



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ST COLUMBA'S COLLEGE

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Columba's College

Full Name of College	St Columba's College		
DfE Number	919/6136		
Registered Charity Number	1088480		
Address	St Columba's College King Harry Lane St Albans Hertfordshire AL3 4AW		
Telephone Number	01727 855185		
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Email Address	head@stcolumbascollege.org		
Head	Mr David Buxton		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Jackie Harrison		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	865		
Gender of Pupils	Boys		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	19	
	5-11:	241	11-18: 605
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	865	
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Elizabeth Freedman		
EYFS Gender	Boys		
Inspection Dates	25 Nov 2014 to 28 Nov 2014		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2010.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31 August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors and other governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Val Barnes	Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Mr Richard Feldman	Team Inspector (Senior Leader, HMC school)
Miss Barbara Habayeb	Team Inspector (Vice-Principal, SoH school)
Mr Mark Heywood	Team Inspector (Head, SoH school)
Dr Gerard Silverlock	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Nicholas Vernon	Team Inspector (Head of Juniors, HMC school)
Mr Alun Watkins	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Mrs Sarah Williamson	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Sian Woosnam	Team Inspector (Head of Infants, SOH school)
Mrs Eithne Webster	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Columba's College is a Roman Catholic day school, which educates boys from the ages of four to eighteen. Opened in 1939, it was taken over in 1955 by the order of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. The first lay head was appointed in 1993 and in 2013 legal oversight of the college was passed to a mainly lay governing body. The order retains rights to approve the appointment of governors, approve auditing processes and large items of non-budgeted expenditure.
- 1.2 The college continues in its aim to develop the distinctive educational charism of the order in an environment of academic endeavour and personal discipline. It seeks to provide a Christian education in which each pupil is personally valued and challenged to pursue the highest standards in all he does. It aims to encourage in pupils the development of self-confidence and of the Columban virtues of courage, courtesy and compassion; that every pupil should learn from their total experience whether through sport, music or drama, and especially through service. The order retains a close interest in the college. One of the Brothers serves as its dean, to promote the spiritual life of the college and links with the order's other schools overseas.
- 1.3 The college currently educates 865 boys, of whom 126 are in the sixth form. There are 260 pupils in the prep school, which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The EYFS has been granted exemption from the learning requirements of the Early Years Framework. Currently 19 children attend. Since the previous inspection a new dean has been appointed and management structures revised in both the senior and prep schools; outdoor play facilities have been renovated in the EYFS; new information and communications technology (ICT) facilities have been provided in several areas; refurbishment of the chapel, science laboratories, the gym and fitness suite, changing room, locker and toilet facilities has taken place; a new suite of classrooms and offices has been added; the college has begun to use additional external playing fields.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the pupils varies across different sections of the college. The ability profile of pupils in the prep school is above average. This is true of pupils in Years 7 to 11 but the range of abilities widens by Year 10. The average ability in the sixth form is just above the national average for those in sixth form education with a considerable spread of abilities evident, two-fifths of pupils being of average ability or lower. Pupils come from Hertfordshire and North London, from a range of backgrounds and ethnicities. A small number of pupils come from homes where English is spoken alongside another language, but none requires specialist help with their learning. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs. Of the 117 students who have been identified as having special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 26 require and receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.5 National Curriculum (NC) 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 equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Reception	Reception

Prep School

School	NC name
Prep 1	Year 1
Prep 2	Year 2
Prep 3	Year 3
Prep 4	Year 4
Prep 5	Year 5
Prep 6	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
Form 1	Year 7
Form 2	Year 8
Form 3	Year 9
Form 4	Year 10
Form 5	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievement and learning is excellent. The college meets its aim that every pupil should learn from their total experience with much success. Children in the EYFS make excellent progress, including through more independent use of ICT as recommended by the previous inspection. Throughout the school pupils demonstrate good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. Those with SEND achieve at levels equal to their peers. More able pupils and the gifted and talented achieve well. Pupils achieve at excellent levels in activities, including considerable success in charitable fund raising. The pupils' learning is characterised by persistence, resilience, excellent collaborative work and effective organisation, although the learning of some younger pupils in the senior school is occasionally less effective when they lose focus or cause distraction. Pupils respond readily to excellent opportunities in the curriculum and activities to achieve good levels of progress; many sixth form pupils and those with SEND make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. These levels of progress are enabled by good teaching. In some less successful teaching, insufficient pace, marking which gives limited guidance for improvement, or levels of demand which are too low result in lower levels of achievement. The recommendation of the previous inspection to employ a wider range of teaching strategies has been met successfully.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent, including in the EYFS. Pupils show strong spiritual development, enhanced by the charisma of the college and its emphasis on courtesy, courage and compassion, which are reflected in the pupils' high levels of tolerance and maturity. Their behaviour reflects with great success the college's emphasis on service. The college provides excellent pastoral care, including a strong emphasis on measures to guard against bullying which pupils understand and value. Good arrangements to ensure the pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety include careful arrangements for the registration of pupils which meet the recommendation of the previous inspection. Effective safeguarding measures include good links with external agencies, including healthcare professionals, whose advice is followed with care. Checks on new staff, volunteers and governors and arrangements for visitors to the college are secure. Records of checks on the single central register have not always been maintained consistently but practice now meets requirements.
- 2.3 Good governance maintains the charisma of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and promotes the college's aims well. Careful financial planning supports the school's tradition of planning for development within its financial capacity; it enables successful development of the college's buildings and resources, including extended provision for outdoor learning in the EYFS, which meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. Governors fulfil their responsibilities for oversight. Regular audit of staff recruitment checks and their recording is part of the remit of the newly constituted audit committee, although this has not yet taken place. Leadership and management are excellent and enable the pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. The college has made significant progress since the previous inspection, particularly in developing teaching and learning, including through systematic staff training. The college's links with parents are excellent.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure records of recruitment checks are kept comprehensively and consistently.
 2. Ensure that all teaching provides levels of demand consistent with pupils' potential, implements agreed classroom behaviour strategies in the senior school, and provides marking which guides future learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 This reflects highly successful fulfilment of the college's aim that every pupil should learn from their total experience whether through sport, music or drama, and especially through service. Pupils demonstrate good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding. In the EYFS, all children, including those with SEND, make rapid progress in all areas of learning, with particular success in physical development and in the acquisition of communication and language skills. Most can read and spell simple words and some are familiar with more complex ones. They talk clearly and those with delayed speech receive effective help to progress.
- 3.3 Pupils throughout the college develop strong linguistic and written skills; some analytical writing in English and Latin in the senior school is of excellent quality. Contributions to the college's newsletter, written and edited by pupils, are persuasive. The pupils' mathematical skills are highly developed as they move through the prep school; by the time pupils reach the sixth form those taking further mathematics achieve excellent standards in relation to their potential. Scientific understanding is good, and excellent in the sixth form. Pupils develop good levels of logical thought. Pupils develop good ICT skills and use these fruitfully; the youngest pupils in the prep school searched effectively and selectively for images for a nativity poster. The pupils' achievement in creative subjects is good, and excellent in art; senior pupils' drawing skills develop strongly. The pupils' physical development is enhanced very well by the college's extensive opportunities in sports, including in dance in the prep school.
- 3.4 Pupils with SEND achieve consistently at levels similar to their peers through excellent specialist support. More able pupils achieve well; those undertaking the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) research in depth, make effective comparisons and incorporate some original ideas in their work.
- 3.5 Pupils reach excellent levels of achievement in activities, where their success is considerable across diverse fields, reflecting the college's focus on all-round achievement. Individuals and teams in both the Prep and the Senior Schools win regional and national honours in rugby and cross country, as do senior pupils in athletics. Basketball teams in the senior school have been national champions on 11 occasions. Pupils perform well in instrumental examinations. Senior school pupils perform particularly strongly in regional business competitions and in regional competitive events for the combined cadet force (CCF). A central focus of the college's activities is charitable fundraising. It is acknowledged as one of the leading educational fundraisers for the principal Catholic overseas aid charity, and pupils contribute in many and diverse ways to this success.
- 3.6 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2011 to 2013. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at age 11 have been above the national average for maintained primary schools; results in 2014 showed increased levels of attainment. Results in both GCSE and at A level have been similar to the average for boys in maintained selective schools, and those at A level were above the average in 2013. Over two-thirds of A-level passes have been awarded at grades A* to B and in 2014 this proportion rose to over three-quarters. These levels of attainment, considered

alongside the pupils' responses in interviews, their written work and in lessons, indicate good progress throughout the school. Progress in the sixth form is excellent for many pupils, given their starting points, supported by the excellent teaching they receive. Those pupils with SEND achieve at the level of their peers in public examinations, indicating excellent progress. Most pupils move from the prep into the senior school; those who leave at Year 11 proceed to selective maintained sixth form colleges or to take vocational courses. A large number of pupils each year gain places at universities in the UK with demanding entry requirements.

- 3.7 The pupils' learning throughout the college is characterised by persistence, resilience, excellent collaborative work and effective organisation. Children in the EYFS listen attentively, play well together, and develop their skills and imagination through activities such as the card shop or bear cave, or when discussing the visit of an alien to the classroom. Some younger pupils in the senior school occasionally lose focus or cause distraction. Independence is a common and successful feature of much of the pupils' learning throughout the college.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.8 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.9 The curriculum provides for pupils of all ages, abilities and needs. It supports the college's aim of developing the whole person and is supported by a wide range of extra-curricular activities and links with the wider community. The curriculum has been reviewed since the previous inspection and changes such as the successful introduction of the creative curriculum in the prep school, combined with exemption from the learning requirements of the EYFS, continue to be monitored for effectiveness.
- 3.10 Enjoyable, imaginative and motivating activities in the EYFS promote excellent progress and enable a smooth transition to Year 1. The recommendation of the previous inspection to extend the setting's provision for outdoor learning has been addressed successfully. Children access a variety of stimulating activities immediately outside their rooms, and experiences in the larger outdoor and wooded areas develop their understanding of risk, for example through cycling or scooting. Individual needs are recognised and provided for well.
- 3.11 The academic curriculum throughout the school comprises a range of subjects appropriate to each age group, including one modern foreign language (MFL) from Reception and two from Year 6 upwards. In the senior school, a good range of subjects includes separate sciences from Year 9. Business studies and economics are available from Year 10, and government and politics and sociology from Year 12.
- 3.12 Pupils with SEND have access to all areas of the curriculum. There is a clear understanding of the needs of individuals and specialist provision is strong. Records of college action identify a range of adjustments to individual pupil programmes. Provision for the most able includes the 'In search of' and 'I wonder' initiatives that broaden individual pupils' experience by introducing them to a range of additional topics, often with a global perspective. These are supported by trips such as that to Milan for senior school gifted and talented pupils. The most able pupils are well known to staff and they are encouraged to develop higher order thinking and reasoning skills.

- 3.13 Religious education supports the Catholic ethos of the college and plays a key role in the development of pupils, alongside a good personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme throughout the school which includes themes on ethos and charism, justice and charitable work, relationships, citizenship, current affairs and human rights. Since the previous inspection, teaching of this programme has become more consistent. Strong links with the local and wider community promote a high awareness of compassion for others in pupils, evident in fundraising for Zambia, support for fair trade and the donation of the harvest collection to the homeless.
- 3.14 Prep school pupils are well prepared for transition to the senior school. Careers and higher education guidance in the senior school ensures that pupils receive effective guidance to prepare them for the next stage of education. This is particularly helpful in Years 12 and 13 where higher education and careers days provide opportunities for practice interviews and to develop skills for the workplace. Recent improvements include provision for work experience in the summer term of the current academic year.
- 3.15 The college's extra-curricular provision is excellent. Dedicated and enthusiastic staff provide a wide range of activities to meet the interests of the pupils. The college places an emphasis on physical activity, skill and service in the extra-curricular programme. The pupils' involvement is tracked throughout the college and every pupil is given the opportunity to represent the college in some way. The pupils are very appreciative of the range of activities available including the opportunities they provide for leadership. Both pupils and parents indicated strong satisfaction with the college's provision in response to pre-inspection questionnaires. Particular strengths are charitable activities, sport, music, the CCF and the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme. The programme is enhanced by trips, visits and tours some of which are overseas, including an under-11 rugby tour to Dublin.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 The quality of the teaching is good.
- 3.17 Teaching supports the pupils' achievements well and fulfils the college's aim to ensure that each pupil is challenged to pursue the highest standards in all he does.
- 3.18 In the EYFS, highly qualified, skilled and enthusiastic practitioners provide enjoyable and challenging teaching of excellent quality. Teaching demonstrates a deep understanding of how children learn, together with a clear knowledge of each individual child and his family which enables rapid progress. Assessment is precise and thorough. It provides a clear picture of the abilities, attainment and progress of each child and is used to identify next steps in learning, and any other required intervention, which are successfully implemented. Plentiful resources include computers, which encourage the children's independent use of ICT as recommended by the previous inspection.
- 3.19 Throughout the college, the most successful teaching is well planned, captures the pupils' interests and encourages pupils to think independently and seek ways in which to extend their own learning. Overall, the expectation of the pupils is high. The college has developed a wider range of teaching strategies since the previous inspection, which benefits the pupils' learning and meets the recommendation of that inspection. In a small amount of less successful teaching, insufficient pace and structure or too low expectations of the pupils results in lower levels of achievement.

- 3.20 The most successful teaching is based on excellent subject knowledge and careful planning which take account of the differing needs and abilities of individual pupils. Older prep school pupils of lower ability were able to produce their own poems based on different sounds heard around the school using interesting and appropriately chosen verbs. In the sixth form, teaching in French conducted entirely in the target language successfully elicited sophisticated oral and written responses from pupils. The clear understanding of the needs of pupils with SEND is evident in the range of individual adjustments identified in records of college action. These are implemented strongly in specialist, individual support but this implementation is not always apparent in class. Teaching makes appropriate provision for those pupils with a statement of special needs. The most able pupils are well known to staff and the most successful teaching encourages their higher order thinking and reasoning skills. Additional lunchtime sessions offer useful additional support for pupils in many subjects.
- 3.21 Teaching combines challenging questions with frequent use of praise and encouragement to promote independent thinking successfully and enable strong attitudes towards learning. The award of house points in the prep school and 'attitude to learning' points in the senior school, together with positive comments about individual work, helps pupils to remain focused. Where such approaches are adopted, the pupils almost invariably behave well. In some teaching for younger pupils in the senior school, inconsistent implementation of agreed, suitable strategies devised by senior managers to promote good behaviour, leads to poor behaviour or loss of focus. Pupils in both sections of the college derive enjoyment and obvious benefit from opportunities they are given to work collaboratively and assess each other's work. Teaching at all levels makes very good use of the college's ample resources, including for ICT.
- 3.22 The pupils' work is assessed regularly but the quality and effectiveness of marking is uneven. The most helpful assessment gives clear written and oral feedback regarding the pupils' success in meeting identified objectives. Their achievements are praised and areas where improvement is needed are clearly indicated. Other marking is less successful because it is not sufficiently detailed to help the pupils develop their work, identify how to improve and build on their achievements.
- 3.23 Assessment data is collected and centrally collated. Detailed tracking of individual progress is facilitated by careful, thorough analysis of this data against national and external benchmarks, together with continual assessment of the pupils' work and formal discussion of their progress. This enables the successful transition to the next stage of education and successful intervention where pupils are seen not to be making progress commensurate with their ability.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The spiritual influence of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, which permeates the college, combined with an emphasis on courtesy, courage and compassion, enables pupils to develop a high degree of maturity and personal development. Pupils are honest, spirited yet respectful and reflective. Children in the EYFS enter the setting in the morning with confidence and mix well with other pupils. They talk freely both to one another and with adults, and they play well with each other. They know and observe routines, are able to dress themselves and are well prepared socially to move to Year 1, for example through walking regularly through the rest of the college to lunch or activities where they meet older pupils and other teachers.
- 4.3 Throughout the college, pupils articulate their opinions with confidence and listen carefully to those of others. The prayer room is a much-used resource and is valued by individual pupils and small groups, while the chapel at the heart of the college is the focus for worship by larger groups. The pupils' excellent spiritual development is further enhanced by activities such as retreats, and services in the nearby Anglican cathedral, and by their participation in sporting and performing activities which successfully enhance their self-esteem. Pupils benefit from an emphasis on celebrating their success in assemblies and through the rewards of house points. They have a heightened awareness of those less fortunate than themselves, evident in altruistic fund raising and a commitment to charitable giving.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral development is excellent. Pupils of all ages have a strong moral awareness and support and help one another. A strong sense of trust pervades the college and pupils show a secure sense of right and wrong. Pupils greatly value the guidance they receive from staff as role models. Younger pupils in the senior school hold the sixth form in high regard for similar reasons, listening with care to excellent presentations about bullying written and given by sixth formers. In tutor sessions, pupils demonstrate high degrees of empathy and readily discuss a range of ethical, political and social issues. The pupils' strong understanding of the clearly defined code of conduct, which requires them to take responsibility for their own actions, engenders a positive spirit of collective responsibility.
- 4.5 From an early age, the pupils' social development is excellent. Relationships throughout the college are highly positive and fruitful, enhanced by the house system which encourages older pupils to work with younger. These arrangements offer many opportunities for leadership which pupils readily accept and from which they derive much benefit. Similarly, monitors in the prep school and prefects in the senior school develop a strong sense of responsibility through fulfilling their duties. Through PSHE and other curricular provision, pupils in both senior and prep schools develop a secure understanding of civic life and responsibility and British values, enhanced for older pupils by meeting political figures of all viewpoints and for prep school pupils through visits to Parliament.
- 4.6 The college's firm commitment to embracing the wider community enables pupils to develop strong cultural awareness. An excellent awareness of other cultures and customs is promoted successfully within subject areas as well as through diverse extra-curricular activities. Links with other schools founded by the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, such as those in Africa and the USA, consolidate the pupils'

understanding of how others live and support strong levels of tolerance. Visits to places of worship for other faiths further enhance the pupils' understanding of other faiths and beliefs. Opportunities for trips and exchange visits develop the pupils' awareness of Western European culture, such as through a visit to Pompeii to visit the site of events studied in Latin. This awareness is further strengthened by the cultural experiences pupils receive in lessons and activities, including studying a wide range of styles in art.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 The school meets its aim to provide a caring, supportive and inclusive community with great success. In the EYFS, highly skilled staff enables children to develop warm, emotional attachments with those who teach and care for them, including their key person. Children are well cared for. They behave well. They know that fruit is healthier than chocolate and that physical education and swimming are good for the body. All can manage their own hygiene needs.
- 4.9 High quality care throughout the college is rooted in the supportive house system. The class teacher in the prep school and form tutor in the senior school are the key individuals in the care of each pupil. Pupils readily identify additional adult figures who provide counselling and pupils who can help them, such as 'buddies' and trained pupil mentors. Parental responses to pre-inspection questionnaires reflect overwhelming satisfaction with the pastoral care provided for pupils. Inspectors agree.
- 4.10 Excellent relationships exist between staff and pupils and similarly strong relationships between pupils are characterised by mutual respect and dignity.
- 4.11 Effective policies to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying are implemented well and understood clearly by pupils. They are supported by detailed information in pupil diaries and by strong presentations in assemblies, such as those in the senior school given by sixth formers which focused clearly, and with great impact, on topics such as sexting, racism and sexuality. Pupils understand clearly that bullying is not acceptable; they confirmed overwhelmingly in interviews and in response to questionnaires that procedures to deal with any bullying operate robustly. Records are methodical; they are monitored regularly and suitable action is taken where needed to address any identified causes of bullying. A comprehensive system of rewards and sanctions operates effectively. In response to pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of senior school pupils commented that sanctions are not operated fairly. Inspection evidence shows that the system operates consistently, particularly with regard to serious sanctions. Contact with parents is an integral and effective element of behavioural measures.
- 4.12 Pupils receive a balanced and nutritious diet at lunchtime and are given extensive opportunities to take regular exercise. This provision promotes a healthy lifestyle very effectively. Some pupils choose to bring a packed lunch while others consider the food to be variable. Inspection evidence shows the quality and quantity of food meets the pupils' needs well. The PSHE programme gives helpful additional guidance on a healthy lifestyle, including advice on mental health issues as well as bereavement.
- 4.13 Listening to the pupils' views is an integral part of the pastoral care structures. In pre-inspection questionnaires, a small minority of pupils were dissatisfied with

opportunities to express their views and the response they receive. Inspection evidence does not support this view. Student councils operate in both sections of the college. That in the senior school is chaired by a senior pupil and has an annual budget to deploy. Each prep school class has a representative on its own council and the two councils have effective links. The college continually reviews the system to seek improvement.

- 4.14 The college has an appropriate plan to improve access for pupils with SEND, both physical and in terms of their learning needs.

4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

- 4.15 The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good.
- 4.16 The college safeguards the pupils' welfare effectively, including in the EYFS. Designated staff undertake regular child protection and inter-agency training. Suitable training in safeguarding is provided for all other staff, both on induction and as part of a programme which encompasses diverse areas of safeguarding relevant to the school's context, such as cyber-bullying, over a three-year period. The school's code of conduct for staff ensures secure understanding of safeguarding requirements, as do arrangements for visitors to the school. The school seeks and follows guidance from external healthcare professionals effectively. Communication with other local agencies is prompt and advice is followed; record keeping of incidents is methodical and is monitored with care by governors. Records of staff checks have not always been consistently kept, although practice now meets requirements.
- 4.17 Registration of pupils is careful and is monitored to a high degree electronically via a single register. This ensures that any unexplained absence is noted and contact made with home quickly. This meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. The college maintains an appropriate admission register electronically, which is backed up and stored correctly.
- 4.18 Arrangements to ensure the pupils' health and safety are strong. A suitable medical room is provided; the permanent staffing includes a qualified nurse. The first aid procedures provide well for emergencies. Appropriate numbers of staff are qualified in first aid. Suitable measures are taken to provide for the health and safety of those with special physical or learning needs and any accidents are attended to promptly and reviewed effectively.
- 4.19 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are very thorough and checks recorded efficiently. Regular drills are held and the outcomes recorded. The school has recently instituted a thorough review of entry and exit arrangements for the site and resolved appropriate actions designed to control traffic more closely. Equipment is checked by outside consultants and appropriate actions taken. Assessments of risk are thorough. Health and safety measures are regularly monitored and reviewed by senior managers and governors.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governance successfully maintains the charism of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart as the key element informing the ethos of the college. The continued involvement of the order through representation on the governing body, and by exercising its rights to approve the budget and auditing processes, ensures this. The governing body includes a good range of experience and skills. The effective operation of a well-designed committee structure ensures monitoring of all areas of the college. Governors have close knowledge of the college through regular discussion with senior staff and through frequent visits, including an annual day in the college which includes viewing lessons. Presentations from staff at governors' meetings include information about meeting the needs of those pupils with SEND as well as about individual subject areas. This enables governors to monitor and evaluate the quality of education provided carefully throughout the school, including in EYFS; the decision to obtain exemption from the EYFS learning requirements is a successful element in building the current educational strategy which views learning from 4 to 18 as a coherent entity. Governors provide stimulating challenge as well as effective support. Their actions support the pupils' excellent personal development and achievement. All have received safeguarding training and several undertake other training, both educational and spiritual.
- 5.3 Financial scrutiny is careful and supports the college's tradition of planning for development within its financial capacity. This ensures that suitable human and material resources are provided. Governors work with senior staff in strategic planning which supports capital projects highly effectively. Planning also charts the development of the college ethos and the governors monitor its implementation, for example in the successful pupil mentoring scheme.
- 5.4 Governors provide effective oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review health and safety arrangements regularly, taking advice from external consultants. Monitoring of welfare arrangements includes an appropriate annual review by all governors of the college safeguarding policy and procedures. This is supported by close liaison between the nominated governor for safeguarding and those with specific safeguarding responsibilities. Checks on newly recruited staff are carried out efficiently and recording on the single central register of appointments now meets requirements. Regular audit of staff recruitment checks is part of the remit of the newly constituted audit committee, although this has not yet taken place.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, is excellent.
- 5.6 Senior leadership is committed to furthering the charism of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart. Senior leaders exemplify the college's commitment to an education in which each pupil is personally valued and should learn from their total school experience. The promotion and highly effective realisation of this ethos is achieved by a culture of self-evaluation which leaders at every level support and implement.

Occasionally, initiatives which follow self-evaluation are not consistently implemented, such as carefully considered measures to improve behaviour in a few classes. Overall, planning is characterised by a secure knowledge of the college's strengths and areas for development and by the effective setting of priorities. This has resulted in highly successful use of financial resources to provide new buildings, facilities and resources which are used well. Leadership and management ensure the safeguarding of pupils, including in the EYFS.

- 5.7 In the EYFS, provision is rigorously evaluated, and regular mentoring and supervision ensure that all staff improve their already strong understanding of effective practice. This is linked to an ambitious vision for improvement to maintain and develop a stimulating learning environment. These measures have ensured that the setting has made significant progress since the previous inspection. It continues to meet the criteria for exemption.
- 5.8 Management structures distinguish successfully between the prep and senior schools where relevant but also provide, through the college leadership team (CLT), an effective mechanism to support the college's vision of a holistic education from the ages of four to eighteen. Within the different structures, effective delegation to subject leaders and Heads of House ensures good oversight of teaching, the curriculum and pastoral care. Since the previous inspection, significant progress has been made through initiatives to develop the pupils' learning skills and provide related staff training, although implementation in areas such as target-setting is not yet wholly consistent. Highly effective revisions to welfare arrangements have resulted in increased monitoring in both the prep and senior schools of areas such as attendance records, rewards and sanctions systems, and bullying logs. These have consolidated the pupils' excellent levels of personal development.
- 5.9 Policy-making is well focused, including in areas concerning safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, and is implemented successfully, with effective review by the CLT ensuring that changes to requirements are met. The school appoints staff of good quality, both teaching and non-teaching. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are secure and recording is now systematic.
- 5.10 All staff are well trained in their responsibilities in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. Induction training is comprehensive and usefully extended throughout the initial year of appointment to ensure full understanding of the college's procedures. The provision of training for staff professional development is excellent and closely linked to planned initiatives. Designated senior staff work very well and closely together to provide a coherent and closely linked programme to meet the needs of individuals and the college, including training from an external source to meet the teaching and learning recommendation of the previous inspection. Innovative methods included sharing good practice through a 'market fair' for staff to share effective teaching strategies. Sessions after lessons provide further development opportunities for both prep and senior schools led by in-house experts. A system of regular appraisal identifies areas for individual training or development for both teaching and support staff.
- 5.11 The college is supported by many non-teaching staff, including members of the order, who efficiently administer the college, maintain the premises and support teaching and learning, fully committed to the college's aims and ethos.

- 5.12 The college maintains excellent links with parents. Responses to pre-inspection questionnaires show extremely high levels of satisfaction with the education provided, the care shown for pupils and the progress they make. There were no issues raised by significant numbers of parents.
- 5.13 Parents are welcomed with their sons into the community of the college, which establishes constructive relationships with them. Parents of children in the EYFS are enabled to be fully involved in their child's education. In cases of identified need, the college quickly secures professional expertise and advice from outside agencies. Social events organised by both the college and the active Parents Associations facilitate constructive relationships with parents.
- 5.14 Parents of current and prospective pupils receive the required information together with much other helpful documentation. The college has an appropriate policy to handle parents' complaints although this has not been required to be used recently. Lesser concerns are dealt with promptly and with due care.
- 5.15 Helpful and detailed reports, including in the EYFS, provide an excellent summary of the pupils' attainment, progress, targets and personal development. These, together with a series of consultation evenings, allow parents to gain a good understanding of their son's progress. Reports give guidance on how pupils can improve. Further information on how parents can help their son to improve and develop is provided through a comprehensive array of letters, handbooks and information evenings.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.