

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Millfield School

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

Full Name of the School	Millfield School
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Age Range	13 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	23rd to 26th November 2009

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, May 2007 and February 2009.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

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

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	1
Characteristics of the School	1
2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	3
The Educational Experience Provided	3
Pupils' Learning and Achievements	4
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	5
The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)	7
3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	9
The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils	9
The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	10
The Quality of Boarding Education	11
4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	13
The Quality of Governance	13
The Quality of Leadership and Management	14
5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS	16
Overall Conclusions	16
Next Steps	16
6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE	17
List of Inspectors	17

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Millfield School is a boarding and day school for boys and girls between the ages of thirteen and eighteen. It occupies a large campus in the environs of Street in Somerset and was founded in 1935. The school established a reputation for its pioneering work in dyslexia. Although also well known as a school for encouraging sporting talent to a high level, Millfield's former pupils are to be found in a wide range of careers. Millfield Preparatory School is also part of Millfield and both schools are overseen by the same board of governors.
- 1.2 Currently the school has 1221 pupils of whom 751 are boys and 470 girls. Years 9 to 11 have 679 pupils and 542 are in the sixth form. Nine hundred and fifty-eight pupils are boarders. Just under half of pupils are in receipt of bursary or scholarship funding, almost all of which is from the school's own resources. A number of pupils are supported by the Ministry of Defence and other organisations. The school has nineteen boarding houses of which three are dedicated sixth form houses. Five houses provide pastoral care for day pupils. Boarders mainly come from within a two and a half hour radius of the school. Nineteen per cent of pupils are from 50 overseas countries, including Germany, India and China. Pupils are from a wide range of family backgrounds. The current headmaster has been in post since September 2008.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection the school has developed many new facilities. These include a new music school and concert hall, a new chemistry centre, an extension to the chapel, a new sixth form girls' boarding house and a range of new sports facilities. The school has also re-designed the GCSE curriculum, expanded the provision for gifted and talented pupils and for minority languages, developed its reporting procedures to parents, increased self-evaluation and development planning within academic departments and embarked upon *Discovering Millfield*, a major strategic review.
- 1.4 The main entry ages are thirteen and sixteen. At 13+ entry, all prospective pupils are interviewed and normally three-quarters take either the Common Entrance examination or the school's own transfer examination. A report is also required from the feeder school of each applicant. At sixth form entry, places are offered on the basis of an interview, GCSE results and a report from the current school. Entry to Millfield does not depend solely on examination results and the school sets great store by the interviewing process, consciously attracting pupils from very diverse backgrounds, at home and overseas, with a wide range of academic ability and special talents.
- 1.5 Standardised tests in recent years indicate that the average ability of the pupils on entering the school at the age of thirteen is above the national average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in public examinations would be above the average for all maintained schools. The average ability of the pupils on entering the sixth form is in line with the national average for all sixth form students, but a number of these pupils are of above average ability. If sixth form students were to achieve in line with their abilities, they would obtain results in line with the national average for all maintained schools.
- 1.6 The school has identified 413 pupils in need of learning support for English language or learning difficulties or other problems which include dyslexia, dyspraxia and problems of retention and planning. Pupils are recruited from a wide range of preparatory schools and also from schools overseas. Three-quarters of pupils in Year 11 stay for the sixth form. On leaving Year 13, the vast majority proceed to university or higher education.

- 1.7 The school's aim is to support and nurture individual pupils with diverse needs to develop confidence and resilience through a wide range of opportunities. Its mission is to serve its pupils by establishing a dynamic, international learning community based on diligence, mutual respect and understanding. In attempting to achieve these goals the school draws on the richness of the school environment and its people and the broader Millfield community and encourages each pupil to achieve the highest standards in all aspects of life.
- 1.8 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
Third Year	Year 9
Fourth Year	Year 10
Fifth Year	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Millfield provides an outstanding range of educational opportunities well suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of all its pupils.
- 2.2 The education provided as a whole is consistent with the school's aims and philosophy. The school's declared mission to support and nurture individual pupils with diverse needs and to develop their confidence and resilience is achieved through access to a broad and balanced curriculum and to an exceptionally wide range of high quality extra-curricular activities led by very committed staff. Since the last inspection the school has enhanced its educational provision, with considerable improvements to facilities such as the new music school and concert hall, as well as a new chemistry building. The school has also made significant improvements to its curricular provision. This includes an increased selection of languages offered at GCSE and an enhanced post-16 provision with new BTEC National courses, a diploma in art and a certificate in sport, a vocational Certificate of Education (Advanced) in leisure studies and the Cambridge Pre-U award in history.
- 2.3 The curriculum gives all pupils experience in, and contributes effectively to, linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, and aesthetic and creative development. Extensive provision is made for the pupils' acquisition of speaking and listening skills and literacy and numeracy. Pupils are articulate, considerate of the opinions of others and can propose coherent and persuasive arguments. For example, in a Year 12 physics lesson pupils presented a range of complex ideas related to Newton's laws of motion and in a Year 13 physical education (PE) lesson pupils demonstrated excellent reasoning skills and applied the 'inverted U theory' of arousal effectively to examples of sporting performance.
- 2.4 The pupils' experience of personal, social and health education reflects the school's aims and ethos and is considerably enriched by the extra-curricular activities, links with the community, and provision for voluntary service. The developing personal and social education (PSE) programme contributes to the school's aims and ethos through its promotion of the importance of understanding of self, its focus on developing emotional intelligence and its emphasis on the importance of developing and managing good relationships with others. The programme also enriches the pupils' educational experience through the links with community and voluntary services such as the Teenage Cancer Trust and the Social Entrepreneurs' Project. A remarkable aspect of the educational provision at the school is the Millfield Activities Programme (MAP) which offers a vast array of more than 120 extra-curricular activities and makes full use of the considerable interests and expertise of the school staff. Activities observed during the inspection were of the highest quality and gave pupils significant opportunity not only to build upon and extend elite performance but also to develop new interests and to enjoy new experiences.
- 2.5 Excellent support and advice are given to pupils preparing for the next stage of education, training, employment and for the challenges of adult life. The careers and higher education department is a source of invaluable expertise and information, backed up by the senior and group tutors who share with pupils their university experience and hold practice interviews. Pupils, tutors and houseparents receive useful UCAS and USA university handbooks which are updated annually and the former pupils (Old Millfieldians) make a valuable and much appreciated contribution to the annual careers convention, during which they present and discuss careers in the light of their own considerable experience. Although the school does not organise a work experience programme in term time, pupils are supported in gaining work experience during the holidays.

- 2.6 The curriculum is planned effectively and set out in writing; it provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and promotes participation in a wide range of activities. Curriculum planning within schemes of work promotes progression and continuity in pupils' learning, and the best examples identify clear strategies to ensure inclusion for all pupils with additional educational needs. Curriculum review is both proactive and collaborative with the recent investigation into a possible change in period length providing an example of best practice with widespread consultation used to inform the review process.
- 2.7 The school meets the curricular requirements of all those pupils requiring learning support, including those for whom English is an additional or foreign language and those with additional educational needs. The school's learning support centre provides comprehensive support and guidance for pupils and good lines of communication between teaching staff and the centre ensure continuity of appropriate provision. Teachers are well informed about pupils' specific needs through detailed individual educational plans. The school has also put in place a register of 'heavily committed pupils' which is usefully employed to ensure that all staff are aware of pupils who are particularly stretched by curricular and extra-curricular obligations.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.9 Pupils' learning and achievements are good and the standard since last inspection has been maintained. Indeed, in some areas, inspectors noted examples of outstanding learning and achievement. The school is successful in realising its aim for all pupils to enjoy learning and to aspire to a level of subject knowledge and understanding which is in line with their ability. Knowledge and skills are well developed with manifest progress through each of the stages. A hallmark of learning is the way achievement is celebrated at all levels in the community.
- 2.10 Speaking, listening, reading, writing, mathematical competence, logical and independent thought and use of information and communication technology (ICT) are all well developed. In a Year 13 drama lesson pupils displayed very high levels of verbal expression in analysing individual and group motivation, whilst pupils in a Year 12 English class were articulate in applying contextual history to an essay based on a performance of *Othello*. In a Year 9 religious studies (RS) class pupils showed analytical understanding of the philosophical concepts behind the meaning of truth, and Year 12 physicists demonstrated excellent subject knowledge and were able to apply this to problem-solving. Pupils also achieve high levels of skill in the wide range of creative and extra-curricular activities in which they participate.
- 2.11 No significant differences were observed in the relative attainment of different groups of pupils. The achievement of those pupils with learning difficulties and those for whom English is an additional language is good, supported by assessment data, guidelines for individual support and the application and determination of the pupils themselves. Indeed, in the sessions for individual support, the pupils showed good organisation and appreciated the way in which specialist help could best be used by them to improve their learning. In these classes and throughout the school ICT is used effectively by pupils where they are encouraged to use it to enhance their learning, but, as the school is aware, this encouragement is not uniform throughout all departments.

- 2.12 Pupils achieve well in public examinations. Pupils' attainment at GCSE is good in relation to their abilities. Results over the last three years for which comparative data is available have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. A number of subjects have consistently shown very good results, reflected in the high proportion of A/A* grades achieved. Nationally standardised measures show that progress from Year 9 to GCSE is well above national norms. Pupils' attainment at A level is good in relation to their abilities. Results at A level over the last three years for which comparative data is available have been above the national average for all maintained schools.
- 2.13 Millfield is well known for its pupils gaining a high number of national and international honours in a wide range of sports. The range of honours is remarkable and the success of Millfield in sporting activities remains undiminished. However, pupils also excel in activities beyond the sporting arena. Pupils are successful in the Mathematics Challenge and the Chemistry Olympiad as well as reaching the national finals of the European Youth Parliament at Durham University. A Millfield team competed in the prestigious Times/Bank of England national schools' economics and accounting competition. The school is regularly represented by instrumentalists in the National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain and by actors with the National Youth Theatre of Great Britain. The quality of these artists was seen at inspection in the drama department's preparation for a production of *Coram Boy* and the music department's conservatoire concert. Recently a Year 13 pupil has been awarded the prestigious Morehead-Cain scholarship (a four-year undergraduate scholarship to the University of North Carolina). This award recognises leadership potential and strength of character. These significant achievements confirm the exceptional success of Millfield's pupils across a wide spectrum.
- 2.14 Pupils are industrious in their learning and develop the skills necessary for work and study. They take notes carefully and accurately and the inspection of pupils' files confirmed that they are strong in organising their work on their own. The Year 12 independent research projects are of good quality and develop research skills at the start of A-level work. An excellent example of independent investigation leading to practical application was observed in the work of a Year 13 ICT group designing computer management systems for use at Millfield.
- 2.15 Pupils work well both on their own and in groups, where they listen carefully to each other and support each other appropriately with advice and encouragement, as in a Year 9 art class analysing photographic portraiture and a Year 13 theatre studies group devising an improvisation from a musical stimulus. Cooperative learning was very high in all the sporting activities observed. Pupils apply themselves well and, in most of the classes observed, enjoyment was at a high level. Pupils like each other, have good relationships with their teachers and are mutually supportive in a variety of situations, which creates a positive atmosphere for learning.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.16 The last report evaluated the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as good and the school has developed this aspect to the point where it is now outstanding. Pupils are courteous, confident and fully involved in the life of the school as a community. This is central to the school's aim which emphasises the importance of spiritual and moral development as part of what it considers to be true education.
- 2.17 Pupils have outstanding spiritual awareness. The encouragement to explore spirituality is strong. The RS workbooks produced by the department provide many opportunities for personal spirituality to be investigated and discussed, as reflected in the words of a poem on humanity written by a Year 9 class. Personal insight and exploration of values and beliefs

are themes which are central to the curriculum, in both academic and extra-curricular activities: for example, pupils were challenged in a house assembly by the Socratic concept of the wise man beginning each day knowing nothing. The PSE programme places emphasis on an individual's self-worth, tackling issues such as stereotyping, emotional resilience and dealing with bullying. In discussion pupils confirmed the positive effect of PSE on their individual development. The chaplain is available to all members of the school, irrespective of faith, on a formal or an informal basis. Pupils like the fact that the school chapel is dedicated for use as a place of worship for all faiths and that they can exercise choice of worship, as well as being prepared for confirmation, as Anglicans or Roman Catholics, if they so wish. Muslims, Jews, Hindus and Buddhists meet regularly, as does the Christian Union and pupils spoke enthusiastically about the annual 'Start of Year Service' held in Wells Cathedral where every faith represented at Millfield takes an active part. Pupils are encouraged to develop personal beliefs alongside respect and concern for one another, which is especially evident in the boarding houses. Pupils' values are elevated by the ambience of the buildings and facilities as well as inspired by the quality of the art work and the beauty of the school's grounds.

- 2.18 Pupils' moral development is outstanding and, through many rich opportunities, pupils develop a well-founded sense of right and wrong. In various forums pupils willingly engage in moral discussions where they develop their moral reasoning. This was seen in a Year 9 RS lesson where pupils showed mature awareness of understanding another person's point of view through role play. Pupils in a Year 10 assembly were enthusiastic about the challenge from the chaplain in an address about not following the crowd and having the courage of one's convictions based on moral right. Pupils debated keenly on moral issues in a number of lessons observed, as in physics on the morality of the neutron bomb. Pupils' files confirmed that expectations of pupils' good behaviour and attitudes were just as important as guidance on how to gain good marks. Pupils show strong awareness of the needs of others less fortunate than themselves through a range of charity work, one of many examples being the challenge of the Year 11 Social Entrepreneurs' Project, which, for a number of pupils, takes them beyond their comfort zone by challenging them to multiply the 'gift' of a £10 note to support an HIV-Aids charity.
- 2.19 Pupils have outstanding social development, which derives from the school's ethos of mutual respect and valuing each individual. The pastoral system, both in the houses and in the tutorial programme, plays a major role in the support and encouragement of each pupil's full participation in school life and contribution to its community. Following the last inspection, the school has strongly addressed house arrangements for day pupils and the unity and mutual support of pupils in those houses is now reflective of that in the boarding houses. Observation of day house assemblies confirmed engaging houseparent-pupil relationships and strong community spirit, particularly in celebrating achievements of members of the house. Pupils are willing to accept responsibility and older pupils set good examples to younger pupils. Likewise, supportive inter-year group connections are encouraged by the pairing of older and younger pupils, as seen in the riding centre and confirmed by boarders new to their houses. The heads of school exercise important responsibilities as leaders and representatives of pupils' views. Each week the heads of school meet the headmaster and the prefects meet the senior master and senior mistress, thereby ensuring that pupils play a significant role in the management of the school and issues relating to pupils. Prefects and heads of school value the new initiatives of leadership training which support their work and leadership opportunities abound in the sports' teams. Pupils also develop social skills by serving on the catering committee, the school council and the editorial board of the pupils' magazine, *The Millfield Voice*. Numerous events in the school year give pupils the opportunity to interact socially and understand more about each other. Nothing exemplified this better than the re-development of the house song competition where all pupils from

twenty-four houses formed seven choirs conducted by a senior pupil. The unity, commitment and enthusiasm of each choir confirmed the social maturity of Millfield pupils. The academic society, sixth form lectures and the PSE curriculum all develop pupils' knowledge of citizenship and of public institutions. Pupils' social development is at a high level, and the school is currently helping them to understand the complexities of boy-girl relationships.

- 2.20 Pupils' cultural development is outstanding. The international diversity of the school's population is described by pupils as one of the reasons why they so much enjoy being members of the Millfield community, describing Millfield as a 'mini world' which gives them appreciation and respect for other cultures. The sharing of cultural experiences was exemplified in an English lesson where, when studying *A Christmas Carol*, pupils discussed their experiences of Christmas. The very high standard of the school's own cultural life gives pupils experiences of music, drama and art which broaden and challenge their cultural awareness. The Atkinson Gallery and the walls of the school are teeming with fine art while the productions in the Meyer theatre and the performances in the concert hall give pupils opportunities to enjoy high quality theatre and music. Pupils confirmed in conversation that the wealth of aesthetic exposure at Millfield was another main reason for their commitment to the school. The tolerance and harmony observed between pupils of different cultures were epitomised in a new pupil's personal view displayed on the chapel noticeboard. In it, the school is depicted as large in size yet warmly welcoming to new pupils so that they felt 'comfortable in a strange new environment' that is 'Millfield's world'.
- 2.21 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.22 The quality of teaching is good overall and some is outstanding, thus maintaining standards since the last inspection.
- 2.23 Parents' and pupils' perceptions are that teachers help pupils to make good progress and that they give appropriate help. The school is committed to small teaching groups and this has a large impact on the pupils' ability to make progress whatever their ability. Schemes of work and homework tasks are modified to match pupils' abilities and good liaison with the learning support centre through the individual education plans ensures that pupils' needs are met in most lessons. Particularly good examples of in-class support taking learning needs into account were seen in mathematics, French, geography, history and ICT, but education plans are not always acted upon. Many teachers adapt their styles to suit the abilities of pupils, as in a Year 11 geography lesson on transnational corporations, where the progress of pupils of contrasting abilities was enhanced by different styles of support. In addition, the introduction of departmental gifted and talented representatives is making an impact, although provision is not uniform. Very able pupils are given extension work and individual teacher support, and good use is made of departmental termly challenges as well as national competitions.
- 2.24 At its best, teaching is inspirational, as seen in classes in art, theatre studies, biology and religious education. The understanding by a Year 11 biology class of the conditions necessary for decomposition was significantly enhanced by the lesson taking place at the school's composting plant, good use being made in this instance of the school's support staff. In a Year 11 English class experimentation with ideas of loneliness and tension led to very sophisticated writing. In these lessons pupils displayed outstanding verbal skills and genuine enjoyment and consequently they were guided to new levels of perception, facilitated not least by teachers' skills, enthusiasm and the high level of their subject knowledge. In a good

- number of lessons pupils were challenged and made to think creatively and their enjoyment was evident. In some lessons, however, a too didactic approach resulted in pupils working within their limits and not enough was made of their ability to think creatively, despite the small class sizes. In this regard, the school has taken a number of steps to enable the sharing of good practice across disciplines and this, along with formal observation for appraisal, is having a good effect on teaching styles.
- 2.25 The behaviour of pupils in lessons is nearly always excellent, encouraged by strong teacher-pupil relationships and lively teaching, and only in the least challenging sessions does attention and behaviour start to waver. In these lessons the aptitudes and needs of pupils are not understood, expectations are too low and progress is slow. Very occasionally the pace of lessons is dominated by a minority of pupils and the more reticent are overlooked. In the best lessons observed, for example in a Year 11 English lesson on the Gothic genre, the needs of all were understood and met and the subject matter was set at an appropriately challenging level.
- 2.26 Teaching is planned carefully and an eclectic range of teaching methods are employed. The best lessons are supported by effective stimuli which encourage debate and allow pupils to think for themselves. Teachers are confident with the subject matter and most are able to adjust the level of their teaching so that all pupils learn. The quality, quantity and range of resources for teaching are excellent and good use is made of interactive whiteboards and other ICT hardware. In mathematics, use of geometry and other software packages is widespread and has a positive impact on the classroom experience. Effective use is made of online practice tests, and in a Year 10 music lesson and a Year 9 history lesson on the British Empire use of the internet greatly aided learning. The library is very well resourced and is used extensively by pupils, although a few departmental sections have not been updated. Displays of pupils' work are excellent in many departments but in a few they do not reflect the pupils' skills or progress.
- 2.27 Very clear assessment policies are in place, and there are good examples of departmental marking policies which make expectations very clear to pupils. Assessment varies in quantity and quality but is good overall. Progress has been made since the last inspection in assessment of work and, at its best, it is clear, diagnostic, enables pupils to make progress and gives clear guidance for improvement. As the school is aware, however, consistency within departments or between different subjects is not uniform. Where assessment is at its best, pupils' involvement is at a high level, as in Year 13 drama where self-assessment was used to excellent effect in furthering pupils' progress.
- 2.28 Arrangements are made for pupils' performance and aptitude to be measured against national norms and the school's own aims and, as the school is aware, whilst national comparison data is available and interpreted for departments, it is not always used to support target setting for pupils. The tracking of pupils' effort and attainment is made easier by the small group tutor meetings and much development has taken place regarding recognising pupils' effort, improvement and attainment. Commendations for improvement, effort and attainment, made possible through the specialist reporting software, are having a positive impact. In addition, the current anticipated grade (CAG) used by staff supports pupils' progress, and pupils confirm that they value its use.
- 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 Pastoral care at Millfield is outstanding and the safeguarding of pupils is a priority for all. The standard of care noted in the last report has been maintained and enhanced. The pastoral care at Millfield clearly meets the aim of supporting the happiness, success, safety and welfare of each pupil within and beyond the school community.
- 3.2 At the heart of pastoral care are the houses. Boarders and day pupils are supported by a strong house structure which ensures that they are known as individuals and their progress in all aspects of their Millfield lives is carefully monitored. Whilst the role of the houseparents is a key one in the lives of the pupils, pupils also enjoy the support of tutors, group tutors and in the boarding houses residential assistant houseparents, non-residential assistants, matrons, liaison tutors, and house tutors. Day pupils are members of one of five houses and meet with their houseparent or assistant tutor at least once each day. Day pupils have their own base where they meet, bring friends and enjoy the daily routine of life at Millfield. In day house assemblies observed, pupils were given encouragement to share responsibilities for running house activities, were enthusiastic about each other's successes and were noticeably moved by a piece of music played sensitively by a pupil on the marimba.
- 3.3 The structure of the pastoral care arrangements has been well refined. The head of pastoral care together with the boarding and day houseparents take excellent care of their pupils' well-being and development, ably supported by a dedicated team of tutors and the whole teaching staff. The vertical and horizontal pastoral structures which are in place contribute to the effective guidance and support of each individual. Day pupils and boarders are supported by a group tutor and head of year in school, and have access to a very well staffed medical centre, a school counselling service and the chaplain. Pupils report that they value the range of support available and also the strength of pupil relationships, whereby they are happy to share issues with each other. Pastoral staff liaise carefully through meeting regularly with each other to ensure that care of pupils is of paramount importance. In a school of this size they are aided in their pastoral role by effective use of ICT systems which allow sharing of information amongst appropriate staff. Pupils thrive in a stable and secure environment where each member of staff contributes to the pastoral development of pupils with whom they have contact, be it in regular tutor times or informally around the campus.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils is excellent in all areas of the school. Staff know their pupils very well and the consistently small class size means that relationships are relaxed but firm, contributing to an easy and pleasant atmosphere throughout the school. A hallmark of the quality of staff support for pupils is the way in which they support pupils, even when the going gets hard. Parents confirm this and say that they cannot praise the school highly enough for persevering with their children well beyond any call of duty. Relationships between pupils are excellent and the good work in the sixth form between boys and girls on perceptions of each other is a continuing development of the pastoral care of the school. The extensive PSE programme has evolved to meet the different needs of each year group and individuals. Pupils enjoy the wider community of the school, making friends from other year groups and countries.
- 3.5 Clear guidelines and measures are in place to promote good behaviour and discipline and procedures are followed consistently by staff. Due attention is paid to punctuality and to respect for others in lessons and in the wider life of the school. The PSE programme continues to develop and to challenge both boys and girls in their relationships with each

other. In a Year 9 lesson observed, pupils discussed dealing with stress and anger and then how to resolve it. Effective measures are in place to guard against harassment and bullying and clear guidelines, known to all pupils, are acted upon when any unacceptable behaviour takes place. The comprehensive child protection policy and all child protection procedures comply with safeguarding regulations. All necessary procedures are in place to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Health and safety arrangements are effective in all areas of the school with regulations and guidance clearly signed in places of potential hazard. Good practice in avoiding potentially dangerous situations was observed throughout the inspection. When eating with pupils, inspectors enjoyed convivial conversation with well-mannered pupils who know how to behave in the dining hall. A healthy menu is served at each meal with an excellent choice of dishes. The extensive and exceptional Millfield activities programme gives every opportunity to take regular exercise and to be fit and healthy.

- 3.6 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

- 3.7 The school has good links with the wider community and an effective partnership with parents, and has developed new initiatives to involve parents since the last inspection.
- 3.8 The responses to the questionnaire sent to parents before the inspection showed that an overwhelming majority of those who responded were very positive about the education and support provided for their children. They were most satisfied by the quality of the teaching and the range of subjects, the attitudes and values of the school and the breadth of activities and provision for the pupils. Particularly strong praise was given to the academic support for all levels of ability, to the pastoral care and to the work of houseparents with the boarders in their houses.
- 3.9 Parents are provided with clear and comprehensive details about their children's work and progress, and also about the school. Termly reports are thorough and informative, with thoughtful remarks from heads of years, teachers and houseparents, all of whom reveal a deep understanding of pupils' abilities and attitudes. Parents have the opportunity to respond to the reports and attend parents' evenings. Parents welcome recent initiatives to involve them in the life of the school and attend school events and were delighted to be welcomed to the House Song, described by parents as a very memorable event. Parents confirm that a good number of them have always been involved with their children's individual activities, particularly sports teams, but now they are invited to the whole spectrum of Millfield's activities. Parents value *The Windmill*, a newsletter for parents, as a helpful source of information and also praise the new school website, which has been developed in part to improve communication with parents. Parents report that accessing staff by email is much appreciated. Parents living overseas, though less immediately involved, feel well informed and state that the efficiency of the Millfield communication machine is very welcome. The inspection team observed that the school is actively exploring other ways to encourage parents to become more involved in the life and work of the school. Where issues are of concern to parents, they state that these are handled well. The school has a comprehensive complaints procedure and it manages complaints appropriately.

- 3.10 The school promotes positive links with the wider community, in the local vicinity, further afield and abroad. Its aim is to make pupils aware of the need around them, encouraging them and empowering them to take action, both as individuals and groups to help with such needs and it meets its aim, although the school is aware that this area of its work has not been fully developed.
- 3.11 The annual Mencap day is enthusiastically supported by pupils, many of whom state that it has changed their outlook on life and challenged them in their attitudes. Running since 1989, pupils host up to 700 Mencap guests and carers from the area and work with them on a range of activities, making the most of the facilities of the campus. A smaller number of pupils visit three local nursing homes every week and at Christmas and in the summer a party is given by pupils for the residents of these homes. The school continues to look for opportunities for pupils' involvement in the wider community, for example through the service section of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Departments such as biology and history hold annual conferences for local schools and some overseas pupils volunteer to go into local primary schools to talk about their country. Further afield, the school has a long standing association with the Leap School and Langa Township in Cape Town which is supported by fund raising, staff exchanges and visits from Millfield sports teams. Year 12 pupils also have exchanges with Doon and Welham Schools in India.
- 3.12 The school's charity committee is a very active organisation with at least one charity event a week. It is run by pupils with staff support, and many pupils are involved with a wide range of charity events. Each year pupils produce a 'Showcase' performance arts show for three nights, when audiences of over 300 each night are entertained to support the chosen charity of the year, which this year is the *Children's Hospice South-West*. Pupils have also organised sponsored bike rides, parachute jumps and mufti days as well as entering 700 runners in the Glastonbury road run to raise money for a range of charities, including a small village in Ghana. During the inspection several smaller fund-raising initiatives were seen, including a shoe shine service during the breaks.
- 3.13 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

- 3.14 The quality of the boarding experience at Millfield is outstanding and very strongly supports boarders' education and development. The last ISI report confirmed standards of boarding practice as high and these have been maintained and strengthened by further investment in boarding accommodation and by increasing boarding staffing in all houses. The most recent Ofsted inspection of boarding welfare also rated boarding as outstanding in all areas and made no recommendations.
- 3.15 Boarders and their parents, in their responses to the questionnaires and in discussion, endorsed the strength of the boarding life of the school. They confirmed that the boarding life met the school's aim of providing an environment within which all pupils could live their lives to the full, in as many spheres as possible, and where individuality can flourish. Relationships between boarders across the age groups are strong. The atmosphere in the houses is relaxed, warm, lively and supportive; boarders confirm that one of the best elements of boarding is the range of friends, particularly those of other nationalities and those with other skills. New boarders are welcomed by older members of the house and are given help whenever they need it. Boarders are particularly supportive of each other's achievements and enjoy going to sports matches, concerts and plays where friends are performing. Boarders enjoy the house traditions and the corporate house events, and value

the fact that house officers are democratically elected and act as good role models in their duties and management of the house.

- 3.16 Relations between staff and boarders are excellent. Based on mutual respect and trust, boarding staff offer an outstanding quality of pastoral care to the members of their houses. The aim for houses to be family communities is well met. Boarders appreciate that such communities need sensible ground rules, and work with the boarding staff to achieve the special atmosphere in the houses where boarders are given the support they need without feeling crowded. Boarders say that they enjoy talking with boarding staff and also value discussing issues with the school counsellor and the medical staff. Parents confirm the quality of support by the house teams, saying that they have been very encouraged by houseparents' handling of issues which has meant their children have settled and feel justifiably proud of their house. Other parents praise the work of the houseparents in the way their children have developed positively in behaviour and attitudes and have 'blossomed as individuals'.
- 3.17 Boarders report that they have a very good range of activities and that the school's structure encourages participation whilst, in the older years, it achieves the right balance between activity and academic study. The breadth of choice of activities is a strength of the school. As well as traditional games activities, boarders enjoy participating in sporting opportunities such as training for racing skiing or the Ten Tors challenge, golf for fun and street dance. Boarders were enthusiastic about being able to participate in less well-known activities such as falconry, forensic science, car servicing and Scottish dancing. They also acknowledged the outstanding range and quality of facilities in which activities take place. Boarders would, however, appreciate the library being open in the evenings and on Sundays. As well as weekday activities, the house staff teams arrange a programme of weekend activities appropriate to pupils' ages. These include visits to places of cultural and historical interest and activity centres as well as home-grown physical and intellectual challenges. Boarders also like the different pace of the house at the end of a six-day working week, allowing them to relax and unwind just as they would at home.
- 3.18 Boarding accommodation is of a very high standard. Since the last inspection a new girls' house has been completed on the campus. Three houses are 'off campus' and the accommodation in these matches the standard of the campus houses. Boarders enjoy a high quality of personal accommodation in study bedrooms, where personal display is markedly good. The social areas of the houses are spacious and well resourced with communication facilities and are significantly lacking in any institutional 'feel'. Public areas are well kept and are enhanced by displays of pupils' artistic achievements as well as notices which are attractive, up-to-date and informative.
- 3.19 The development of the physical environment has been complemented by the strengthening of the houseparent teams by appointing a non-resident assistant tutor to each house. The boarding staff enjoy strong leadership by a caring and effective boarding management team. This combination contributes to the high quality of boarding and its role in the personal development of boarders.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The governance of the school is effective and the governing body strongly supports the aims and values of the school, as defined by the unique Millfield ethos. The governing body provides good oversight and guidance. The 2003 report commented that the school was well governed and this high standard has been sustained and strengthened.
- 4.2 The composition of the governing body has recently changed and a new chairman appointed. A wide range of expertise on the governing body supports the different facets of the school. Governors bring expertise from the fields of education, including recently retired heads of other well-known independent schools, finance, law, management, sport and the armed services. The governance is enhanced by a well-balanced committee structure covering all key responsibilities. In their detailed reports these committees make recommendations for consideration by the full governing body. The terms of reference of the governing body committees, though adequate, are not fully in line with current best practice. The governors are most effective in discharging their responsibilities for the pupils' welfare, health and safety including safeguarding and child protection.
- 4.3 The governing body worked closely with the headmaster and the senior management team in developing the current strategic plan stemming from the *Discovering Millfield* initiative. The governors offered excellent support and rigour to the planning process by encouraging the invitation of outside advisers and commentators to challenge and develop Millfield's concept of itself. Governors are monitoring closely the implementation of the strategic plan and have held an additional meeting to this single purpose. The recently opened 'state of the art' chemistry building with nine modern laboratories, an ICT suite and lecture theatre is the latest example of the governing body's commitment to provide the community with world-class facilities.
- 4.4 The governors are kept closely informed about the school through the comprehensive reports of the headmaster. In addition, the chairman meets regularly with the headmaster and his senior team, and the bursar receives personal counsel from finance and business governors. Members of senior and middle management teams make formal presentations to committees; for example, the second deputy addressed the education committee on the plans to implement departmental self-review and the head of careers on current issues in higher education. One governor has been designated as staff liaison governor. Her responsibilities include departmental visits and meeting regularly with the staff room committee. These commitments are highly valued and appreciated by the staff. Governors attend whole-school events including speech day, musical soirees and, most recently, the highly successful House Song event. At these, they actively engage with pupils, staff and parents.
- 4.5 The composition of the governing body is regularly reviewed and this includes careful succession planning. New governors are given appropriate induction and all governors undertake self-appraisal that is monitored by the chairman. The statutes and regulations of governance are clear and appropriate. All governors fully appreciate the demands and responsibilities of their roles.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The good standards in leadership and management have been maintained since the last inspection. Six years on from 2003 the structure and personnel of the school's management have undergone significant change, but the clear vision for Millfield's role remains committed to 'nurturing individual pupils with diverse needs to develop confidence and resilience through a wide range of opportunities'.
- 4.7 New leadership and management have brought fresh focus to planning for the future. Parents acknowledge this new focus but also state how pleased they have been with the Millfield experience for their children: 'All of our children have been through the school as boarders: all fulfilled their potential and loved every moment. We are pleased.' Other parents praise Millfield's admissions philosophy and its good influence on their children's personal development, stating that the 'Millfield mix' works well and gives a well-grounded attitude for those lucky enough to receive a Millfield education.
- 4.8 The restructured management team, led by the new headmaster, has approached the further development of the school by consulting widely both within the school family and further afield. *Discovering Millfield* was a bold and far-sighted strategy to seek the views of pupils, staff and parents but also to invite specialists in their field to Millfield so that the school community could be challenged from outside. This initiative has contributed to the *Strategic Plan 2009-2014* which gives well-focused aims for the current academic year and the years beyond. The school's management, through its policy of consultation and consideration, has ensured that planning for Millfield's future embraces the best of the past but does not shrink from pursuing innovation and new directions in the best interests of its pupils. The new leadership, supported by governors and senior management, has been instrumental in developing a dynamic vision for the school's future.
- 4.9 Clear educational direction and leadership are provided by those with management responsibilities, illustrated by the continuation of outstanding sporting achievement, the increase in academic standards and the fact that the school's aims and ethos are borne out in the daily lives of the pupils. Added to these are the initiatives for the even greater integration of day pupils, the re-shaping of the timetable through the work of the unitary timetable group, the further increase in the use of ICT and the greater involvement of parents in the life of the school. It is to be noted that the effects of these commitments have already borne fruit, with parents commenting that they already feel much more part of the school and pupils commenting that they value the changes being made, stating that the new headmaster has really listened. The re-structuring of the senior management groupings into a senior management team monitoring the daily life of the school and a strategy group for future development is a clear indicator of the strength of the school's leadership and management.
- 4.10 One of the recommendations of the 2003 report was to bring the quality of leadership of all heads of department up to the level of the best. Heads of department have been supported in this by the establishment of annual departmental reviews, including performance indicators as well as future departmental targets linked to support by senior management. Heads of department lead the appraisal process for the members of their departments. This process identifies training needs, which are included in the annual review. These initiatives have contributed to improving the performance of heads of department and have also encouraged them to be more proactive in monitoring teaching, learning, target-setting and support for very able pupils and those with learning difficulties. This is work in progress as the monitoring by heads of department is not consistent across all departments. Observation of a meeting of heads of department during the inspection did confirm the cohesion of this group and its commitment to increasing academic standards and celebrating pupils' academic improvement. A further recommendation from 2003 was to increase the productive use of

ICT across the curriculum. Whilst this has been addressed effectively by many departments, some areas of the curriculum are not fully supported by ICT.

- 4.11 Houseparents and their teams and the tutors are the key to pastoral care at the school. Both pupils and parents confirm the strength of care and how available staff are to pupils to support them in their personal development. The structure of pastoral support has been carefully developed over the years and it reflects the emphasis on helping the individual to blossom whilst offering advice, guidance and, as necessary, constructive criticism. Pupils appreciate the range of people to whom they can turn and, also, the Millfield ethos of mutual support between pupils. The appraisal programme, however, does not currently include the work of the houseparents and residential assistants.
- 4.12 Management at all levels is effective in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff. The school's checking of the suitability of staff and proprietors is centralized, robust and clearly documented. The effectiveness of recruitment strategies is reflected in the high calibre of staff, both in the academic sphere and in the coaching of pupils' skills development across the spectrum of sport, music and drama. New staff report that they are well supported through induction and mentoring. The school is committed to supporting newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and staff in training, and manages their programmes appropriately.
- 4.13 The school's aims are very well supported by the bursarial department. Not only are bursarial reporting and management procedures clearly laid down, but, more significantly, the quality of the bursarial team enhances the pupils' education in every sphere. Pupils enjoy facilities and resources of a very high standard and these are maintained to that standard by a committed and hard-working support team, whose efforts are appreciated by pupils and staff alike. Finances are very well managed and ensure that sufficient resources are provided to meet the needs of the pupils. The administration of the school is efficient. The administrative staff are welcoming and approachable, and, with the support of the excellent ICT system, ensure that communication is prompt and effective.
- 4.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.15 The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers and meets its requirements.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Millfield clearly meets its aims and is very successful in the education it provides. The nurturing of individual pupils is the clear focus of the school's educational mission and its success is seen in the daily lives of the pupils, who are articulate, engaging and very appreciative of the opportunities the school offers them. In the light of their many significant achievements, they are also grounded individuals, who are supportive of each other's skills and who really value the cultural mix of the school. The parental responses to the questionnaire very strongly supported Millfield's commitment to nurturing every pupil's talents. Pupils enjoy an excellent curriculum, including an exceptional choice of extra-curricular activities both within the school and far afield, supported by equally excellent facilities and resources which pupils use to the full. Pupils are helped to achieve good academic results, supported by committed teachers and a high quality of specialist provision for those with learning challenges. The safeguarding and pastoral care of pupils and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education are excellent. The boarding life of the school is outstanding and the life of the day houses is ever improving. The high quality of support is firmly rooted in the excellent relationships between pupils and teachers. Teachers and other specialists readily share their expertise with pupils and give unstintingly of their time in supporting pupils' academic, pastoral and extra-curricular lives. The school benefits from strong and forward-looking leadership and is well supported by a committed governing body.
- 5.2 The school has improved significantly since its last inspection in 2003. Achievement is higher and there are more areas of excellence in the education provided and the physical provision. The school has addressed the recommendations about the management of departments, target-setting and ICT but further development remains to be undertaken in these areas. The school is very aware of its future needs and has systems of self-review and the quality of management to execute its planned development. There were no recommendations from the last Ofsted boarding welfare inspection in November 2007.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. However, to achieve further improvement in the education it provides it should:
1. continue the programme of departmental review, support and training so that all departments are proactive in monitoring teaching, learning, use of ICT, target-setting and support for very able pupils and those with learning challenges.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 23rd to 26th November 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the medical centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Adrian Underwood	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Flora Bean	Former Head of Year, HMC school
Mr David Bown	Deputy Head, ISA school
Mr Chris Cleugh	Headmaster, HMC school
Miss Barbara Habayeb	Deputy Head, GSA school
Mr Geoffrey Hill	Former Head of Department, HMC school
Mr Richard Lynn	Director of Studies, HMC school
Mrs Lorraine Winch-Johnson	Head of Department, GSA school