INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Bristol Grammar School

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

Full Name of the School Bristol Grammar School

DCSF Number **801/6013**Registered Charity Number **1104425**

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Age Range 11 to 18
Gender Mixed

Inspection Dates 12th to 15th October 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 does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

1.1 Bristol Grammar School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged eleven to eighteen years. Its city centre site houses both the upper school and the lower school. The school was founded by Royal Charter in 1532 'for boys to be instructed in good manners and literature'. It moved to its present site in 1879 and the first girls were accepted as pupils in 1976.

- 1.2 The school is broadly Christian in ethos, but offers support to those of all faiths or none. It aims to inspire a love of learning, foster intellectual independence, promote self-confidence and a sense of adventure amongst its pupils and to achieve excellence in all it does. It wishes to encourage a mature sense of responsibility, forming well-rounded young people able to use their talents and leadership potential in the service of others, at school and in their future lives.
- 1.3 Numerous additions have been made over the years to the original Victorian buildings and the houses on the opposite side of the road to the main school have gradually become part of the school's campus. The school also has extensive playing fields at Failand, three miles away. Since the time of the last ISI inspection in 2003, the senior leadership of the school has changed: the current head took up his post in September 2008 and most of the senior leadership team has also been appointed since 2008.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection the upper school had 920 pupils aged from 11 to 18, 566 boys and 354 girls, of which 623 pupils (398 boys and 225 girls) are in Years 7 to 11 and 297 pupils (168 boys and 129 girls) are in the sixth form. Most pupils come from within the city of Bristol itself, but about 20 per cent of the pupils travel from outlying towns and villages. The school has a wide socio-economic mix of pupils and is committed to providing its own assisted places and bursaries. At the time of the inspection 93 pupils were receiving such financial support. Over a fifth of the pupils come from a range of minority ethnic backgrounds, with no significantly large group.
- 1.5 Admission to the school is dependent on success in the school's entrance examinations. At 11+ candidates sit tests in verbal and non-verbal reasoning, English and mathematics; at 13+ a modern language test is added and at 14+ a science test. Candidates for Year 12 are interviewed for their chosen subjects and offers are made subject to GCSE results. The results of standardised tests taken in Years 7, 9 and 12 indicate that the average ability of the pupils is well above the national average. If the pupils are performing in line with their abilities their results in public examinations will be well above the average for all maintained schools.
- 1.6 At the time of the inspection two pupils in the upper school had a statement of special educational need (SEN) funded by a local authority. The school had identified a further 78 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) and 25 of these were receiving specialist learning support. Twenty-four pupils did not have English as their principal language, but none of these had been identified as needing specialist English as an additional language tuition.
- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

2.1 The school provides an outstanding range of educational opportunities both within and outside the classroom. The curriculum fulfils the school's declared aims and has improved since the last inspection.

- 2.2 The school goes to considerable lengths to ensure that the academic curriculum is designed around the needs of the students: a free choice of subjects is offered at both GCSE and A level, and virtually all options are accommodated. Flexibility is available for students with special needs who can, after consultation, follow a reduced programme. Curriculum planning is informed by pupil questionnaires, parental feedback and the expectations of universities. The new learning teams monitor the curriculum closely and ensure that provision remains strong.
- 2.3 The academic curriculum addresses the needs of all pupils. Planning of the curriculum is clearly set out in writing and gives pupils ready access to subjects. No subject area dominates, and pupils are able to make progress across the range of subjects from mathematics, science and technology to the creative arts. The very wide range of optional subjects allows students to pursue interests and aptitudes; for example Russian and Greek are included as options at GCSE.
- 2.4 The curriculum was identified as a strength of the school at the last inspection, and a subsequent review has resulted in further improvements. In Years 7 to 9, changes include the introduction of Spanish into Year 8, and ICT into Year 9. Drama and Spanish are now available at GCSE and business studies has replaced economics. The school has moved to international general certificate of secondary education (IGCSE) in mathematics, which has provided better preparation for those going on to A-level; the history department began teaching IGCSE in September 2009, and the English department will follow in 2010. In order to improve the curriculum yet further, the school is considering further expansion of subjects at GCSE, a redistribution of time in Years 7 to 9, and the introduction of the extended project at A level.
- 2.5 Pupils' education provides them with extensive opportunities to develop in all areas of learning. Good standards of literacy, numeracy and other core skills were evident in the majority of lessons observed, and pupils were able to show advanced skills in many areas. For example, a Year 7 religious studies class was encouraged to demonstrate advanced reasoning skills in a debate on sacrifice, while a Year 12 art lesson and a Year 13 theatre studies class both encouraged aesthetic awareness. Schemes of work in all subjects are thorough, and ensure that the education provided supports the school's aims.
- 2.6 Physical education is a strong feature of the whole curriculum, as a skill, as a source of enjoyment and as a contribution to a healthy life style. Pupils benefit hugely from the excellent sports facilities available at the school and at Failand, the school's sports ground.
- 2.7 The educational experience is significantly enhanced by the SPD (Students' Personal Development) programme, which encompasses aspects of personal, social and health education (PSHE) along with wider social education. Pupils appreciate the impact this programme has on their preparation for future life. They also have very good opportunities for voluntary service, and around half of pupils in Year 11 undertake work experience after GCSE examinations, with further opportunities in Year 12. Links with the community are strong and contribute to pupils' awareness of the wider world.

2.8 The previous inspection report identified the full range of activities as a strength of the school. This programme has been enhanced even further, and now offers an exceptional range and quality of opportunities for all pupils. Sport, music and drama all feature prominently, with an extensive programme of matches, concerts and plays, many of which are organised around the house system. In addition, all pupils take part in one afternoon of timetabled activities each week, which offer an exceptionally wide range of opportunities extending well beyond the examined curriculum. At the time of the inspection these included the Duke of Edinburgh award, fencing, cooking, stage crew, martial arts and book illustration, to name but a few. This programme is a major strength of the school, and provides significant enrichment to pupils' education.

- 2.9 The highly regarded careers department organises a comprehensive careers and higher education entry programme which is strongly supported by parents and alumni. The programme, which starts in Year 9, provides excellent guidance to pupils on subject choices at all stages and on possible future careers, and is supported by an innovative programme of related events.
- 2.10 A fully qualified head of learning support and an assistant have been appointed since the last inspection, and training has been provided for all staff. Sixty-six pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties, of whom 23 receive regular support; fourteen have English as an additional language, of whom six receive support from an appropriately trained teacher; and two have statements. Several examples of teachers providing good support to these pupils were observed.
- 2.11 The new scholars' programme is of good quality and is designed to provide enrichment opportunities for the most able, and to raise aspirations across the school.
- 2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.13 Pupil' learning and achievements are good overall, with some outstanding elements, maintaining the quality seen at the time of the last inspection, and meeting the school's aim to inspire a love of learning and foster intellectual independence. While some aspects of learning are outstanding and the great majority good, there is scope for pupils of all abilities to develop more fully in some subjects as independent learners. This is related principally to the less challenging teaching described elsewhere in this report.
- The pupils become confident learners with high expectations about work and achievement. They acquire high levels of knowledge and skills and learn to think logically through well-structured learning programmes. They make full use of opportunities to think critically and work creatively as for example when they study, compare and discuss interpretations of views and evaluate sources in history, or write creatively in English. Pupils' competence in mathematical processes is strong. They are acquiring the skills needed to achieve at an ambitious level in ICT through research, data-handling and presentation. At GCSE, pupils achieve results which are far above the average for pupils in all maintained schools and above the average for selective maintained schools, and this indicates good progress. At A level, pupils achieve results which are well above the average for pupils in all maintained schools and above the average for selective maintained schools. There is evidence of strong performance at both of these levels which has increased over three years, with nearly three-quarters of pupils achieving A* or A grades at GCSE by 2008, and eight out of ten achieving A or B grades at A-level.

2.15 Pupils' appetite and enthusiasm for achievement is a testament to the school's pursuit of its aim to engender a love of learning. Their individual achievements in examinations are very strong, so, for example, pupils achieved amongst the top ten marks in the schools' first entry to IGCSE mathematics. Pupils regularly achieve success in Olympiads in biology and mathematics, and there is strong achievement in areas such as design scholarships, drama examinations and the Young Engineers contest. Other sixth form pupils recently won prizes in a Europe-wide Latin translation competition.

- 2.16 Pupils organise their studies effectively and acquire the skills necessary to be effective learners. Active note-taking is widespread throughout the school. Exercise books and folders are well-maintained and there is emphasis in many subject areas on the development of individual study. In Year 12 business studies, for example, pupils showed good investigative skills when looking at entrepreneurship.
- 2.17 The pupils find cooperative working enjoyable and challenging and are proficient at it. Effective paired work, helped by well-organised groupings, is seen for example in geography and modern languages. In science and mathematics, class discussions are promoted by presentations or cooperative problem-solving.
- 2.18 Pupils show real enjoyment of learning across the full range of the curriculum. Their perseverance is manifest in their work in folders, exercise books, the things that they have made, played or painted and their many other achievements.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.19 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development of pupils is outstanding. This builds on the good SMSC development seen at the time of the last inspection and fulfils the school's aims to develop these abilities to the full.
- 2.20 Pupils take full advantage of the opportunities to explore values and beliefs. For example in their lessons they are challenged to think hard about thorny issues such as the existence of love or the concept of sacrifice. They appreciate being taught how to make judgements about important matters and being encouraged to formulate their own reasoned opinions and beliefs. Religious issues are explored seriously in subjects like art, where imagery and meaning in Renaissance paintings are studied. House assemblies give pupils opportunities to think about the "bigger picture" of world events as well as appreciating the beauty of the natural world.
- 2.21 SMSC development is underpinned by highly effective programmes in personal and leadership development which successfully foster pupils' excellent development. These excellent programmes enable pupils to develop a strong sense of identity, become self-aware and develop as confident young leaders. A system by which all pupils produce their own curriculum vitae, updated twice a year, helps them consider their achievements and acknowledge their strengths and weaknesses. Pupils proudly record their successes, often valuing success in areas outside their acknowledged specialisms. For example an accomplished musician in Year 13 was particularly pleased with her achievements in the schools' *Question Time* competition.
- 2.22 Pupils seize with great enthusiasm the opportunities the school provides for them to step out of their 'comfort zone' and to participate in a very wide range of activities across academic and extra-curricular areas. They appreciate the strong support and encouragement they receive which foster their self-worth at every level, from praise in whole school assemblies for achievements within and outside school to the quick passing word in the corridor from a head of house who has spotted some small act of helpfulness or progress. The pupils also

value the house system for enabling them to participate in activities such as debating and charity fundraising and to compete in sports such as squash or rugby where they may not be sufficiently talented to shine at a whole school level.

- 2.23 Pupils have a highly developed sense of right and wrong. They show an excellent ability to make informed and reasoned judgements, for example when discussing population policies in China or considering the moral issues surrounding Shylock in the Merchant of Venice. They respect the school's discipline system and its fairness. The fulfilment of the school's aim to inspire responsibility, confidence and compassion is seen in the outstanding development of pupils' social skills. They seize chances to take responsibility for themselves and for others, for example through prefect and leadership roles at all levels of the school, and carry out a wide-range of duties with great effectiveness. They value their roles in house activities and appreciate the influence for change that they have through the school council.
- 2.24 Pupils are also very aware of the community beyond the school walls and are particularly active in work for charities, at home and abroad, and voluntary service, as well as showing a good understanding of how public institutions work.
- 2.25 Pupils' cultural awareness is highly developed through the wealth of opportunities available to them. Their awareness of other cultural traditions is enlarged through many areas of the curriculum such as consideration of the Afghan election issues and the Chinese ageing population dilemma. They gain from listening to outside speakers from a wide variety of fields as well as from the broad range of cultural expertise of their teachers. Pupils take full advantage of the range of school visits such as to the Bristol Museum, within the locality, and further afield to locations in the UK and abroad, for example on field trips and study visits related to art, drama and geography.
- 2.26 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.27 The quality of teaching is good overall, with a significant element of outstanding teaching. This good quality of teaching has been maintained since the last inspection and meets the school's aim of inspiring a love of learning, fostering intellectual independence and achieving excellence.
- 2.28 Teaching is generally well matched to pupils' learning needs and enables them to make good and often excellent progress. Provision for pupils with LDD ensures that these pupils progress well. Pupils are unafraid to ask for help and are confident that it will be available to them should they need it. They appreciate the extent to which teachers and other advisers will help and value the quality of help and advice they can expect.
- 2.29 Teaching consistently fosters the application of intellectual effort. In games and PE, and in the arts, teaching is well judged to develop physical and creative effort. The best teaching is enthusiastic and knowledgeable, ensures good behaviour and a rapid pace of learning, makes good use of teaching resources including ICT, involves plenty of teacher-pupil interaction, makes good use of encouragement and praise, and provides a challenging and enjoyable learning experience. For example, a very successful sixth form sports studies lesson involved a variety of teaching strategies and activities, drew on pupils' own experiences and showed a keen awareness of different abilities and aptitudes. In a Year 7 religious studies lesson high expectations led to every pupil being focused and keen to participate, with the teacher listening carefully to each pupil's contribution and using it to help the class to develop a sophisticated discussion on a complex topic. Pupils are frequently encouraged to

think for themselves, for instance in a well-planned Year 11 history lesson which challenged pupils to draw their own conclusions about whether Robin Hood was a real person or not.

- 2.30 The school's collegiate atmosphere and attention to the individual ensures that teachers know pupils well and plan their lessons accordingly, for instance in a Year 7 lesson where a pupil with advanced Latin skills had an individually designed curriculum. Teaching often makes good use of references to prior learning and to pupils' own experience. Pupils in the sixth form are encouraged to study independently and good teaching ensures full involvement and rapid learning. For example in a sixth form English lesson, pupils presented an analytical account of a passage from a novel with confidence and enthusiasm and in a sixth form further mathematics lesson pupils were thinking and working at the same intellectual rate as the teacher.
- 2.31 In a minority of lessons a more formulaic approach leads to lessons where the pace of learning is slower and teaching does not do enough to involve and challenge pupils. In these lessons there is too little consideration given to how pupils learn and the quality and volume of work is reduced.
- 2.32 All teachers are well qualified, secure in their subject knowledge and teach with confidence, adeptly ensuring the development of core subject skills. In a sixth form Spanish lesson, for example, teaching drew on detailed and confident knowledge of the early life of General Franco to good effect to support learning.
- 2.33 The good range of resources available to teachers is used well. The school has recently invested heavily in updating ICT resources which are used with increasing frequency and to good effect, for example when interactive whiteboards are used in mathematics and modern foreign languages. In geography, the resourceful use of ICT for GCSE project work extends to continual access by email to staff for pupils during the summer to assist them with individual fieldwork. In English an ICT-based learning resource developed by the school and known as 'Grammarsaurus' is used to good effect.
- 2.34 Good practice in marking is found, for example, in English and history where helpful and formative written commentary is widespread. Nevertheless this good practice in marking is not always shared across all departments and some marking is less effective. Pupils remark on the helpfulness of oral feedback from their teachers. Many lessons start by referring to work done in the previous lessons so that reinforcement takes place and pupils are prepared for the next topic. For example in science lessons on light and enzymes, technical terms were recalled and explained afresh so that they could be appropriately applied in the lesson.
- 2.35 Data on pupils' performance is carefully evaluated and analysed. Teaching makes increasingly good use of data as its dissemination develops and improves. Tutors help pupils evaluate their own performance so that they are aware of the progress they are making and what they need to do to improve. Summative and formative reports are regularly communicated to parents.
- 2.36 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care, and of the welfare, health and safety of pupils, is outstanding. This is consistent with the schools' aim of forming well-rounded young people, and is an improvement since the last inspection, reflecting the unstinting work the school has undertaken in this aspect of provision. The school is rightly proud of its culture as a 'talking school' centred on good communication, and pastoral care provision reflects this.
- 3.2 All members of staff play an active role in providing very effective support and guidance for the pupils. This is achieved principally through the house system, and also through year and form groups, as well as through a peer mentoring programme and extra-curricular activities. Staff receive appropriate training as part of their continuing professional development (CPD) to enhance their ability to provide pastoral care for pupils.
- 3.3 Pastoral arrangements are clearly defined, sensible and robust. A deputy head responsible for pastoral care and the six members of the main pastoral care team hold regular briefings where information is shared and important issues raised and discussed, and from which key information is quickly passed on to other members of staff.
- 3.4 Specific guidance is given to pupils who take on pastoral responsibilities. They have training, and clear written guidelines and handbooks are supplied. The school has a unique and highly effective system of pupil-to-pupil peer mentoring, led by a designated member of staff as head of peer mentoring, in which sixth form pupils mentor their younger peers. The meticulous application process involves a letter of application, a curriculum vitae, references provided by other teachers and an interview. The impressive training programme for peer mentors comprises six sessions with a trained psychologist and the head of peer mentoring. Pupils must complete the training course and 'qualify' before being allowed to practise their roles. The head of peer mentoring holds regular weekly meeting with the mentors and has devised a highly effective database so that the progress of the mentoring programme can be scrutinised with considerable clarity and success. Younger pupils value very much the support provided by this programme.
- 3.5 Sixth form prefects, who are designated as either school or house prefects, receive rigorous and constructive training for their roles. Prefects make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school and enjoy having considerable responsibility. Pupils with responsibility have status in the school and are identified either by badges or photographs on notice-boards.
- 3.6 Pupils respect each other's roles and positions of responsibility are much sought after. Where sixth form pupils are not selected as either prefects or peer mentors they are given feedback so that they better understand the reasons why, showing how the school's pastoral care system takes careful account of pupils' needs and aspirations.
- 3.7 The house system is very successful in providing pastoral care, and helps pupils to better integrate into the school. Heads of houses, their deputies and other house staff provide good support during designated house time and form registrations. The houses organise a wide range of activities such as singing contests, plays and fund-raising events. Older pupils take the lead in these activities with great enthusiasm and do much to encourage younger pupils. House assemblies are lively and informal occasions and show plenty of house spirit.

3.8 The relationship between staff and pupils is one of mutual respect and courtesy. Humour and a well-judged degree of informality help these relationships to prosper. Pupils value their teachers for both their wealth of knowledge and their experience, and the staff rate their pupils highly for their intelligence and individuality. Pupils show courtesy and their behaviour in lessons and around the school is well-mannered. Relationships between the pupils are very good. Pupils are self-assured, friendly and supportive of one another.

- 3.9 The school actively promotes and rewards good behaviour, and is prompt and fair in dealing with unacceptable behaviour. Pupils' perception of some disparity between the rewards given out by different houses has led to adjustments being made. The school guards against harassment, with particular attention being paid recently to the potential impact of cyberbullying. Pupils and parents feel that behaviour issues, including bullying, are swiftly and fairly resolved.
- 3.10 Provision for pupils' welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school has a detailed child protection policy. All staff, teaching and ancillary, have received appropriate training, including new staff who receive training as part of their induction. A designated governor, with expertise in the field, has an oversight of the school's child protection procedures and reports to the governing body each year. The school has suitable procedures for attendance and admissions registers. Regular fire safety risk assessments are carried out. Fire alarms, fire extinguishers and other alarm systems are maintained and tested regularly and fire notices displayed. The school holds regular evacuation drills and keeps careful records.
- 3.11 The school has a full and detailed health and safety policy. A health and safety committee meets each term and reports to the governors. Records of accidents and other incidents are kept and patterns of accidents are discussed, with recommendations of how to avoid similar incidents in the future. Risk assessments are specific to roles and departments. These cover all potentially hazardous activities including science investigations, work in technology, sporting activities and school visits as well as routine maintenance.
- 3.12 The school has a full time and experienced school sister and a GP visits the school regularly. Pupils can be referred by the sister to a qualified counsellor within the school. The well appointed medical centre accommodates sick pupils until parents can take them home. New pupils have medical checks carried out by the school sister and pupils can contact her directly to arrange appointments. Regular development checks are carried out on younger pupils. All staff receive some basic first aid training, and some have attended more advanced courses. All staff who take pupils away for sporting fixtures or on expeditions receive appropriate first aid training. The school has a suitable plan which meets its duties under the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- 3.13 Pupils are encouraged to adopt healthy lifestyles, to take regular exercise and to eat healthily. They are offered a wide variety of nutritious food, including a salad bar, with menus which change daily. Pupils speak favourably about the choices available. In addition healthy eating forms part of the comprehensive SPD programme, which also includes units on alcohol, tobacco, drugs, body image and sexual health.
- 3.14 There is an extensive programme of sport and games and all pupils are expected to take regular exercise each week. The list of available activities is broad with many forms of exercise including fencing, gymnastics, climbing, kick boxing and yoga available in addition to the more traditional school sports. The pupils speak very highly and enthusiastically about the activities programme and about the variety of sporting options available.
- 3.15 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the quality of pastoral care and the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

3.16 The school has outstanding links with parents and the community. The partnership between parents and the school builds on the good practice seen at the time of the last inspection and has developed quickly under the influence of a member of the senior team.

- 3.17 A parental questionnaire survey conducted as part of the inspection showed that the great majority of parents are satisfied with the education provided by the school. A minority of parents felt that the scope for them to be involved the life of the school was limited but inspectors found that the school has worked hard to improve this and now makes good provision for this aspect of its work. An in-depth consultation with parents on the links they would like to have with school recently provided an excellent starting point for new initiatives, so that, for example, sets of parents are now being brought into school to take part in pupil learning reviews.
- 3.18 Parents receive a good flow of regular and useful information. A weekly newsletter, which reaches almost all the parent body by email, reports notable achievements, carries sports results and encourages attendance at forthcoming events. In addition to the newsletter, a Year 7/8 news publication, and VIEW, a short magazine, are distributed twice a year. The recently re-designed school website is of good quality and has a dedicated and secure parents' section. Sharepoint, an internet-based information and communications system, designed to assist parents in following closely the work of their children, is being introduced.
- 3.19 There is a generous programme of parents' meetings, with a minimum of two in any curriculum year and three in some. Parents of new pupils are invited to visit the school towards the end of the summer term before entry. Appropriate progress reports are produced each term, with a full subject report in any term which does not contain a subject based consultation evening, followed by a summary report after examinations in June. Reports are clear and useful, most featuring valuable formative advice and end of year summaries to guide improvement. Pupils' curricula vitae are also sent to parents at the end of each year from year 10.
- 3.20 The Friends of Bristol Grammar School has been reinvigorated, is growing in numbers and is beginning to make a significant contribution to the life of the school.
- 3.21 Concerns raised by parents are handled well. The complaints procedure is published to all; the very few formal complaints received have been thoroughly investigated and resolved with fairness and efficiency.
- 3.22 The excellent links it has with the wider community are a great strength of the school. Through a well-administered programme of community service, over 100 students each year are able to find placements for a term in local primary schools, nurseries and other institutions. They are all visited at their placement by the programme coordinator or her assistants.
- 3.23 Literary events at Bristol Grammar School, inspirationally run and managed, have become a special feature of the school. These public occasions have involved celebrated authors and attract large numbers of people, many with no previous connection with the school. Local press coverage has raised awareness of this impressive programme. Last summer, a special literary day event was held for nearly 300 girls from twelve schools in the Bristol area.
- 3.24 The pupils undertake a great deal of charitable work on behalf of communities beyond the school. Each year pupils work with great enthusiasm to raise money for a wide range of causes, several outside the UK. A notable charitable project is located in Morocco; a group

- of pupils have raised over £10,000 to help build a boarding house for a girls school there and some pupils have visited and worked on the project.
- 3.25 Staff from the school lend expertise to primary schools in several subjects including drama, modern foreign languages, physical education and science. At secondary level, expertise in university applications to Oxford and Cambridge is being shared with several local schools. The school's sports facilities are regularly made available to local churches and a local school, while groups including the Bristol Islamic Society have benefited from the use of the school's accommodation for meetings.
- 3.26 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Governance of the school is outstanding, building ever more securely on the very good governance reported at the time of the last inspection. Members of the governing body have over recent years given exceptional support and have carefully guided the school through often very complex challenges. The school has benefited significantly from the exceptional range and level of expertise of members of the governing body, and has been able to draw on their knowledge of architecture and buildings, finance and investment, business, marketing and legal matters as well as educational development. This professional expertise has been extremely valuable in giving the school a very secure understanding of the options it has available for future development.
- 4.2 The governing body have a secure understanding of their responsibilities. Governors have a good knowledge of educational provision. They take on specific areas of responsibility, form good links with the school and make regular visits while the school is in session with a specific fact-finding purpose aimed at ensuring better understanding of the school's work. The governing body are actively engaged with appointments in the school and show a clear awareness of the importance of leadership and vision in moving the school forward. The governing body's annual away-day with senior staff provides very valuable opportunities for the school to define common purposes and plan strategically.
- 4.3 The governing body has a very clear view of its responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of pupils, and, through a designated governor, is careful to ensure that the school meets regulatory requirements.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The quality of leadership and management has been maintained since the last inspection and is good with a number of outstanding features. Leadership and management are well suited to meeting the aims and aspirations of the school in seeking to achieve excellence.
- 4.5 The headmaster has been in post for three terms, has made an astute analysis of the school's needs, sharing with the staff and the governing body a very clear vision for the future focused on creative and intellectual achievement. In the past year changes in key areas of management and innovative measures to engage managers at all levels and in all areas of the school have helped to secure delegated and accountable responsibility.
- 4.6 The school now has a system of learning teams, each led by one of the five deputy headteachers, one of whom is the school's finance manager, and involving in total nearly fifty members of staff representing different areas of management responsibility. The learning teams include academic, pastoral, administrative and other support areas within the school. The learning teams meet regularly and provide valuable opportunities for systematic review and analysis, setting priorities and bringing about change. Although relatively recent in its introduction, the learning team system has already had a positive impact on organisation in the school and has led to improved involvement and accountability.
- 4.7 The new leadership team ensure that management procedures are appropriate, and liaise well with other staff to ensure the smooth running of the school. The new senior team have begun to carry out a systematic review and update of the school's policies. Their first priority has been, rightly, to ensure that the school now has in place policies which ensure compliance

- with current regulations. The senior team is continuing to revise other policies which the school recognises are in need of review.
- 4.8 Middle managers are well organised and efficient. They have often exceptional management skills, know their pupils and are highly committed to meeting their learning needs. Some, although not all, subject leaders use monitoring strategies effectively to ensure best practice in learning and teaching is shared.
- 4.9 The school recruits well qualified staff and provides good support for their induction. The professional development of staff is well planned and linked to regular appraisal and identification of needs. Members of staff responsible for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQT) have worked hard and persistently to put in place an induction scheme which now ensures that NQTs have a well structured start to their teaching career.
- 4.10 The school manages its financial resources well. The recently appointed finance manager has brought important "bigger-picture" insights to strategic planning which help the governing body and the headmaster as they map out the school's future. The accommodation, which is complex and not easy to manage, is used very well, and educational resources are carefully organised to meet pupils' learning needs.
- 4.11 The school is administered calmly and efficiently. There are secure arrangements for checking the suitability of staff. Administrative, maintenance and ground staff show commitment and professionalism, and provide very effective support for pupils' education.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

5.1 Bristol Grammar School is a thriving and confident school which makes outstanding provision for pupils' education. The pastoral care it offers is excellent. This ensures pupils develop as rounded individuals who have an outstanding awareness of spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. The links it has with parents and the community are outstanding, as is its governance. The new senior management team have quickly developed an inclusive style of leadership and management. Pupils are capable and robust learners, and achieve high levels of success in examinations. They grasp every opportunity to learn, and when teaching challenges them sufficiently, they operate as outstanding independent and creative thinkers. The school is aware that the further development of outstanding teaching will help pupils to develop as outstanding learners.

- 5.2 The school has met in full the recommendations from the previous inspection relating to the improvement of teaching facilities, the provision of ICT, the professional development of staff, better use of the library and the adjustment of the complaints procedure.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.4 Bristol Grammar school has many strengths. In the key areas of learning and teaching there is scope for the school to develop even further. The school should consider how to:
 - 1. further develop teaching to match the flair and quality of the outstanding teaching already in place in order to enable learners to fulfil their potential at the highest level in all areas of the curriculum.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

6.1 The inspection was carried out from 12th to 15th October 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. 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 Peter Jones Reporting Inspector

Mrs Catherine Brahams Head of Sixth Form, ISA school
Mr Christopher Hall Head of Department, HMC school
Mr Francie Healy Deputy Headteacher, SHMIS school
Mr Philip Lee Deputy Headteacher, HMC school
Mr David Pritchard Head of Department, HMC school

Mrs Sue Sowden Registrar, HMC school
Mr David Thomas Headteacher, HMC school