care, commented on favourably by many pupils.
- 4.6 The school has a wide-ranging development plan in place, improved since the last inspection. The priorities are well chosen, but the wording is sometimes too vague.
- 4.7 All those with management responsibilities operate well to support the values and caring elements of the school's aims. Good management in the junior department has led to improvements there in every respect, in response to the recommendations of the last

- inspection. Elements of teaching and learning are of inconsistent quality in the senior school despite this being raised as an issue at the time of the last inspection. One of the reasons for this is that mechanisms for sharing good practice are still at an early stage of development. The internal management structure for the sixth form is very clear and effective. All sections of the school liaise effectively and this includes some subject liaison, particularly strong in those subjects which are taught in the junior department by senior school staff.
- 4.8 A suitable performance management system is in place that provides for appraisal every two years and includes lesson observations with points for guidance. The training budget is sufficient to ensure that all staff receive training towards the better fulfilment of the whole school development priorities. Many useful whole school policies have been written and are known by all staff. They are the result of a thorough and regular process of consultation and review which includes the governing body. Recruitment procedures for staff are effective. All statutory checks are made prior to confirmation of appointment. The induction procedure for new staff is supportive. The use of classroom assistants enhances the educational experience for the pupils they are directed to work with.
- 4.9 Catering and maintenance staff are hardworking and support the school well in providing nutritious food and a clean environment in which to live and work. The arrangements for providing appropriate resources, including ICT resources, and the libraries, are generally well-managed by the headmistress and the bursar to ensure that pupils' needs are met. Staff are readily provided with the resources they need.
- 4.10 A key feature of the administrative arrangements, and a strong characteristic of the school, is that it works well as one unit; it functions well and deals well with the differing needs of its wide age range within that one unit. This cohesion reinforces the strong caring ethos. Administrative support is of a very high calibre, and supports the school ethos by giving the headmistress time to lead the whole school effectively.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Lavant House is a caring community that fulfils its aims well. This assists pupils to make good and sometimes rapid progress through the good, broad and interesting educational experience it offers. As a result, they achieve high standards by the time they reach GCSE, benefiting from the individual attention received. Children enjoy a strong start in the Foundation Stage. Throughout the school, outstanding pastoral care helps pupils to develop strong personal qualities. Links with parents and the community are exceptional. The quality of teaching is good overall, but inconsistent. Pupils in the junior and senior schools who need extra support for their learning are catered for particularly well. In the sixth form, pupils with EAL are provided with plenty of language support, but this sometimes has the effect of reducing the amount of time for subject-specific teaching. In the senior school, pupils are not habitually set clear academic targets. Opportunities for independent learning are too few, limiting the development of critical thinking. However, the strengths far outweigh the weaknesses, and result in pupils who are confident and happy, and who leave the school well-prepared for the next stage in their education.
- 5.2 Because the school has developed successfully since the last inspection, good progress is recorded in many aspects. Standards achieved have improved over much of the school and particularly in the junior department.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 In order to build on existing provision, the school should take the following steps.
1. Ensure that teachers' planning provides more opportunities for pupils to develop independent learning skills over the whole school, by including, for instance:
 - more open-ended questions;
 - more use of ICT and the library for research in a range of subjects;
 - work designed to suit pupils with different learning styles.
 2. Improve the use of assessment in the senior school, by devising individual academic targets, based on the data collection already in place, and regularly reviewing these with pupils.
 3. Provide consistent strategies to support the language development of sixth form girls with EAL to ensure that A level subject teaching time is not used to develop understanding of basic vocabulary.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 11th to 14th February 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 the boarding accommodation. 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 Ruth McFarlane	Reporting Inspector
Miss Mary Burridge	Former junior head, GSA school
Mrs Linda Cole	Deputy head, GSA school
Mr David Ibbotson	Director of studies, HMC school
Mrs Rosalind Wilson	Former deputy head, GSA school