

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Hurtwood House School

Full Name of the School	Hurtwood House School
DCSF Number	936/6564
Registered Charity Number	N/A
Address	Hurtwood House, Holmbury St Mary, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6NU.
Telephone Number	01483 279000
Fax Number	01483 267586
Email Address	info@hurtwood.net
Headmasters	Mr K R B Jackson and Mr C M Jackson
Chairman of Board	Mr K R B Jackson
Age Range	15 to 19
Gender	Mixed
Inspection Dates	21st to 24th January 2008

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005 and May 2007.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate. The Ofsted report is available separately at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Inspection reports/Boarding schools.

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

CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Characteristics of the School	1
2.	THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION	2
	The Educational Experience Provided	2
	Pupils' Learning and Achievements.....	4
	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils	5
	The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment).....	6
3.	THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS	8
	The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils.....	8
	The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community	9
	The Quality of Boarding Education	11
4.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT	12
	The Quality of Governance	12
	The Quality of Leadership and Management	12
5.	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....	14
	Overall Conclusions	14
	Next Steps.....	15
6.	SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE	16
	List of Inspectors	16

1. INTRODUCTION

Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Hurtwood House School is an independent, mostly boarding school for young men and women between the ages of 15 and 19. It is located high on the Surrey Hills close to the border between Surrey and West Sussex. It is non-denominational and welcomes students of all faiths and of none. The school was founded in 1970 by one of the two headmasters, who also chairs the board of the non-profit making private company, limited by guarantee, which owns and governs it. The headship of the school is in transition from the founder to his son and co-headmaster. There is no governing body.
- 1.2 The school describes itself as a residential community with a home structure, offering a halfway house between secondary and higher education. It wishes its students to be free to develop as individuals, enabled through guidance and encouragement to be happy, to work hard and to realise their academic potential. It aims to teach them the skills needed to achieve the best results possible. It prides itself on providing a complete education in a community which enjoys a stimulating cultural, social and sporting life.
- 1.3 A further feature of the school is its international character, with about one-third of its students drawn from a variety of countries, principally in South East Asia and in Western and Central Europe. About half of these students are sufficiently fluent in English for their studies, while the other half (50) range from those at an early stage to those with more experience in the language but some need for further development and support.
- 1.4 The school is composed of 134 boys and 190 girls, of whom 129 boys and 175 girls are boarders and the remainder are day students. In total, 6 students were below the age of 16 on the 1st September 2007, of whom 4 are pursuing a GCSE course in Year 11, prior to embarking on sixth-form study.
- 1.5 Because entry is mostly at the age of 16 and also international, students come from a wide variety of schools and education systems and with a wide variety of starting points in the subjects they study. Many students from both the UK and abroad are very able and are already well advanced in the subjects they study. Several from the UK have achieved more modestly at GCSE either overall or in one or more of their chosen subjects. The school does not carry out standardised baseline tests at any stage but, from prior GCSE results of the UK intake, it is likely that the average ability of the students is above the national average for all maintained schools and that if students perform according to their abilities, results will be above the average for all maintained schools.
- 1.6 The school has no student with a statement of special educational needs, but has identified 58 as having some form of learning difficulty and/or disability (LDD), mostly dyslexia.
- 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 Hurtwood House provides a good educational experience, with several exceptional features, attuned to the needs and aspirations of the students and fitted to professional opportunities of the 21st century. The school has continued to extend and improve its range of subjects since the last ISI inspection. The curriculum is fully in line with the published aims of the school to provide a well-balanced academic portfolio with real-life disciplines. It is both diverse and distinctively modern, being focussed on sciences, performing and expressive arts and professional subjects.
- 2.2 The range of courses at A level is wide. A special strength is the variety and extent of provision for the performing and expressive arts: a high proportion of students follow one or more of theatre studies, media studies, photography, music technology, textiles or art, many with a view to continuing into a professional career. Mathematicians are well served by the options to study mechanics and statistics as well as mathematics and further mathematics. In addition, the humanities options are concentrated on professional subjects: economics and business studies, accounting, sociology, law and psychology. The range of options has been significantly increased since the last inspection, with the introduction, for example, of psychology and photography. Subjects are timetabled with outstanding flexibility to allow virtually any combination.
- 2.3 The intensive one-year GCSE programme for the small number of students following it allows a reasonable, albeit fixed, range of subjects: English, mathematics, the three sciences, business studies and art, together with some elements of the *Enigma* programme.
- 2.4 The *Enigma* programme, which effectively enhances the examined curriculum, is an imaginative non-examined course. It is designed to engage all students in a programme of personal, social and health education (PSHE) and to provide interesting and challenging alternatives to their subject studies, ranging from recreation and lifestyle, including meditation, car mechanics and investment, to fitness and the performing arts. Two afternoons a week are devoted to these options, while on one further afternoon each week the programme consists of a variety of talks by visiting speakers on subjects related to personal development and life skills. In this way, the school has successfully addressed one of the issues raised in the ISI report of 2002 by providing for an element of health education.
- 2.5 The international diversity of the school itself enriches the experience of all students, who mix easily with students from countries with often vastly differing linguistic, educational, cultural, and political traditions.
- 2.6 Beyond the timetabled curriculum is an extensive range of other optional extra-curricular activities, including, but not confined to, the performing and expressive arts. Though optional, both attendance and quality are monitored. Moreover, a very high proportion of students participate to some extent in the artistic life of the school, through the many school performances, often of a professional standard.
- 2.7 Sport has to be optional to fulfil a key principle of the school that students should be free to develop in their own ways. Sporting provision on site is limited but good use is made of local facilities to enhance this provision. Enthusiastic members of staff provide some sports training and supervision, including football, rugby, netball, hockey, basketball, cricket and tennis. Physical activity is encouraged and includes dance; currently about half the students are actively engaged.

- 2.8 The detailed planning, management and oversight of the curriculum are excellent. Departments meet regularly and in a purposeful manner. Schemes of work are broad and clear and are overseen rigorously by heads of department and by the first deputy.
- 2.9 The twenty-minute morning and afternoon breaks, in addition to the lunch break, give a good rhythm to the day and ensure punctuality to lessons. The pattern of the school day makes efficient use of time. Not all students like the way in which, on some afternoons, lessons follow sporting and other activities, but the benefits in terms of time for sports, activities and rehearsals outweigh the disadvantages. However, both GCSE and some teaching of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are outside the formal timetable and clash with part of *Enigma*. As a result, a significant minority of students lose some aspects of an important common element of the school's curriculum.
- 2.10 The careers department is well organised and generously staffed to provide strong support to students in entering the next stage of their life; most go into higher education of some sort. Careers staff provide well-structured guidance. Students have access to an on-line test of aptitude and interests. Staff closely monitor the university and college application process and strike a sensible balance between supporting students and encouraging them to take responsibility for themselves. Students are also prepared well for entrance to drama schools and art colleges through the expertise and links of both teachers and visiting professionals. Well-informed support is also provided for students seeking admission to universities in the United States through the Standard Aptitude Test.
- 2.11 The school has no specialist staff to support students with LDD, but one member of staff is attending a course in specific learning difficulties. However, the first deputy responds to any issues raised either in existing reports from educational psychologists or from teachers or parents. He provides suitable individual education plans (IEPs) and posts them securely on the intranet, with guidance to housemasters, tutors and teachers. If necessary, he secures further expert assessment. There is no formal provision for gifted and talented students. In practice, these arrangements operate successfully, because teachers are aware of IEPs and are sensitive to individual needs. However, the lack of specialist training in relation to LDD reduces the precision of planning and review.
- 2.12 The number of international students is a challenge as well as a strength. The school has a substantial department for ESOL, staffed by well-qualified teachers and led by a highly qualified and experienced head of department. Students are screened on entry and those in need of support are assigned to an appropriate level of course. The department co-ordinates with other departments across the school and provides detailed guidance on language needs. They have not, however, compared their own grammatical vocabulary with that employed for the teaching of English and of other foreign languages.
- 2.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.14 Students emerge from the school well and broadly educated, in line with the school's distinctive aims. Most make good progress in their studies, are successful in their applications to higher education and professional training and are well informed about the world in which they live. In this, the school has sustained the standards noted in the previous inspection. Most students are highly motivated, enjoy their work and develop strong skills in study. Students of media and theatre studies and of business studies and economics do especially well.
- 2.15 Many ESOL students struggle with English at first, particularly with the specialist concepts of their subjects. Because of the good teaching they receive in the ESOL department, most make good progress by Year 13 and achieve well in the language diplomas they take, as well as in their subject examinations. Similarly, students with LDD make good progress, aided by the support their teachers provide, with guidance from detailed and appropriate IEPs.
- 2.16 Over the two or three years in the school, students become securely grounded in the knowledge, understanding and skills of their various subjects. They are also highly articulate, and argue and reason well. They read and listen effectively at the different levels for their English competence. Students of subjects where mathematics and statistics are required, such as science or economics, make effective use of mathematics: they can interpret and generate statistics and charts and can solve equations. Most students are fully fluent with a wide range of computer and communications technology. In some subjects, teachers provide ample scope for the use of computers, while in others, specialist access is more limited. Students communicate with their teachers by email and word-process assignments as a matter of course. Most produce formal presentations for the class at various stages of their studies, while many in the expressive arts are familiar with a variety of stage and audio software.
- 2.17 Students' ability to go beyond the requirements of their subjects, to employ ideas critically and creatively and to think for themselves is uneven. In the expressive arts and in business studies and economics, students are constantly operating beyond the immediate course requirements, so that their standards are often outstanding. Students in a business studies class had made a visit to a major car plant, in which they gained valuable understanding of the workings of such a plant in a real world context. Examples were seen in many other subjects, but often, both in their lessons and in their writing, students were limiting themselves to the immediate requirements of examination syllabuses, of past paper questions and of the associated mark schemes.
- 2.18 Over the last four years, results at GCSE have been well above the national average, with a dip in 2006. However, the number entered has been too small to permit reliable national comparison. At A level in the three years to 2006, results have been well above the national average for all maintained schools. In German, history, business studies, sociology, art and design, textiles and media/film/TV studies, results have been far above the national average. Given the broad entry, and the number of students from different educational backgrounds, these results are good. Girls outperform boys overall, but not in all subjects.
- 2.19 Many students achieve highly in other ways: in particular, the standards of artistic performance are high. The school performance of the musical *We Will Rock You*, for example, was of virtually professional standard both in performance and stage production, even though many students were included who had no claim to artistic talent. A small number of students were spotted by a visiting agent. There are many examples of other achievements, especially in music and the performing arts but also in mathematics: in the UK

senior Maths Challenge, 11 students achieved gold, 9 achieved silver and 11 gained bronze awards.

- 2.20 The majority of students work hard and those that do not are given every encouragement to improve, usually with success. They take trouble over the work they produce and work effectively both on their own and in teams. Most organise their work well and can take efficient notes. They concentrate in lessons, listening carefully and engaging wholeheartedly in the cut and thrust of debate. They take instruction well. For example, in a lesson of theatre studies, two students held difficult poses for some minutes while the teacher pointed out the qualities they were presenting and the class discussed them thoughtfully. They then developed their impersonations rapidly in response to the ideas discussed.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.21 The students' personal development and the quality of relationships are outstanding. Students in their lessons, around the school and in their houses show the kind of independent maturity and autarchy that the school declares as one of its principal aims. It is true to say that the school allows them to develop in their own ways and that teachers do not seek to promote any particular kind of development in them. The results are evident in the confidence, approachability and civility of the students. Thus the school has maintained this strong feature.
- 2.22 The students are self-possessed and confident. Teachers, tutors and other staff work together most effectively to build this confidence both in their academic work and within their wider life in the school. In many subjects, students have ample opportunity to reflect upon the nature, feelings and needs of themselves and of others. In a Year 11 lesson, for example, in which the air crash in the Andes was discussed, students were thoughtful in exploring one another's ideas and feelings in order to decide what actions they would take. The strong tutorial system and the quality of relationships help students to make the transition from adolescent to adult, which is at the core of the school's aims. Through the supportive nature of the house system and the give and take of debate in class and beyond, they learn to take account of one another's needs and opinions. The school does not seek to promote any particular faith and does not hold religious assemblies or teach religious studies. However, students learn to appreciate and respect other faiths through their daily contact and through a variety of visiting speakers.
- 2.23 Students are able to distinguish right from wrong and show a recognition of the difficulty in some circumstances in doing so. They know and respect the common sense rules that apply within the school. They encounter ethical issues and dilemmas through the subjects they study and in the course of many of the *Enigma* lectures from visiting speakers. In their study of *Wuthering Heights*, their writing reflected an understanding of moral temptation and dilemma and of the tragic possibilities of error. Students of business studies were able to consider the implications of free trade for the condition of people in both developed and developing countries. A discussion of car pollution showed among the students involved a clear understanding of environmental issues, while in an English lesson, a student raised the question whether Thomas Hardy could have counted as a happy man.
- 2.24 Students respond well to the school's aim to promote tolerance and respect. They develop socially through the shared activities, such as the school productions, whether as participants or observers. The school does not provide formal leadership roles, such as those of prefect. Some students are elected to the school council, which has formed a food sub-committee. However, it is not entirely consistent with the school's ethos that a headmaster chairs this meeting and although some actions have been taken through it, such as the introduction of take-away sandwich lunches, several students expressed doubts about its efficacy. Despite

this lack of official responsibility, leadership does arise autonomously through the life of the school generally, for example in the sound production for a recent performance.

- 2.25 Students show a broad general knowledge of public institutions, not only in the UK but in the countries from which many of them come. These are covered in the course of many subjects of study, such as accounting and law, but also through the programme of visiting lecturers.
- 2.26 The school, both in class and in the houses, is an engaging mix of differing cultures and languages. This reveals itself in the easy interaction evident in the daily lives of the students. At times the expertise of the staff enhances this. For example, in French, students at A2 had acquired from their teachers the habit of writing essays in the manner taught in France.
- 2.27 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.28 The quality of teaching is mostly good and often outstanding. Hurtwood has maintained the high quality of its teaching since the last inspection, because of the effective way in which teachers, tutors, housemasters and managers work together to ensure that each student does as well as he or she can. In this, the school fulfils its aim to guide each student towards reaching his or her potential.
- 2.29 All teaching observed was meticulously planned, taking account of the wide differences of individual need, language and starting point for the different students. All lessons were well organised and paced. Teachers used a suitable variety of approaches, making efficient use of time, resources and equipment, including computers and projection. In the great majority of lessons, teachers made their lessons interesting, putting their enthusiasm and commitment into their lessons and in many cases using humour, illustration and pace to do so.
- 2.30 Teachers bring to their teaching high levels of subject knowledge and expertise. This is more than anywhere evident in the performing arts, where students are inspired by and look up to their teachers and the visiting artists as role models.
- 2.31 Teaching goes on all day long and many teachers are available to their students outside lesson time and were often seen in their classrooms and elsewhere, explaining, teaching and guiding one or two students. Good informal use is made of the twenty-minute breaks for this kind of personal tuition.
- 2.32 As the school literature claims, many teachers regularly cross-refer to real life in their teaching. For example, students of French had been deeply impressed by thinking about the plight of disadvantaged immigrants in Paris.
- 2.33 Even though not supported by rigorous initial standardised benchmarking, teachers, tutors and housemasters make exceptionally detailed use of marking and assessment to help guide and improve students' performance. These arrangements are exceptionally thorough. Weekly grades in every subject are monitored by the first deputy and by housemasters, and discussed in a whole staff meeting, followed by an evening discussion between each student and her or his house tutor. As a result, students are aware of their strengths and weaknesses and of targets to improve.

- 2.34 In the many lessons that were outstanding, teachers were inspiring and often challenged students to go beyond the immediate requirements of the examination syllabuses. This is particularly evident in the performing and expressive arts and in business studies and economics. They are willing to be topical, as in a media studies session in which students were discussing the news values of a variety of very recent stories. The teacher showed great skill in allowing a free-ranging and energetic debate to develop, while skilfully ensuring that the lesson maintained momentum.
- 2.35 In many other subjects, teachers, even though their lessons are interesting and enjoyable, confine themselves and their students too strictly within the boundaries of the examination syllabuses and mark schemes.
- 2.36 Teachers are aware of the detailed guidance for supporting students with LDD and provide appropriate support. The teaching of the ESOL courses to foreign students is expert. It is supported by careful diagnostic assessment of their levels of competence at entry and the careful matching of provision to the identified need. Students expressed appreciation of the quality of what they received.
- 2.37 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 staff of Hurtwood House provide outstanding pastoral care in line with the school's aims and with the findings of the last report. They provide well for the students' welfare, health and safety, although there are a few weak points, which the school has recognised and is addressing. The weekly staff meetings and the discussion between tutors and students that follow provide a powerful mechanism for ensuring effective communication and action in relation to students' needs. The excellent quality of relationships between staff and students and teachers' ready accessibility is at the heart of the school's success.
- 3.2 The dedication of staff is supported by a clear and strong pastoral structure, closely linked to the academic structure. All students can look to their tutors and housemasters for support as well as to their teachers. Housemasters keep meticulous records of their students and of any concerns. This is reinforced by frequent contact with parents, often by email. Communication between housemasters and house tutors and teachers and heads of department is excellent and is cemented by the Monday meetings. Guidance to all staff on pastoral matters is full and helpful.
- 3.3 Students have easy access to a wide variety of staff: they appreciate the approachability and supportiveness of their housemasters and tutors. Many see their teachers as key mentors and role models. Many made a point of mentioning the supportive nature of the two deputies, whose doors are always open. Indeed, so is that of the headmasters, whose glass-fronted drawing room is literally transparent. In addition to these, students have access to an independent listener.
- 3.4 The relationships between staff and students and among students are excellent. Students are at ease with staff: their teachers respect them and their independence, and they show respect in return. Measures to promote good discipline are moderate and effective. Firm lines about serious offences are made clear in the students' handbook. Sanctions are clear and reasonable and the school maintains a proper record of sanctions for serious misdemeanours.
- 3.5 The school makes clear that it will not tolerate bullying. Early in the year, Friday lectures cover various issues including bullying and cyber-bullying. All students to whom inspectors spoke expressed confidence in the effectiveness of the school's arrangements.
- 3.6 The school takes proper care for the well-being and safety of its students, although there are a few issues to which the school needs to attend. Students generally said that they felt safe at the school.
- 3.7 There are appropriate policies and guidance for staff on child protection, in line with local authority procedures. There is a particularly clear and helpful guidance policy ensuring that relationships between staff and students remain professional and objective. Training of staff and of the child protection liaison officer, including interagency training, is up to date. Any concern or referral is brought to the attention of the headmasters. They review the policies annually but have not carried out a review of the effectiveness with which those policies are carried out in the school, although since the inspection they have devised a suitable procedure for implementation in summer 2008.
- 3.8 Arrangements for fire safety are in almost every respect thorough and efficient. Fire risk assessments are in place and letters from the fire officers note only minor issues, which have been duly attended to. Fire practices are regularly conducted in houses both by day and by

night. Regular practices are also conducted in the main school. Staff maintain rigorous records of fire practices and equipment is regularly checked and serviced. However, there is no fire alarm in one of the teaching blocks, although a specification for one was drawn up in December 2007 and the necessary work is due to be carried out with the completion of a new block.

- 3.9 Due care is taken with health and safety and with reducing risk. A few concerns raised with the school during the inspection were rapidly dealt with. The school has suitable numbers of staff trained in first aid, including a school nurse and assistant. Appropriate records of accidents and of medical treatments are kept and reviewed regularly by the second deputy. Risk assessments are in place. The risk assessment arrangements for many areas of school life, including for minibs transport to and from houses and for visits in the UK and abroad, are exemplary.
- 3.10 The school has appropriate admissions records and now keeps a suitable register for the attendance of day students. The school has reasonable means of checking the whereabouts of its students and has further strengthened its systems as a result of the inspection.
- 3.11 The food, though not well regarded for its quality by many students or their parents, is adequate. Although physical exercise is not compulsory, the school tries to involve as many students as possible in some form of energetic activity and succeeds with about half of them. Healthy lifestyle is the subject of elements of the *Enigma* programme.
- 3.12 The school has a clear policy for equal opportunities and honours it in relation to the students. At the time of the inspection the school's access plan under the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act was incomplete, although the implementation date was March 2006. Since the inspection, the draft has been completed and is appropriate.
- 3.13 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils [Standard 3]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) implement the new annual review of the effectiveness with which the policies for student welfare and child protection are implemented [Regulation 3.(2)(b)];
 - (b) complete the installation of a fire alarm in one of the school's teaching blocks, as planned [Regulation 3.(5)].

The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community

- 3.14 The school's relationships with the parents both at home and overseas are outstanding because of the trouble staff take to communicate and work with them. This is wholly consistent with the school's aims, even though it is not stated among them. The school has good links with the wider world. Its links with the local community are modest but developing. This is similar to the position at the time of the last inspection.
- 3.15 Parents expressed a high regard for the school in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Their strongest and almost unanimous approval was for the quality of teaching, the range of subjects, the information they receive about their children and the opportunities to discuss it, the attitudes and values the school promotes, the range of extra-curricular activities and the handling of any concerns they have. A small but significant minority had reservations about the provision for students with LDD, the provision for boarders and the opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school.

- 3.16 The strongest feature of its relationship with parents is the exceptional extent to which the school communicates with them. Reasonably enough in a school in which almost all students board and a third of the parents live abroad, the school does not hold formal parents' evenings. Instead parents are invited to visit the school on line. They can check their children's progress web page. Email communication with housemasters is encouraged and extended electronic correspondence was seen carefully logged in the records of every house. It was easy to see from these the care devoted to students who had any concern, academic or emotional. In addition to this, parents receive one interim report and one full report every term and these reports are outstanding in their detail and in the quality of the analysis and advice they provide. Despite the absence of formal opportunities to meet teachers face to face, parents are encouraged to make individual appointments for this purpose.
- 3.17 Parents are provided extensive information about the school through the website, the school prospectus and the students' handbook. At the time of the inspection, the information so provided was too diffuse, rendering it difficult to know where to get hold of any one piece of information. For example, information about staff and ESOL is in the students' handbook but not in the prospectus or website, while information about provision for those with LDD is at the end of the prospectus but not on the website. The school has since the inspection collected all the information together in a single place in the prospectus and worked to remove apparent inconsistencies. Some necessary information is integrated with promotional material, making it difficult to sort out factual information. In other cases, information may give an inaccurate impression, as in the case of *Enigma*, where the information concentrates on freedom to choose without providing information about the compulsory components.
- 3.18 The school has no association of parents, which is understandable, considering their global dispersal. Relatively few parents participate to any great extent in the life of the school, although they are regularly invited to school performances and many travel long distances to attend. Some provide their professional services for the benefit of students, for example by contributing to the *Enigma* programme. Since the last inspection, the school has developed and published to parents a suitable complaints procedure and keeps proper records of concerns raised. On the evidence of the records scrutinised, the school responds to any concerns with proper care.
- 3.19 As at the last inspection, the school has modest links with the local community, which it is seeking to develop further. Local residents and schools are regularly invited to attend school concerts and performances. The students have raised money for local charities, including a hospice, as well as raising funds for a school in Kenya. In this and other ways, some students have the opportunity to help care for people less fortunate than themselves. The school is further well connected with its international community. Many students help raise money for UNICEF, for example, or join and support Amnesty International. Within their subjects, many departments have strong connections with the wider world, and nowhere less so than in the performing and expressive arts, where experience and know-how have helped students to choose appropriate places for professional training.
- 3.20 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

- 3.21 The quality of boarding education is good. It has some outstanding features, most notably the ethos of the different houses and the quality of relationships. The school is the residential community with a family structure that is its aim. In this it has sustained the quality noted at the last inspections by the Commission for Social Care Inspection and the ISI. It has refurbished the two houses as recommended.
- 3.22 The boarding experience makes a vital contribution to the ethos and success of the school. It gives many students access to educational development, not least in the performing arts, at weekends as well as during the week. Respect, trust and maturity permeate all house practices and management and, as a result, the atmosphere in all the houses visited was consistently welcoming, calm and supportive. Houses range in size from large down to outpost lodgings with only three students, and each has a distinct identity in which students take great pride. The outpost lodgings generally serve as halfway houses for students not accustomed to boarding, each run by staff of the school, in full accordance with the school's boarding and welfare, health and safety policies. These students belong to the day house, so that they can be part of a larger group of students. The quality of care provided is outstanding and supported by excellent student records.
- 3.23 The activities during the week are outstanding in range, in number and in the numbers of students involved. At weekends, reasonable provision is made for some expeditions and outdoor pursuits and extensive rehearsing is undertaken in the main school. However, several students complained of boredom on some weekends, as, in some houses, occasionally a small number remain.
- 3.24 The quality of boarding accommodation is good overall. The different houses are clean and comfortable, though in one or two cases redecoration is overdue. All include recreation rooms, television, secure and duly controlled internet connection and facilities for heating food. One or two of the single rooms are adequate but a little small and a few students complain that their beds need replacing, but in most respects houses are well appointed. The measures for transporting students between the widely scattered accommodation and the main school every day are secure.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good overall, as it was when the school was last inspected. The board have been particularly successful in developing and improving a school with a unique character and ethos, originally established through the vision of the founder and chairman.
- 4.2 Because all executive members of the board hold senior positions in the school as joint headmasters and bursar, there is little difference between governance and management and there is no independent body to guide and oversee the headmasters. In practice, however, this potential weakness has been averted by the sensible distribution of responsibility, so that the headmasters concentrate on the development of the school, in consultation with other staff and delegate much of the daily educational and pastoral management to the two deputy headmasters. This structure allows the members of the board to be fully aware of and involved in school strategies through their day-to-day business and their role in senior management meetings.
- 4.3 The board meets regularly and deals with pastoral, academic and financial matters in a businesslike way. They have committed a high level of investment to both resources and staffing. They maintain a firm and largely effective oversight of matters of health and safety, but do not have a rigorous means of assuring themselves that the school's policies for the welfare of students are being effectively carried out.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 The school is effectively led and managed at every level, as it was at the last inspection. The headmasters, particularly the founder, have been outstandingly successful in establishing and maintaining the school's distinctive ethos and educational style. The period of dual headship is providing a smooth transition from father to son. The two deputy headmasters are very effective in providing a professional connection between the proprietors and the operational aspects of the school itself. This combination has given the school strong roots and a vibrant sense of educational direction.
- 4.5 Senior management has been highly successful in developing the quality of educational provision, significantly increasing student numbers, ensuring good care for the students, and in ensuring that the school fulfils its declared aims.
- 4.6 The structure of management provides a strong and clear framework for establishing policies and monitoring their implementation. These processes are secured by excellent communication, especially through the staff meetings, and a clear focus on the students themselves. The co-ordination between the academic and the pastoral, the quality of assessment and both pastoral and academic record keeping are particularly valuable results of the system and of the people at all levels who operate it.
- 4.7 The school has good academic and pastoral policies and procedures, although the occasional gaps identified in this report suggest the need for a more structured system for identifying and responding to regulatory change. Policies are detailed and provide clear guidance to all staff, parents and students. Their effectiveness is monitored through the regular contact that staff enjoy at various levels within the management structure.

- 4.8 A key strength of the school has been the quality of the staff recruited and retained by the school and their commitment to the school's ethos. The expertise of many of the teaching staff is a key factor in the academic success of the students. Management has struck as good a balance between freedom and accountability with its staff as it has with its students. An effective appraisal system operates on an annual basis, largely based on self-evaluation, with an element of peer observation.
- 4.9 The arrangements for recruiting and vetting staff are careful and rigorous in almost every respect. However, in one case references were taken up by telephone without being recorded. The central register of staff checks was not complete at the time of the inspection. The school has done much since to remedy these matters. The school does not participate in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers.
- 4.10 Strategic planning is very effective and involves consultation with all staff. This has enabled the school to continue to develop its distinctively modern sixth-form ethos, to expand the range of qualifications offered and to upgrade its accommodation. Financial resources are well managed, ensuring that the school has adequate resources to meet the needs of teaching and learning. The school is in most respects efficiently administered. However, the dispersed nature of the site itself and of the houses has led to a dispersal of records and files which has made it difficult, for example, to have central access to staff recruitment files.
- 4.11 The geographical location of the main school is breathtaking and the students take full advantage of the changing panoramas and landscapes that are part of their daily lives. The steeply sloping site also poses major challenges because of its necessarily scattered nature. In most respects the accommodation is suitable for its purposes, but lacks sufficiently accessible toilets for students and has limited space for dining, both of which are likely to be dealt with when the building project currently in progress is completed. It has particularly good facilities for theatre and media. The school has done well to make the best use of an awkward site for sport and has supplemented this by the use of other public facilities.
- 4.12 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) complete the central register of appointments so that there are no blanks [Regulation 4C.(2)(c)];
 - (b) ensure that in cases where references have to be taken up orally, a full note is taken of the questions asked and of the answers given [Regulation 4.(2)(a)].
- 4.13 The school meets most of the regulatory requirements for premises and accommodation [Standard 5]. In order to meet all the requirements, the school must:
- (a) provide sufficient washroom facilities for students, reasonably accessible from any point in the main school [Regulation 5.(k)].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Hurtwood House is true to its founding headmaster's vision. It is a supportive residential community; it is a halfway house between school and university in which an excellent balance is struck between allowing students the freedom to develop as adults and providing careful guidance and oversight. The curriculum is modern and enriched by a high quality of extra-curricular activities. Students of all nationalities benefit from the school's international character and from the flexible and notably modern range of subjects offered. Most achieve success both in public examinations and in their applications for higher education and professional training. Standards are especially high in the performing and expressive arts and in business studies and economics. Students are outstandingly mature and confident and have an unusually clear sense of their future directions. They participate with relish in the school's vibrant cultural life. These strengths are the results of the consistently high quality of provision. Students owe their success to the good and often outstanding teaching. However, some of the teaching concentrates too narrowly on the strict examination requirements. The detail and depth of assessment is a particular feature. The standards of support for students with LDD and of teaching for ESOL students are high. The quality of both careers guidance and of pastoral care is outstanding. Academic and house staff devote great care to their students and to their welfare, health and safety. There are a few gaps in the school's handling of some aspects of these which have been brought to the school's attention. Communication both among staff at all levels and between staff and parents is an exceptional feature of the school, though links with the local community are still limited. The staff are of high calibre. The governance and management of the school are highly effective, although oversight of regulatory compliance by the board is not sufficiently systematic.
- 5.2 The school has both consolidated its strengths and made improvements since the last ISI inspection. It has successfully introduced new subjects, such as psychology and, by creating the imaginative *Enigma* programme, has both enhanced the education for all students and improved the provision for PSHE and spiritual development. The PSHE element of *Enigma* now includes health education. Students in most subjects have ample scope for research and enquiry.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standards 3 (welfare, health and safety of pupils), 4 (suitability of proprietors and staff) or 5 (premises and accommodation).

Next Steps

- 5.4 The strengths of the school comfortably outweigh its weaknesses. In order to make further improvements the school should:
1. make sure that all teachers regularly go beyond the examination syllabuses and mark schemes, so that their students' analytic, critical and creative powers are more fully engaged;
 2. ensure that the board has formal mechanisms in place to track compliance and to respond to new regulatory requirements as they arise;
 3. review the place of ESOL and of the one-year GCSE course in the timetable as a whole;
 4. further develop the school's links with the local community.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) implement the new annual review of the effectiveness with which the policies for student welfare and child protection are implemented [Regulation 3.(2)(b)];
 - (2) complete the installation of a fire alarm in one of the school's teaching blocks, as planned [Regulation 3.(5)];
 - (3) complete the central register of appointments so that there are no blanks [Regulation 4C.(2)(c)];
 - (4) ensure that in cases where references have to be taken up orally, a full note is taken of the questions asked and of the answers given [Regulation 4.(2)(a)];
 - (5) provide sufficient washroom facilities for students, reasonably accessible from any point in the main school [Regulation 5.(k)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 21st to 24th January 2008. The inspectors examined samples of students' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with students. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with members of the board, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and scrutinised the registers. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the health centre. The responses of parents to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.
- 6.2 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of two Ofsted inspectors over three days.

List of Inspectors

Mr Tony Hubbard	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Diana Dodd	Deputy Headteacher, HMC school
Mr David Holland	Headteacher, ISA school
Mr Ian Lovat	Director of Studies, HMC school
Mr Mark Mawhinney	Head of Department, HMC school
Dr Andrew Mottershead	Senior Teacher, HMC school
Mr Mark Twells	ICT Co-ordinator, HMC school