

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Bablake School

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

Full Name of the School	Bablake School
DCSF Number	331/6017
Registered Charity Number	528961
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Age Range	11 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	25th to 28th 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 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 Bablake School traces its origins to 1344 and it has a continuous history from 1560, the time of Queen Elizabeth I. It moved in 1890 to its present site of some eleven acres, close to the centre of Coventry. In 1975 it became co-educational. Since 1991 it has shared its site with Bablake Junior School, which was founded in that year for pupils aged between seven and eleven. The schools have an additional forty acres of playing fields about one mile from their main teaching facilities. They are part of the Coventry School Foundation of six schools, all within the Coventry urban area. Bablake has a Christian foundation; it welcomes pupils of varied religious beliefs and backgrounds, and of none.
- 1.2 The school's aims are 'to provide an excellent and stimulating education for boys and girls, by developing character, intellect and physical well-being within a happy, scholarly and caring community.' It seeks 'to encourage the growth of reflection, intellectual curiosity and creativity, within a spirit of independent and co-operative learning.' It aims also 'to offer a wide range of activities and opportunities for enrichment, enabling pupils to develop sporting and cultural interests through participation with others.'
- 1.3 The school has 881 pupils between the ages of 11 and 18, of whom 256 are in the sixth form. It is wholly co-educational, with 461 boys and 420 girls. These figures are slightly higher than those at the time of the last inspection in 2002, particularly in the sixth form. About one-third of the pupils enter from the junior school, the rest coming principally from a large number of maintained primary schools. About two-thirds live in Coventry or its immediate vicinity; the remainder travel daily to and from the school by means of an extensive bus service. Pupils come from diverse social and ethnic backgrounds and, according to census groupings, about one-half live in non-affluent areas. Nearly one-third receive financial support from the school, part of the Foundation's programme to make its schools as accessible as possible.
- 1.4 Pupils applying for admission are required to sit an entrance examination in mathematics, English, and verbal and non-verbal reasoning. The average ability of the pupils is well above the national average so that, if pupils are achieving according to their ability, their achievement in GCSE should be well above the national average of all maintained schools and approximately in line with the national average of maintained selective schools. A small number of pupils leave the school at the end of Year 11, normally to enter a college of further education, and the school admits a similarly small number to its sixth form on the basis of success at GCSE, headteacher's reference and interview at the school. The standard of pupil ability continues to be well above the national average, so that pupils may be expected to achieve results at A level well above the national average of all maintained schools and approximately in line with the average of maintained selective schools.
- 1.5 No pupil in the school has a statement of special educational need. The school identifies 81 pupils as having learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD), mainly associated with dyslexia, and it provides educational support for 63 of these. It also recognises 3 pupils as having English as an additional language (EAL) to that normally spoken at home. Almost all pupils proceed from school to university, across a wide range of subject areas and generally to their preferred institution.
- 1.6 Since the last inspection, the school has made new appointments as headmaster and in senior management, and it has adapted the overall structure of responsibilities of senior leaders. It has raised new buildings, including science laboratories, and developed its special provision for the teaching of modern foreign languages, English, drama and music. It has expanded

and improved the library and increased the provision of information and communications technology (ICT).

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
Shells	Year 7
Seconds	Year 8
Thirds	Year 9
Fourths	Year 10
Fifths	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The quality of the educational experience provided throughout the school is outstanding. It meets well the school's aim to supply a challenging and balanced curriculum, which prepares pupils for adulthood, equipping them with skills for life. The school plans carefully through its schemes of work to supply a broad and stimulating programme suitable for the full range of abilities and interests, including those who transfer from the junior school. The education balances academic challenge with an extensive range of cultural, spiritual, sporting and creative activities, as well as opportunities for community service to promote generosity of spirit among all its pupils. The school has implemented well proposals noted at the time of the last inspection, such as the widening of academic choice in Years 10 and 11.
- 2.2 Through its careful planning, the curriculum contributes very effectively to the linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative development of all the pupils, and it makes excellent provision for their acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy at all stages. Provision in modern foreign languages and in the classics allows an expanded programme for the most able, and setting in mathematics allows specific challenge according to ability. Pupils throughout the school are encouraged to communicate fluently and precisely, and numerous activities are arranged for public speaking, both in regular assemblies and in debating societies and competitions.
- 2.3 The quality of pupils' artwork reflects a high level of creativity and perception, a provision significantly expanded since the time of the last inspection. Attractive and imaginative pupil displays celebrate the activities of the school, promote awareness of the local and global community and stimulate a sense of pride in achievement. Opportunities to participate in the performing arts are frequent and the school continues a long tradition of taking dramatic productions to the Edinburgh Festival. An extensive programme of games and sports encourages participation as high as national levels. A developed house system offers further opportunity, particularly in sports, for all to participate and to contribute to group success.
- 2.4 A broad range of lunchtime clubs and after-school activities includes the Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme at gold level. The community service volunteers' programme allows pupils actively to engage with the local community, and the general studies programme encourages a range of group interests.
- 2.5 Outstanding attention is given to preparing pupils for the next stage of their education and for adult life. An extensive and strong personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) course is administered throughout the school, principally by form tutors but also through visiting speakers and agencies. The full-time careers adviser guides pupils in the selection of appropriate subject options. In the sixth form, a careers programme prepares pupils for university application and admission as well as the world of work and the acquisition of practical life-skills. Provision is made for appropriate work experience in Year 12, often enabled by former pupils. The careers department is very well resourced and expertly led, offering advice to all pupils from Year 8.
- 2.6 The school meets the curricular requirements of all those pupils requiring special provision; learning support is outstanding. It ensures that those pupils with LDD and those with EAL derive full benefit from their time in school. The school pursues well its premise that 'all can achieve'. The practice of supplying a synopsis of each pupil's needs to every teacher, defining the optimum level of support, is exemplary. To develop good reading habits in all pupils, and to encourage effective use of the library, each class in Year 7 has a dedicated weekly library lesson.

- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 The quality of pupils' learning and their achievements is good throughout the school, and in many areas it is outstanding. It meets well the school's aims to enable pupils to enjoy their education and to fulfil their academic potential, and to encourage the growth of reflection, intellectual curiosity and creativity, within a spirit of independent and co-operative learning. It matches the high standards recognised at the time of the last inspection.
- 2.9 Pupils achieve good levels of knowledge, skills and creative understanding and they learn to apply these effectively. In all areas pupils have a clear and precise knowledge and they pursue refined understanding and clarity with earnestness. They are clear in their goals to advance their learning and to succeed well. They produce copious notes of high quality and take excellent advantage of additional workshops and lessons directed to improve understanding and success. They are ambitious, they are keen and they are successful as highly competent learners, although this is sometimes at the expense of adventure and innovation.
- 2.10 The pupils speak, listen, read and write markedly well. They are articulate and they are possessed of charm and poise. Mathematical competence is strong and literary fluency is high. Academic learning is excellent but independent learning is less developed and less demanded by teachers. Pupils with LDD or EAL are well supported by designated staff who keep the subject teachers closely informed of need and recommend specific strategies to assist learning. Through the rapid and effective exchange of information, they are fully assimilated in all classes and learn and achieve well.
- 2.11 Standardised measures indicate that the pupils make good progress. Their attainment in public examinations is good in relation to their abilities. GCSE results are far above the national average for all maintained schools and A-level results are well above the corresponding average. Results at both levels are above the averages for maintained selective schools. Pupils respond well to the additional challenge of advanced study and they enjoy success.
- 2.12 Pupils' work in all subjects is notable for its volume and its comprehensive detail. Notemaking is thorough. It is also well presented and carefully ordered. This reflects both pupils' pride in their study and the high expectations of their teachers. Pupils work well on their own and in groups. Pupils settle quickly to their tasks, make a prompt start to their lessons and cover a great deal of learning in a single lesson of 35 minutes. Learning throughout the school is purposeful and it sustains a good pace. The pupils support each other well in extracting clear understanding or an agreed solution. Outstanding examples of effective and co-operative learning were seen throughout the school. The pupils enjoy their studies. They also persevere well to achieve full understanding and they are prompt to seek clarification when in doubt.
- 2.13 The pupils' skills in art, design technology, music and games are well developed. The amount and quality of art displayed around the school is exceptional. Significant individual and group successes in sport abound, notably in rugby, cricket, hockey and netball. Further success is marked in national competitions such as in debating and public speaking, the Bank of England Target Two Point Zero competition, the Mathematics Olympiad, the Gold Crest Awards in science and the Education Engineering Scheme in design technology.
- 2.14 Pupils' use of ICT is good and increasing, but it is not yet uniform or general. So too pupil use of the library as a significant learning resource is limited in all years, even though the

library has been extended and refurbished since the last inspection and specific lessons are conducted there to encourage best practice.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.15 The pupils demonstrate outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. Pupils' development in all these areas has advanced from the already good standard noted at the time of the last inspection. It meets with impressive effect the school's aim to encourage development of character, a sense of responsibility, spiritual values and a strong personal and moral code, leading to the highest standards of behaviour and consideration for others. The pupils show a great respect for each other, so that a culture of acceptance and inclusivity is marked. They are confident, open and courteous. They receive visitors warmly and they reach out into the community in a generous way. Almost all parents responding to the confidential pre-inspection questionnaire agreed that the school promotes worthwhile attitudes and views.
- 2.16 The spiritual awareness of the pupils is strong. They respect different religious beliefs and practices and they demonstrate a deep awareness of the rights and needs of each other. The school has no chapel but prayers are said regularly in assemblies, and religious studies lessons for all in Years 7 to 10 explore the major world faiths. Plans are advanced for a quiet area to be set aside within the school as a memorial garden for reflection and spiritual contemplation. A 'spirituality group' discusses spiritual issues within the school and it produces a stimulating 'thought for the day' which is read to all pupils at registration sessions. Pupils recognise well the spiritual dimension in their lives.
- 2.17 The pupils' moral awareness is excellent. They recognise the need for considerate behaviour and they believe that the school's rules and expectations are reasonable and productive of communal well-being. High standards of conduct and of concern for each other are evident throughout the school. The pupils accept wholly that all forms of bullying are wrong and they acknowledge that on the rare occasions when bullying does occur it is dealt with promptly and effectively. Many signs about the school encourage pupils to 'speak out' if they are victims of bullying or witness any occurrence. Pupils seize opportunities to discuss moral issues in PSHCE sessions, religious studies classes and form periods. A Year 7 group discussed drug awareness, terrorism and bullying in preparation for an assembly with their peers. Pupils in Years 12 and 13 engaged in the Amnesty International campaign against slavery and human trafficking in the contemporary world and received well visitors to the school who presented a hard-hitting depiction of genocide. Year 9 pupils visit the Holocaust remembrance centre at Beth Shalom, and sixth-form pupils recently travelled to the former Auschwitz concentration camp, so that they recognise man's inhumanity to man.
- 2.18 Pupils' social awareness is well developed and they have a clear sense of self-worth. They feel a sense of ownership and pride in their school, and responsibility for its success. Relationships among pupils are excellent and great care and consideration are shown to those pupils with LDD. The school provides opportunities for leadership through its system of school and form prefects, the Combined Cadet Force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, and by sharing in the editorship and production of the school magazine. Lessons in many subjects encourage a strong social awareness. For example, pupils in an economics class in Year 13 discussed keenly the character of contemporary England and a geography lesson in Year 10 explored themes of global warming and the effects of acid rain. School councils exist for each section of the school. These are highly valued and regarded by pupils, who feel they have a voice in the school and that they have an effect on its organisation, for example by improving the waiting area adjacent to the school for travellers by bus. Teachers

vigorously encourage pupils to use the school council as part of pupil entitlement and responsibility for their own school and personal well-being.

- 2.19 The pupils' cultural awareness is strong. They are exposed to and receptive of a wide range of cultures and influences. They attend lunchtime clubs regularly to learn both Mandarin and Japanese. Pupil musicians tour abroad and the whole of Year 8 visit the Foundation's property in France. Thereby pupils come to understand different cultural traditions and observances, they respect varied dress codes and they recognise national practices and history. Throughout the school, pupils develop and demonstrate a mature and trusting understanding of differences of culture and tradition.
- 2.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.21 The quality of teaching throughout the school is good, and often it is outstanding. The school achieves well its aim to provide well-qualified, dedicated and enthusiastic staff. The overall standard of teaching throughout the school maintains the high standard recognised at the time of the last inspection. The school's regular use of assessment to monitor learning and to set targets of progress is outstanding. A large number of parents who replied to the pre-inspection questionnaire agreed strongly that the teaching in the school enables their children to make good progress.
- 2.22 Lessons are distinguished by a powerful sense of purpose to learn, in a shared enterprise between teacher and pupil. The teaching enables pupils of all abilities, including those with LDD or EAL, to acquire new knowledge and to make good progress. In many lessons, questions are carefully graded to enable pupils across the full range of ability to participate effectively and to learn well. The recent introduction of cross-curricular lesson observation, coupled with systematic and regular department appraisal, encourages the sharing of good practice. This forms part of an overall review of the quality of teaching and learning within the school development plan for the years 2007-2010.
- 2.23 The teaching fosters well in all pupils the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort. Many lessons are outstanding in cultivating pupils' interest and focus in their work. ICT is used well in some classes, although not in all. Throughout the school, classroom displays demonstrate high quality work that is both exciting and stimulating. Pupils recognise and value different styles in teaching and they have a high respect for their teachers. They understand what is required to learn effectively.
- 2.24 The school's monitoring of academic progress is outstanding. Nationally recognised measures of pupils' attainment and progress are supplemented by the school's own 'Bablake score', which includes assessment on each pupil's admission to the school and subsequent examination performance. Use of this information is directed and overseen by the senior managers in the school and it is recorded in every teacher's mark-book. Pupils who fall below expectations are identified quickly and their current needs recognised and addressed well. Application of this excellent system of repair and encouragement is being extended to challenge further those identified by the school as particularly gifted and talented.

- 2.25 The teaching shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of all the pupils, which is regularly updated. Targets and expectations follow directly on this basic information. Regular testing further ensures that areas for improvement in pupils' learning are identified. Setting in mathematics and differentiation in modern foreign languages and classics enable gifted and talented pupils to explore advanced topics early or to take additional courses. Pupils with LDD or EAL are supported by individual learning plans, which are communicated to and implemented by subject departments. Some pupils have tailored weekly lessons to provide further support for their learning, and many attend supervised homework clubs organised by some departments.
- 2.26 Teachers have an excellent knowledge of their subjects and in all lessons this enhances pupils' learning well. Teachers plan their lessons carefully and they use resources ably. They employ interactive whiteboards, projectors and ICT facilities when necessary, although the quality of practice does vary. Examples of excellence include the use of map software in geography and of computers in musical composition.
- 2.27 Teacher assessment of pupils' work is thorough and its use to identify individual need has been significantly expanded since the last inspection. Pupil tracking is effective and ensures that the needs of all pupils are met fully. Pupils are also engaged in evaluating their own attainment, and they discuss with teachers their performance in examinations and agree steps necessary for improvement. From Year 8 they are also invited to attend meetings between their parents and their teachers. Pupils are encouraged to accept responsibility for their own academic progress and they discharge this well. Marking is good and it helps pupils to improve their performance. Although practice varies appropriately between departments, all marking accords with the school's overall policy.
- 2.28 The effective and committed teaching ensures that pupils' behaviour in all lessons is excellent. They act responsibly and engage well together to refine understanding and to produce appropriate outcomes. Lessons start promptly and they continue at a pace appropriate to ensure effective learning and achievement.
- 2.29 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 quality of pastoral care throughout the school is outstanding. It continues the excellent standard recognised at the time of the last inspection and it meets wholly the school's aim to value and support each individual, nurturing self-esteem and mutual respect.
- 3.2 The school provides excellent support and guidance for all its pupils. Form tutors are at the heart of the pastoral system. They make sure that they get to know their pupils well and they are attentive and effective when their pupils need guidance or support. The tutors monitor the academic and extra-curricular performance of their pupils and they teach the excellent PSHCE programme to their form during an allocated weekly period. Time for this is limited, however, and the training and supervision of form tutors in this aspect are also scant. Yet pupils are confident that the strong relationship between them and their form tutor allows proper and full consideration of even sensitive issues. The pupils have a clear allegiance to their form, and their form tutor is central to this.
- 3.3 The staff are assisted in their pastoral care by highly effective pastoral arrangements. The pastoral system is managed by the school's two deputy heads and by the head of sixth form. Year heads and section heads oversee the progress of each pupil and deal with those pupils who fail to respond to a form tutor's first steps of encouragement or redress. Some appraisal of form tutors takes place within departmental reviews, but this is not yet reinforced by direct observation of the work of a form tutor.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils is outstanding. They develop naturally from the friendly, supportive ethos of the school. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and know that they will listen and respond quickly to individual concerns and requests for help.
- 3.5 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour are excellent. The school's code of conduct and its stepped approach to discipline declare clearly the school's expectations of good behaviour, and those sanctions that will be applied in cases of misconduct. Pupils are well aware of these expectations. The school has a comprehensive and successful anti-bullying policy and the pupils respect the requirement that no bullying is ever just. Pupils know clearly what they should do in the event of bullying, but they also believe that incidents of bullying are rare. Parents express confidence in the school's approach to discipline.
- 3.6 Child protection measures are securely in place and they are effective. The child protection policy is thorough and detailed. One of the deputy heads is the nominated person for child protection. The training of senior staff and those with a specific role in child protection is effective and thorough. It includes training in the 'Every Child Matters' agenda.
- 3.7 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective and the school has due regard for health and safety statutory obligations. The school has taken all necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. It has an effective fire safety policy and installed a new fire protection system in 2007. Risk assessments for educational trips and visits are complete and comprehensive; they are routinely undertaken and recorded. The school medical centre has two trained nurses who together provide first aid throughout the working week. The nurses also provide a valuable service to pupils who are distressed or anxious and who need to talk to someone. The school has a thorough policy for first aid and ready access

to qualified counselling. The presence of a trained Samaritan on the teaching staff is another striking and valuable resource.

- 3.8 Both the admission and attendance registers are carefully completed and properly maintained. They are stored centrally and readily available. Any absence is followed up promptly and parents are expected to keep the school appropriately informed of any pupil absence.
- 3.9 The pupils are encouraged to be healthy, both by developing healthy eating habits and by taking regular exercise. A good range of healthy meals is available at school during lunchtime. Pupils take part in regular exercise as part of the curriculum and they are encouraged to participate in the many opportunities for sport or other activities within the strong extra-curricular programme.
- 3.10 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

- 3.11 The quality of the school's links with parents and the community is outstanding. It fulfils well the school's aim to work in partnership with parents and to promote an awareness of the world beyond school, a generosity of spirit, and a sense of service to the wider community. It maintains the excellent standard recognised at the time of the last inspection.
- 3.12 A high proportion of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. A vast majority expressed themselves satisfied with the educational provision of the school and the opportunities made available to their children. They indicated a strong support for the values and attitudes promoted by the school and praised the quality and range of extra-curricular activities. They believe that the school handles their concerns well and they appreciate the information they receive from the school, including email contact and evening phone-calls. These supplement well the regular formal and frequent informal discussions with teachers and managers and the school's informative publications and newsletters.
- 3.13 An active parents' association supports the school through a variety of events for parents, pupils and staff. It is also involved in raising considerable funds for projects within the school, such as framing pictures, supplying kit for overseas sports' tours, and supporting bursaries for GAP-Year students. At parents' evenings it provides refreshments and it organises a biennial 'international week' to enhance cultural understanding.
- 3.14 The school strongly encourages regular contact between parents and tutors, year heads and senior managers. It has set up parent focus groups and invited parents to a development planning morning to ensure that parents are kept informed of proposed changes at the school and feel engaged in their preparation. Parents feel that they are welcomed at the school. They regularly attend school occasions, such as musical events, drama productions and sports fixtures. They help with work experience placements, careers evenings and practice interviews for older pupils about to leave school.
- 3.15 A recently restructured reporting system provides full and regular communication to parents about their children's attainment and progress. Regular parents' evenings encourage open and frank discussion, normally with the pupil present. Parents are informed that the school tracks pupils according to identified potential, and homework diaries encourage regular monitoring of work set and completed. Parents declare that they feel themselves engaged in their children's education. The school handles parents' concerns well and an appropriate

complaints policy is in place. Most complaints are settled promptly and informally. When formal procedures are employed, they work well.

- 3.16 The school promotes very positive and extensive links with the local and wider community. It keeps in touch successfully with former pupils, past parents and teachers through the Bablake Reunited website and a series of high quality newsletters and magazines. It arranges work experience for pupils in Year 12 and extensive volunteer community service in charity shops, primary and secondary schools, residential care homes and the local hospital. It regularly invites members of the local community to events such as school concerts and pantomimes, and primary school children have access to sports taster days and to the school's pottery facilities. School amenities such as the theatre, dining-hall and sports facilities are regularly made available to local organisations. This expanding programme is ably co-ordinated by the director of marketing and admissions on the school's senior management team. The school's outreach is extensive.
- 3.17 Pupils engage actively with the local community. They work hard for those in need, often by extensive fund-raising. They also focus keenly on global environmental issues, including conservation of energy and recycling. They engage in issues as diverse as women's health care, and genocide and the denial of human rights in the developing world. The Bablake weather station, located at the playing fields and manned by staff and pupils, provides detailed information to the national network. Within the school site, senior pupils listen to reading by pupils in the junior school and assist in some of their games activities.
- 3.18 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].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good. Its structures are well defined and effective so that they ensure careful oversight of the school and secure development. The governors set appropriate aims and values for the school and they provide clear guidance to its managers. The high standard of governance commented upon at the time of the last inspection has been successfully maintained.
- 4.2 The management arrangements related to the governing body are well defined. The governors have a clear knowledge of the school and a vision for its future, both in its own right and as a member of the Foundation. Goals are clear and they are also ambitious. The governors have formulated with the school leaders a development plan for the years 2007 to 2010 and they have initiated and directed change effectively. This has included the management and best use of the whole site, which is currently shared with the junior school, as well as definition of curriculum objectives and staff development. A recent enquiry and report, commissioned by the governors, has recommended that academic representation on the governing body should be increased to provide more direct and recent experience of schools and secondary education. The governors are currently seeking to provide this so that the full range of school activity will be better met. The governors have established committees where necessary, for example in the determination of pupil bursaries, the settlement of academic priorities and the allocation of resources. Regular appraisal of the headmaster's performance is planned, but it is not yet in operation.
- 4.3 Governors have undergone appropriate and formal training and they are well aware of their responsibilities. They have reviewed all statutory policies and ensured their compliance. They are secure in their responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, and for child protection. Financial planning and routine management are good. The governors ensure excellent resources and they are attentive to the successful marketing of the school and its outreach to the community. Some governors have observed lessons in the school, and relationships between governors and staff are good. The governors have a good insight into the working of the school and they provide staff with support, advice and challenge.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The overall quality of leadership and management in the school is good, and in many aspects it is outstanding. Examples of excellence are in the school's forward planning, in its sharing of responsibility for the success of the school, and in the quality of pupil-tracking by assessment, setting new targets for attainment and monitoring. These are considerably advanced since the time of the last inspection. The school has set itself clear and comprehensive aims over a wide field and it is meeting these well. Its leaders and managers work well together and they share a vision for Bablake that is both published and pursued.
- 4.5 The headmaster, appointed in 2006, provides strong and purposeful leadership within a consultative framework. This ensures a collective sense of ownership of change and secures an active engagement in it. The headmaster has reviewed with staff and with parents and pupils the school's current practices and refined these, for example in the frequency and manner of reporting to parents on pupils' achievement and needs, in curriculum development and in contacts with local and overseas communities. He is well supported by his senior managers so that much has been changed and improved in a short space of time.

- 4.6 The senior management team consists of the two deputy heads, the director of studies, the head of sixth form and the director of marketing and admissions. It meets regularly and formally each week to discuss and resolve matters of current importance. It also meets frequently with appropriate pastoral and subject heads as the school development group to consider longer term issues and planning. It is assured in its decision-making and it is effective in its leadership of change. Each senior manager has also defined duties and responsibilities, although both pastoral and academic oversight is shared. Marketing has become specific and well informed. The commitment and enthusiasm of the senior managers are clear and respected throughout the school.
- 4.7 Heads of subject departments meet regularly under the director of studies and determine routine curriculum matters in the school. They have established a broad and challenging curriculum for all pupils and they share well information on pupils' abilities and progress. Department heads feel valued. They also accept responsibility for the development of their subjects and the teaching within them, and for the success of their pupils.
- 4.8 Pastoral roles are defined according to sections of the school. This is complex but it works well. It allows appropriate adjustment for pupils new to the school, those well established in it and those about to move on to higher education and professional careers. Consideration of the particular needs of boys and girls within the school is also good. Together the pastoral middle managers produce a measure of care and support to all pupils that is a strength of the school. They support well the school's PSHCE programme although, as the school recognises, the allocation of adequate time and appropriate training for the delivery of this is not yet secure. Both the house system and the respected school councils provide further opportunity for pupils to participate and to show leadership.
- 4.9 The school has well-qualified and committed teachers, sufficient for its size and capable of challenge to the full ability range of the pupils. Recruitment procedures are efficient and safe and all checks on staff and regular assistants and visitors are applied fully and correctly. Newly qualified teachers are inducted well, according to national requirements. Records are careful and support is caring and formative. Induction for teachers new to the school is also effective. The school has a well-structured system of staff appraisal, conducted by the head of subject department and senior managers. Departmental appraisal is also conducted biennially by senior managers. In-service training and teacher attendance on courses are available, but currently somewhat confined to examination-based and regulatory issues. Staff training days within the school are held regularly.
- 4.10 Routine administration, provided both by the Foundation and by the school's own members, is efficient and comprehensive. It pays careful attention to safety and welfare. Financial management is prudent and well harnessed. Secretarial provision is good and the grounds and premises are well maintained. The quality of meals is to a good standard, with appropriate attention to healthy eating. All take a pride in the school and share a sense of achievement in its success.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.12 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Bablake School meets its clear aims confidently and with assurance. It provides for all its pupils an outstanding educational experience. It constitutes a happy community of successful learners, engaged in a wide range of activities: academic, cultural, sporting, social and charitable. The overall quality of pupils' learning and achievements and the quality of teaching throughout the school are good; often they are excellent. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding; so too is the quality of pastoral care, together with provision for the welfare, health and safety of the pupils. Links between the school, parents and the community are extensive and they are highly effective. This level of achievement reflects well the successful and committed governance in the school and the high quality of leadership and management. Weaknesses are few and partial, and they are already largely recognised by the school: in the need to extend exciting and innovative learning, in the still patchy use of ICT and library resources, and in the delivery of PSHCE mainly in form tutors' lessons.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection in February 2002, the school has maintained its high standards of provision, in teaching and in learning, in pastoral care and in links with parents and the community. It has preserved its ethos of care for every pupil and its provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities and pursuits. It has, at the same time, extended these and it has consulted parents over intended changes. It has improved its recording of pupils' attainment and established a comprehensive tracking system of individual progress, subject by subject. It has revised its methods of reporting. It has extended the library, expanded its art facilities, and it has improved the quality of maintenance and refurbishment across the school. It has met well all weaknesses in registration procedures, checks on staff and procedures for health and safety, including fire-drills. It has invested in ICT and increased access to modern technology.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school is highly successful, although it needs now to provide still greater intellectual challenge to its pupils and to enable more independent and exciting learning by all, through:
1. more frequently ambitious teaching, so that to the high level of pupil compliance and competence is added a powerful sense of intellectual challenge and curiosity;
 2. the promotion of greater and better use of its ICT and library resources as learning and research facilities to the highest levels;
 3. reviewing and improving, through appropriate training and scheduled time, the teaching of its PSHCE programme across all years.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 25th to 28th 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. 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

Dr Anthony Dachs	Reporting Inspector
Mr Neil Chippington	Head of Department, HMC school
Mrs Lucy Elphinstone	Head of Sixth Form, GSA school
Miss Sarah Knibb	Senior Teacher, HMC school
Mr Peter Lacey	Former Head, HMC school
Dr David Mascord	Head, HMC school
Mr Tim Wilbur	Principal, HMC school
Mr Ian Yorston	Head of Department, HMC school