

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

St Bees School

Full Name of the School	St Bees School
DCSF Number	909/6003
Registered Charity Number	526858
Address	St Bees, Cumbria CA27 0DS.
Telephone Number	01946 828000
Fax Number	01946 823657
Email Address	mailbox@st-bees-school.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Philip Capes
Chairman of Governors	Mr Bill Lowther
Age Range	7 to 18
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	27th to 30th April, 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.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 St Bees School is an independent boarding and day school providing education for girls and boys aged between seven and eighteen. It was founded in 1583 by the Archbishop of Canterbury. With extensive grounds, it occupies a central site in St Bees, a large village on the west coast of Cumbria. The school was last inspected by ISI in 2003. Since then, in 2008, it has opened a preparatory department to cater for some of the pupils from a local prep school that closed. This currently consists of fourteen pupils aged from the ages of seven to eleven. Since the last inspection, the school has formed three additional committees on the governing body, with the aim of promoting stronger links between the governors and the staff room.
- 1.2 The school aims to bring out the best in the pupils; to ensure that pupils are challenged in the classroom; to give pupils countless opportunities to discover their talents in many different areas such as sport, music and drama. The school states that Christian principles are fundamental to the school's philosophy and practice and are reflected in its pastoral and disciplinary organisation and in the pattern of services and assemblies.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school had 305 pupils on roll (127 girls and 178 boys): of these pupils 104 are in the sixth form. The number of boarders is 114. Admission to the school is through entrance examinations, interviews and consideration of reports from previous schools. Standardised national tests taken on entry show that the ability profile of the school is above average. If pupils are performing in line with their abilities, their results in public examinations will be above the average for all maintained schools. Pupils have a variety of backgrounds. Day pupils come from the area around St Bees itself and are mainly the children of business and professional parents. The boarders come from a variety of countries including China, Germany, Slovakia, and the USA. Of the pupils, 82 speak English as an additional language, with 51 receiving specific language support, up to 20 in the school's International Centre where they have a discrete curriculum with special attention being given to English, mathematics and science. No pupil has a statement of special educational need provided by a local authority but the school has identified 41 pupils who have learning difficulties. These pupils are supported in lessons, and 26 of them receive specialist learning support.
- 1.4 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 tables.

School	NC name
Prep Department	Years 3,4,5,6
First Form	Year 7
Second Form	Year 8
Third Form	Year 9
Fourth Form	Year 10
Fifth Form	Year 11
Lower sixth	Year 12
Upper sixth	Year 13

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a good range of educational opportunities suited to the interests, aptitudes and needs of all pupils. The education as a whole is broadly consistent with the school's declared aims and philosophy: to bring out the best in the pupils; to ensure that pupils are challenged in the classroom; to give pupils countless opportunities to discover their talents in many different areas such as sport, music and drama. The school states that Christian principles are fundamental to the school's philosophy and practice and are reflected in its pastoral and disciplinary organisation and in the pattern of services and assemblies. All this is certainly true in general terms but the actual experience of the pupils is inconsistent. The curriculum has progressed since the last inspection in that it now has more breadth and is more balanced.
- 2.2 Frequent and regular opportunities are provided for pupils to develop their skills, abilities and talents across the full range of educational experience and the school makes good provision for acquisition of skills of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy. From Year 7 to Year 11, pupils have a broad core curriculum with good choices for GCSE including the separate sciences, - biology, chemistry and physics - and French, Spanish and Latin. The provision for, religious education (RE) is more limited: one lesson per week throughout Years 7 to 11 and nothing in the sixth form. In recent years no pupils have taken RE at GCSE or A level. The range of sixth-form options is limited to some extent by the size of the school but flexibility in the choices is allowed and the sciences are again well represented, as is further mathematics. The Years 3 to 6 curriculum is suitable for its age range with a good core and adds the extra stimulus of a modern language and Latin. Pupils' experience of personal, social and health education reflects the school's aims and ethos. Good use is made of lesson time, which includes general studies in the sixth form and a cross-curricular approach, as well as of extra-curricular time. Aesthetic education is assisted by an artist in residence.
- 2.3 The curriculum is enriched by extra-curricular activities, outstanding links with the community, and provision for voluntary service and work experience organized by the pupils themselves. Due attention is given to preparing pupils for the next stage of education – university for most – training, or employment and for adult life. On the school campus, a Management Centre is in daily use for local industry and by the school and provides strong links with the world of work. Pupils in their daily routines come across managers from various industries. Older pupils are given effective opportunities to take responsibility, for example, as prefects, and in the combined cadet force (CCF), which gives many opportunities for leadership, service and working co-operatively with others. The beautiful rural and coastal environment of the school contributes to the education of the pupils, not least the school's own grounds, including its nine-hole golf course, and the architecturally-pleasing buildings. The school makes good use of its surroundings, and Years 7, 8 and sixth-form pupils have outdoor education sessions where pupils engage in a wide variety of outdoor activities, as well as appreciating the beauties of the countryside. The school interior is made very attractive, and aids aesthetic education, through high quality displays of pupils' work and also reproductions of other materials.
- 2.4 The curriculum is effectively planned, provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils, and promotes participation in a wide range of activities and interests. However, although individual departmental schemes of work are mostly good, there is little whole-school integration of curricular and attainment objectives.

- 2.5 The school meets the curricular requirements of all those pupils requiring special provision, including those for whom English is an additional or foreign language. The school caters especially well for this latter group particularly through its International Centre, where such pupils receive specialist teaching in English and other subjects and can experience, if necessary, a whole curriculum designed for them. Ready, informal teacher support for pupils is given in class and at after-school sessions and lunchtimes.
- 2.6 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.7 The quality of pupils' learning and achievement is good and has been maintained since the last inspection assisting the school to achieve its aims to bring out the best in the pupils and to ensure that pupils are challenged in the classroom, though, in practice, inconsistencies exist. Pupils are well grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding and can apply these effectively to develop the essential skills and attitudes for work and study. Most learn effectively regardless of age, ability, need, gender, ethnic origin or circumstances.
- 2.8 Pupils have a good command of English: they listen, talk, read, silently and aloud, and write very well. They are articulate and effective communicators engage actively with each other and adults, and they listen attentively. They understand the grammar and syntax of the English language. They acquire this understanding not just in English lessons, but in other subjects. In Latin lessons, for instance, the pupils showed an excellent facility in identifying adverbs in Latin and English. Pupils in the International Centre are encouraged to develop their speaking skills through presenting and contesting arguments. Pupils of all ages show well developed mathematical competence, often beyond that expected of their age. They can work creatively and independently when given opportunities to do so. They can use information and communication technology (ICT) effectively when required. A touch-typing course is being tried in Year 7 to enable pupils to acquire a consistent and efficient method of using the keyboard. Those who have specific learning needs use ICT regularly to support their learning. An excellent example was seen in geography where software was used to create an educational game which could be accessed by pupils through their mobile phones.
- 2.9 In lessons and in activities, boys and girls of all ages and abilities reach good attainment which is consistent across subjects. A common policy is being developed to help provide appropriate challenge for the most able in lessons. When the opportunities are there, the pupils display an intellectual eagerness. As well as answering questions, pupils ask questions of their own. Pupils with English as an additional language are especially well supported through the International Centre and most make very good progress. Full or partial integration of these pupils into mainstream education is determined according to the individual's need and is generally effective.
- 2.10 Results show that pupils' attainment in national tests at the age of thirteen over the last three years, in relation to their abilities, is high in mathematics and science (taken until 2007) and is far above the national average for all maintained secondary schools; attainment is good in English, well above the same national average. Results in GCSE, in the last three years for which national comparative data was available at the time of the inspection, have been good, well above the national average for all maintained secondary schools and close to being far above that level. In the same years, A-level results have been sound, above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. Girls' and boys' results are of the same level and show no significant difference overall.

- 2.11 The school has a good record of individual and team achievements which are celebrated in the termly newsletter. Pupils regularly take part in Junior, Intermediate and Senior Mathematics, Biology and Physics Challenges with some qualifying for the Olympiad. Pupils achieve well in music examinations and inspectors and pupils enjoyed the ‘fringe’ activities during inspection week where pupils and staff came together to perform as soloists, in ensembles and in rock groups around the school at break and lunchtimes. Good numbers follow The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award scheme with 24 bronze, 18 silver and 5 gold awards gained in 2007/8. The school competes in a variety of team sports including rugby, hockey, cricket, tennis and rounders, and pupils regularly achieve representative honours at county level. The Golf Academy, which opened in 2008, is a useful addition to the school’s sporting facilities. Pupils speak highly of the range of activities available to them and the encouragement to try out new activities.
- 2.12 Some pupils present and organize their work effectively with well-ordered notebooks and files where work is easily accessible for revision and review. This is not always the case, however, across all subjects and some untidy work was noted. In the sixth form, notes are often photocopied worksheets or commercially produced materials and little evidence was seen of effective note taking by pupils. Some Year 12 pupils complete an extended research project or an Open University module which helps to develop their independent study and research skills.
- 2.13 Pupils are very effective learners when working as a whole class or in small groups or pairs, especially in the science laboratories, or, for example, in French, where they acted as a critical friend when commenting on each other’s work, and in mathematics where class used logic to try to deduce the volume of a frustum. Pupils have a respect for their peers and show support for each other’s talents. Sixth-form pupils organize whole school events such as fund-raising activities, talent competitions and house activities and pupils enjoy participating in a range of house competitions.
- 2.14 Most pupils settle and apply themselves very well in lessons. They are well motivated, enjoy their work and are eager to learn and achieve. They respond best in lessons where the activities challenge them to think for themselves. On the occasions when the work was less challenging, the attention of some pupils began to wander. Pupils are very well mannered and courteous and are proud of their school and their surroundings. Relationships between pupils and staff are very positive and this contributes to an overall atmosphere in the school that encourages learning and development.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.15 Overall the pupils demonstrate good spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. The school has made progress in this regard since the previous inspection and, in line with its aims, gives special attention to Christian values.
- 2.16 Pupils show good spiritual development reflecting the headmaster’s view that “spiritual values are not overbearing but are translated into everyday values by which we expect the boys and girls to lead their lives”. Pupils are provided with, and make use of, opportunities to acquire a sense of identity, self-respect and self-confidence, to find meaning and purpose in life, and to explore values and beliefs and the way they affect people’s lives. These opportunities exist through daily chapel or church services and timetabled religious studies lessons, as well as through other areas such as art, music, literature, and outdoor education sessions. The pupils are sensitive to others, thoughtful, reflective and appreciative of the beauty of their surroundings. The school chaplain is also the vicar of the village parish church, the Priory, a beautiful pre-Reformation early English gothic building, with Norman features, which stands very close to the school grounds. The school is able to use this church

for services and does so for full school services, and some pupils choose to attend the Priory for worship. Spiritual values are reflected in the school's pastoral organisation and its daily life; pupils are aware of these values and learn from the whole of their life at the school the value of the spiritual.

- 2.17 Pupils' moral sense is excellent. They can distinguish lucidly between right and wrong and show a deep-rooted respect for each other, the school and their surroundings. Their general behaviour around the school is excellent and only a very few, minor breaches of school rules were noted. Pupils are unfailingly courteous and polite. The demeanour of pupils in lessons shows a sense of the value of each individual and that individual's right to be treated with respect, to learn effectively and to express ideas without interruption or ridicule. The pupils also learn and practise consideration for others, honesty, fairness, politeness, generosity, tact, and the art of friendly conversation.
- 2.18 Pupils also show excellent social development. This is evident in their ability to accept responsibility for their behaviour, to show initiative, and to understand how they can contribute to community life. They readily accept discipline and relish being in a school with sensible rules where order prevails. The pupils display great common sense and a lack of anxiety. They have high expectations of themselves and of their lives. Pupils are smart in appearance and appreciate the different uniforms that show, for example, that they are senior pupils or members of a particular house. Pupils also show a good broad general knowledge of public institutions and services in England, most notably through the A-level general studies programme or indirectly through such subjects as history.
- 2.19 Pupils show good cultural development and they acquire a real appreciation of, and respect for, their own and other cultures. This is done in a way that promotes tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions and is strongly evident in the daily life of the school and particularly so within the boarding houses. The International Centre plays an important part and the successful and happy integration of pupils from a wide range of other countries represents an outstanding example of how a diverse community can flourish. Pupils from China and many European countries all mix well together and demonstrate mutual respect. Other opportunities are taken to celebrate other cultures and traditions, for example through special menus in the dining room and via assemblies. A number of the boarders from abroad are ambitious to go on to British universities.
- 2.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.21 As at the last inspection, the teaching is good - sometimes excellent - helping the school to work towards achieving its aims to bring out the best in the pupils and to ensure that pupils are challenged in the classroom.
- 2.22 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties or disabilities and especially those with English as an additional language, to acquire new knowledge, make progress according to their ability, increase their understanding and develop a command of subjects. Pupils with learning difficulties are very much involved in lessons. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are quickly integrated, becoming involved in curricular and extra-curricular work. In the International Centre good teaching provides individual support to pupils. Some lessons in various subjects also show an excellent use of extended written work for pupils, although this is not universal.

- 2.23 Most teaching fosters in pupils the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, interest in their work and the ability to think and learn for themselves. Young pupils showed a delight and elation in learning the dative case in a Latin lesson that concentrated on challenging the pupils to think deeply and to achieve mastery of difficult material. However, in some subjects, excessive use is made of reproduced notes, or of coursework books, sometimes pitched below the level of intelligence of the pupils. On occasions, teachers make too much use of the textbook and fail to provide pupils with the opportunities to think and speak for themselves. Teaching in Years 10 and 11 sometimes finds it difficult to reconcile the need for pupils to pass the GCSE examination at high grades with opportunities for them to explore the subject fully.
- 2.24 Teaching encourages pupils to behave responsibly and to enjoy learning and so the school is characterised by busy pupils working with enthusiastic teachers. Teachers create an atmosphere where pupils can freely show enthusiasm and ask questions without earning the disapproval of their fellows. Thus an ethos of intellectual work is fostered and the school is an excellent place for the vast majority of pupils who want to work. The school discipline is excellent leading to pupil behaviour that is, for the most part, exemplary. In the best lessons, teachers transmit their enthusiasm, and even their passion for their subject within a disciplinary framework that is friendly but firm. Occasionally, classes are not suitably challenged leading to less concentrated behaviour from pupils. Teachers give their own time to help individual pupils with extra lessons.
- 2.25 Teaching is mostly well planned, employing effective teaching methods, suitable activities and wise management of class time. In French, for example, pupils worked in paired rôle-play exercises, giving each other assistance and evaluating each other's presentations but with the teacher always on hand to correct and encourage. The teachers are not afraid to have periods of silence and so the pupils learn how to concentrate.
- 2.26 Teaching generally shows a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainment of pupils. A strength is that the teachers know each one, not just as a pupil with test scores, but as a person with a distinct personality and set of interests and aspirations. They adapt their teaching to match the needs of individual pupils. For instance, in a learning support mathematics lesson, the teaching showed an excellent knowledge and understanding of the pupils' needs and so was able to make use of resources beneficial to each individual pupil.
- 2.27 Teaching demonstrates a very good command, knowledge and understanding of the subjects being taught. Teachers often have a deep knowledge of their subject and a sense of it as a discipline in its own right as well as being related to other subjects. Thus, for example, in Latin lessons, teachers are aware of what pupils have to master in terms of grammar, syntax and vocabulary not just at the beginner's level but at the depth needed to translate Latin authors.
- 2.28 Teaching is supported by an adequate quality, quantity and range of resources and makes effective use of them. The provision for ICT has improved since the last inspection. A network manager has been appointed and is used aptly by some teachers. Significant upgrades have been made in data projectors since the last inspection. The recently introduced Golf Studio makes an excellent use of latest technology and allows highly effective learning. Facilities in the music technology studio allow pupils to record their compositions and performances. The library, however, is under-used. After the initial induction session, many pupils fail to use it frequently with few teachers explicitly encouraging pupils to undertake independent reading. It is adequate as a resource for private study but its use for independent research or background reading across the curriculum is limited. It contains few periodicals of an intellectual or cultural nature.

- 2.29 Best teaching practice includes regular and thorough assessment of pupils' work and uses information to plan teaching so that pupils can progress. The school has an assessment, recording and reporting policy which covers marking, academic assessment and reporting. The document is helpful but no effective monitoring system exists to ensure that pupils' work is marked properly. Thus pupils' work showed a varied quality of assessment. The best marking is clear and detailed, with comments for improvement. Less effective marking is irregular and inconsistent in detail and usefulness. Much marking in English, often of extended writing, is thorough and diagnostic, with written work returned to pupils soon after they have done it. In some other subjects, marking can be perfunctory, little more than a tick with teachers' initials, providing little guidance for pupils. Not all subjects correct or notice mistakes in the English of pupils and, on some occasions, very basic spelling mistakes of words much used in that subject were ignored.
- 2.30 Teaching makes use of arrangements for pupils' performance to be evaluated, against both its own aims and against national examinations. The school tests the assessed ability of its pupils on arrival and makes use of national tests at the end of Year 9. However, it is not always clear why this is being done and how the pupils benefit. For instance, the school has, over the years, taken the national tests in English, mathematics and science but the rationale for this is not explained, nor the use to be made of these tests, the point of which is questioned by some teachers. The school holds twice-yearly internal examinations for all pupils with results included on the reports. Full reports are sent to parents twice a year (three times for Year 12 pupils). General advice is given to staff as to what should be contained within a report, and they exhibit an individual approach and very good knowledge of the pupils. These reports furnish parents with useful information on their child's standards and progress. In addition, achievement and effort sheets are produced half termly.
- 2.31 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 the welfare, health and safety of the pupils is good. Within this, personal care is outstanding. The high standard of care noted in the last inspection report has been maintained. Pupils are happy, content and enjoy their school. The school states that Christian principles are fundamental to the school's philosophy and practice and are reflected in its pastoral and disciplinary organisation. The school puts this into practice especially in the outstanding quality of the care and relationships.
- 3.2 The staff care effectively for all pupils' well-being and development, and are supported in this by an effective structure. Pastoral arrangements are good. All pupils are allocated to a house and to a house tutor. The housemaster or mistress oversees both the pupils' academic and pastoral welfare. The house system is very effective in giving support and guidance to pupils. Parental response to the questionnaire indicated a high level of satisfaction with the care given to pupils. Pupils said they had no hesitation in turning to staff for assistance and said they felt well looked after. A shadow system exists for new pupils to the school: Year 7 pupils are paired with a Year 8 pupil to help them settle into the school. The prefect system is well organized and effective, helps discipline, order and care, while giving the prefects themselves the opportunity to provide service to others through leadership.
- 3.3 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves is outstanding: staff are approachable and welcoming and always willing to give their time. Pupils' appreciation of this further enhances their relationships. Pupils described their teachers as always smiling and happy and are considered by them to be a strength of the school. Equally the staff consider the pupils to be a major strength. This view was echoed by members of the non-teaching staff.
- 3.4 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour, including procedures to guard against harassment and bullying, are effective and deal constructively with unacceptable behaviour when it occurs; pupils see the school rules and procedures as fair. Pupils state that incidents of bullying are rare and that, should they occur, that they would be dealt with swiftly and effectively. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and manners in all situations, and the inspectors found the pupils to be courteous and well behaved. Sanctions are progressive and understood but the almost universal good behaviour means that sanctions need to be used relatively rarely. Year 8 pupils when asked to give examples of recent behaviour requiring punishment could think of no significant instances.
- 3.5 Measures to safeguard and promote pupils' health and well-being are successful. The required child protection measures are in place. The child protection officer, currently the school nurse, has received enhanced training which is updated regularly. One of the governors has been designated to be responsible for child protection matters. Staff have comprehensive documentation on the subject and their training is updated regularly during staff training days. Admission and attendance registers are efficiently and appropriately filled in and maintained. The school has an appropriate plan for improving its accessibility to pupils with disabilities and conforms to the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act.
- 3.6 All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken. A fire safety policy is in place, the fire risk assessment is reviewed regularly and procedures are comprehensive. Fire practices are conducted each term.

- 3.7 Arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective and the school has due regard for the health and safety regulations. Some minor inconsistencies in the monitoring of risk assessments exist, though. A visits policy and risk assessments for trips are all in place. The provision of first aid is thorough.
- 3.8 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing sensible eating habits and taking regular exercise. The school encourages plenty of physical activity in organized games sessions, physical education lessons and extra-curricular activities. The pupils have every opportunity to be physically fit. The dining room serves healthy, nutritious and high quality food, catering for a wide range of taste and special diets. Pupils were full of praise for the food and the contribution the cheerful catering staff made to the school.
- 3.9 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

- 3.10 The school has a strong and effective partnership with parents. It has excellent and imaginative links with the wider community; significant progress has been made in this respect since the previous inspection.
- 3.11 Parents are very satisfied with the education and support provided for their children and this was evident in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. They were particularly complimentary about the teaching, the curriculum, the help and guidance given to pupils, and the behaviour of the pupils. No significant concerns were raised about any aspect of school life.
- 3.12 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in activities in the school and in the work and progress of their children. The recently formed parents' group, the Family Association, is very supportive and supports social activities within the school. Parents say that the opportunities exist for parents to become more closely involved should they wish.
- 3.13 Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with all necessary information about the school through a prospectus and a detailed website. Parents are given helpful and regular information about the school and receive clear and useful reports about their children's work and progress. Parents' evenings are held so that parents can discuss individual concerns with tutors or subject teachers and well organised and informative evenings explain to parents and pupils about option choices and possible career routes.
- 3.14 The school handles the concerns of parents with due care and its response is sensitive and prompt. Parents feel that there are many routes through which they can express any concerns and they have confidence in the school to investigate and resolve any such misgivings. A properly constituted and thorough formal complaints procedure exists, but, in recent times, all matters have been dealt with in its early informal stages.
- 3.15 The school is outstanding in the way in which it promotes positive links with the wider community. For example, the Management Centre is an imaginative way of providing a focus for meetings of local business groups whilst at the same time acting as a very good shop-window for the school. It is also a valuable resource for the school to use. The school is very closely connected with the village of St Bees, where it is a significant local employer. The links with the Priory Church enable another important connection to be maintained. The school has strong connections with the local lifeboat for which it raises money; recently, a sixth former has been a regular crew member of the lifeboat. Pupils help the villagers by keeping the beach tidy and by similarly tidying up at the adjacent railway station. Other

activities include a dog-walking service and gardening. The school strengthens this link with its immediate community still further by inviting local people to attend school events such as concerts and plays. Some of the impetus for this comes through the work of the Family Association. Good use is made of school facilities by the wider community: for example the school hosts a Tag Rugby tournament for 350 primary school pupils.

- 3.16 The influence of the overseas pupils is very significant in helping to promote a real interest in, and sympathy for, the wider world community and a desire to support and understand it. This shared understanding and mutual respect is evident in all of the activities of the school. The Charities Committee, with representatives chosen from each of the houses, provides a strong focus for fund-raising and the school is energetic in supporting both local and global charities, such as the Wasdale Mountain Rescue Team and a shared enterprise with other schools to support a project in Tanzania.
- 3.17 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

- 3.18 The quality of the boarding experience is good and supports pupils' education and development. The school was last inspected by Ofsted in 2008. The report of that inspection identified few weaknesses and the matters for improvement noted have been implemented, except that the risk assessments for the use of the beach by boarding pupils have yet to be finalised but the pupils are not currently allowed to go to the beach.
- 3.19 Relationships within boarding are very good, supportive and reflecting mutual trust and respect between staff and pupils. Pupils are proud of their houses and are appreciative of the work of the residential staff. They readily accept responsibility to help the order of the house. An open-door policy encourages good access to residential staff and pupils take advantage of this to seek help and advice as well as to express their wishes for the running of the boarding houses. Good communications exist between the girls' and boys' boarding houses with visits to common areas permitted after prep. Flexi-boarders enrich the boarding experience and pupils from overseas feel welcomed and valued. A native Chinese chef visits the school to produce authentic Chinese cuisine in order to make Chinese boarders feel more at home and the school holds regular national days such as Chinese New Year, a Polish Day, and a Mexican Day, to celebrate the multicultural ethos of the boarding houses. All pupils in the school belong to one of the five houses and this promotes integration between day and boarding pupils. All members of the residential staff are academic teachers and tutors and this provides boarders with a valuable link between school and the houses.
- 3.20 The school offers boarders a good range of activity out of school time and at weekends. The extensive grounds and sports and recreational facilities considerably enhance the setting and the range of leisure opportunities available, and boarders are able to make use of the school's wide-ranging facilities. Many extra-curricular activities are on offer such as choir, orchestra, musical ensembles, sports teams, a CCF, strong in itself and a focus for other activities, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and community service. Residential staff organise a good variety of weekend trips, such as visits to a ballet put on locally by a touring Moscow company, and to more distant venues. More local trips include the cinema, fell walking and shopping at the local supermarket.

- 3.21 The quality of accommodation and resources is adequate and suitable. A refurbishment plan delineates a rolling programme of improvement and some houses have already benefited from decoration, new carpets and bathing and toilet upgrades. Boarders are content with the hot water and heating provision. Houses have a good spread of leisure areas with workrooms, pool tables, air football, computer rooms and pianos. The kitchens and laundry rooms are suitably furnished and stocked. Each boarder has good personal space and adequate storage for personal effects. All the accommodation inspected was clean and well maintained.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 As at the time of the last inspection, the governance of the school is effective in deciding, and facilitating the achievement of, the school's aims.
- 4.2 The structure and management arrangements related to the governing body are well defined and support effective oversight of the school. Since the last inspection, the governors have re-organised their sub-committee structure which now consists of the following committees: executive; investment; premises and development; education; and marketing. One governor has been given responsibility for child protection. However, the responsibility for the oversight of recruitment procedures has resulted in some difficulties in this area.
- 4.3 The governing body is aware of its responsibilities and appropriately involved in educational development and financial planning, strategies to ensure effective educational provision, and investment in people and material resources. The body is the guardian of the school's traditions and aims but is actively helping to plan for the future. Governors are appropriately involved in the school development plan. However, the current plan is not always as detailed as might be useful. The last inspection stated that: "The school development plan and departmental development plans are insufficiently linked for them to provide a framework for maintaining a fully balanced, all-round education in keeping with the aims of the school." This is still the case. The development plan is in places, insufficiently specific and it does not integrate planning from other strands, such as subject departments.
- 4.4 The governing body has a good insight into the working of the school and provides advice, support and stimulus for growth and improvement. Governors visit the school frequently. The chairman of governors has a long association with the school and much experience of industry. He works well with the headmaster. He is clear about the need for everyone at the school to work together for the common good and works for this.
- 4.5 The governing body is effective in discharging its responsibilities for the welfare, health and safety of pupils with the exception of some documentary matters in staff recruitment.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.6 The quality of leadership and management by senior managers and others with delegated responsibilities is sound and helps the school in working towards achieving its aims.
- 4.7 Educational leadership by those with management responsibilities is generally effective, as reflected in the quality of education, the positive impact of the care on pupils and the way in which the school is working towards the fulfilment of its aims and ethos. Some inconsistencies remain, however. Currently, the senior management team is depleted, following the recent departure of two deputy headteachers. The extra work which this has devolved upon others, including the headmaster himself, has led to some neglect of some functions, giving him less time for overall direction. Those with management responsibilities are generally effective in analysing the school's needs, setting priorities, planning to meet those priorities, and putting decisions into practice. However, at senior and middle management level, the direction, planning and monitoring is not always sufficiently rigorous, leading to unevenness and inconsistencies. All staff, both teaching and non-teaching, give outstanding support in the pastoral care of the pupils and the boarding is excellently led and managed.

- 4.8 Management at the different levels is to some extent effective in drawing up and implementing appropriate procedures and policies, and in checking and reviewing their effectiveness. Some staff mention a lack of sufficient communication and the inspection showed this to be true in certain respects. The last Ofsted boarding inspection report mentioned that the school's practices are usually good but the paperwork often deficient. This is still true. Encouragement of what is good is there, but is not always followed up by effective monitoring of what is going on to achieve uniform excellence. Much is undefined and unformulated. Too much reliance is placed on the informal and the intuitive at the expense of planning and monitoring. The school is aware of this and is keen to use the appointment of a new deputy head to do more planning and monitoring at all levels and to improve communications, working closely with the headmaster.
- 4.9 Management at all levels is effective in securing, supporting, developing and motivating sufficient high quality staff. The school is a good place to teach and is able to attract very well-qualified and experienced teachers. However, the recruitment of staff is not undertaken rigorously enough. A centralised register of appointments is in place but for some staff, insufficient documentary evidence is produced that all the necessary checks have been undertaken, although most of the inadequacies relate to past appointments; further, the school is energetically and urgently taking steps to ensure that all documentary evidence is provided. Induction procedures for staff new to the school, and for those new to the profession who are participating in the national scheme for newly qualified teachers, support them effectively. Middle management in the running of the boarding houses - the housemasters and housemistresses - is very effective. What the heads of department do is uneven because their work is not sufficiently monitored.
- 4.10 Financial resources are well managed to secure appropriate accommodation and resources, in support of educational aims, and to meet the needs of the school's pupils. Resources for learning, including provision for ICT, are plentiful, competently managed and meet pupils' needs well. The administration of the school is efficient. An outstanding contribution to the school is made by the non-teaching staff in administration, catering, working in the grounds and elsewhere. They are loyal, industrious, and work with a cheerful efficiency. Very often they know the pupils, take an interest in them and actually contribute a pastoral dimension. The non-teaching staff are excellently managed by the bursar who is also responsible for financial functions and the very high standards of maintenance of the buildings and facilities and the beautifully kept grounds.
- 4.11 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) ensure that all appropriate recruitment checks are carried out on all staff before their appointment and that these checks are properly recorded. [Regulations 4.(2)(a); 4C.(2)(f); 4C.(3) and 4C.(6)].
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5].
- 4.13 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 St Bees School, with its well-balanced and happy pupils, and its fine buildings in a beautiful rural and coastal setting, is well on the way to meeting its high aims and aspirations and the needs of all its pupils. The excellently behaved and well-disciplined pupils learn well and achieve good success thanks to teaching that is good and sometimes outstanding. The personal care given to the pupils is outstanding, resulting in excellent relations between staff and pupils and among the pupils themselves. This is especially true in the boarding houses where good standards prevail. The links with the wider community are a strength of the school, involving a fine Management Centre and the school's own International Centre which attracts pupils from Europe and China to form an international group which benefits those directly concerned as well as all at the school. While most things in the school are good and sometimes excellent, a great deal of unevenness still exists in such features as marking, and even aspects of the teaching itself, good though this is, and the school is currently not sufficiently effective in its self-evaluation.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, the school has improved in several ways: more ICT is provided, with the new post of network manager to supervise, and pupils are able to use it, when required. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme has been successfully introduced. However, the last inspection report noted planning deficiencies, especially in relating middle management with senior management, and also the limited part played in the life of the school by the library. In both of these areas, though progress has been made, weaknesses still exist.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 4 (suitability of proprietors and staff).

Next Steps

- 5.4 To improve the quality of education, and especially to eliminate the unevenness that currently exists, the school should take the following actions.
1. Ensure that at senior and middle management levels, effective direction and communication exist.
 2. Introduce effective means of integrated planning involving all the teaching staff and implement the plans.
 3. At senior and middle management level, introduce and apply efficient and effective systems of monitoring in order to bring all practice up to the standard of the best.
 4. Review the use of the library in order to make it more effective in stimulating wider and deeper use by pupils, by enlisting the help of all the staff to encourage reading for learning and for pleasure.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) ensure that all appropriate recruitment checks are carried out on all staff before their appointment and that these checks are properly recorded. [Regulations 4.(2)(a); 4C.(2)(f); 4C.(3) and 4C.(6)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 27th to 30th April 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 sanatorium. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mr Eric Hester	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Valerie Dunsford	Headmistress, GSA school
Mr George Fisher	Headmaster, HMC school
Mrs Pamela Johnson	Head of Boarding, GSA school
Mr Martin Kettlewell	Head of Department, HMC school
Miss Margaret Pepper	Former Headmistress, ISA school