

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Newcastle School for Boys

Full Name of the School	Newcastle School for Boys
DCSF Number	391/6014
Registered Charity Number	503975
Address	30 West Avenue, Gosforth, Newcastle-upon-Tyne NE3 4ES.
Telephone Number	01912 559300
Fax Number	01912 130973
Email Address	office@newcastleschool.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr C J Hutchinson
Chair of Governors	Mr P Marshall
Age Range	3 to 15
Gender	Boys
Inspection Dates	12th to 15th November 2007

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 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 Newcastle School for Boys is a rapidly changing and growing school. It is a charitable educational trust, created in 2005 by the merger of two boys' preparatory schools, Ascham House School and Newlands School, and it occupies three sites in the residential suburb of Gosforth, close to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Each year since its merger, the school has extended its provision to the next academic year, in staged fulfilment of its plan to provide education to A-level. Currently the age range is 3 to 15. Two buildings, about 100 yards apart, house the junior school: one of these is for the Nursery, Reception and Year 1 classes, and the other is for Years 2 to 5 inclusive. The senior school site, about half a mile away, covers around five acres of playing fields and buildings, and houses Year 6 to Year 10 inclusive. Major extensions are in the course of construction. The two founding schools were last inspected in 2001.
- 1.2 The headmaster took up his post just a few weeks before the inspection. Prior to that, in the absence of the then headmaster, the school was managed for some months by the school's leadership team, with the close involvement of the governors.
- 1.3 The school's overarching aim, found in the prospectus and elsewhere, is to develop happy, confident, well-rounded and reliable young men, academically and socially prepared for life in the 21st century. A further series of specific points supports this and covers challenge, enjoyment, encouragement, integrity, self-discipline and a desire to work in partnership with parents.
- 1.4 Pupils may enter the school on a mostly part-time arrangement when they are aged three. Entrance tests are taken for entry to Year 1 and above. Pupils' average ability is above that of the national average.
- 1.5 The school has 402 pupils on roll. Boys aged under five number 62 (19 of whom are part time) and a further 185 boys in the junior school are aged between 5 and 10 in Years 1 to 5. The senior school currently has 155 boys in Years 6 to 10 aged 10 to 15. The school takes its pupils from a wide local area and most are from professional families. A range of ethnicities is represented. Four pupils on roll have a statement of educational needs (SEN) and the school has identified a further 31 in need of support, as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). A few pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), most of whom are fully fluent English speakers.
- 1.6 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 Newcastle School for Boys provides a good educational experience for all its pupils, having careful regard for its main aim to develop happy, confident, well-rounded and reliable young men, academically and socially prepared for life in the 21st century. The school has coped very well with the significant changes emerging from uniting two different schools across three separate sites. It has capitalised on the strengths of each separate school very fruitfully, enhancing and growing, and forming one cohesive unit. This has resulted in lively and confident pupils, well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- 2.2 The Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) children cover all areas of learning leading to the six learning goals as set out in the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum is fully followed throughout the school. Assisted by judicious use of specialist teachers appropriate to their age, for instance for physical education (PE) and music, even the youngest children are encouraged to develop their intellectual, artistic, musical and physical potential. In the junior school, the National Curriculum gives pupils in Years 1 to 5 a good broad range of subjects and in addition, pupils are taught French. In the senior school, pupils in Years 6 to 9 continue this programme of subjects, and from Year 8, modern foreign language provision is enhanced by the option of Spanish. Emphasis on cross-curricular work, a particular feature in the junior school, enriches much of the pupils' experience. The school has just enrolled its first Year 10, together with a number of new staff, to support the teaching of a good range of academic GCSE subjects.
- 2.3 Linguistic opportunities abound from the earliest age, through literacy and through the introduction of French from Year 2, and Spanish from Year 8. Plenty of opportunity to develop mathematical understanding is provided. Literacy and numeracy skills emerge well throughout the curriculum. Scientific and technological education is well provided for. Initiatives to develop information and communication technology (ICT) have made this subject a successful, lively and intrinsic part of the curriculum for all pupils. A suitable range of humanities education is available throughout the school, including religious education (RE). Personal, social and health education (PSHE) is also timetabled throughout the school and the syllabus ensures that all aspects receive appropriate emphasis.
- 2.4 The recent 'day of creativity' for Reception and Year 1 is representative of the way the school ensures that its pupils enjoy a good range of creative experiences, particularly in the junior school. Drama lessons further enhance the creative opportunities and, in both sections of the school, creative work is also included in music, art, English and history. The team and individual success in a variety of sports through the whole school is testament to the high quality of PE.
- 2.5 Pupils enjoy an energetic programme of extra-curricular activities. For the junior school, the excellent range supports technological, human and social and creative work, as well as a variety of sports including competitive rugby. Fencing, judo, board games and African drumming are imaginative and exciting examples. In the senior school, the wide range of extra-curricular sports continues, and now includes badminton. The recent introduction of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme further extends opportunities and reinforces physical breadth, whilst Mandarin adds to the linguistic experience. Enrichment of the curriculum is extensive in both sections of the school both within the school environment, in the local area through visits and from speakers.
- 2.6 Good preparation for the next stage starts early. Recently, pupils in Reception took a tour of the senior school and interviewed the headmaster about his role. Year 4 went to interview

Year 9 boys to help become familiar with the senior school environment and ethos. Pupils moving up to the next age group or section of the school are assured a smooth transition because the school is taking care to develop a single school ethos and strong links through liaison between subject departments, and between each section of the school. The broad curriculum, including emerging work in careers education, beginning in Year 8, prepares pupils of all ages for the next stage and for the world beyond school.

- 2.7 The curriculum overall is carefully planned and developed logically to extend skills and knowledge. Though pupils move to a different building at the end of Year 1 and at the end of Year 5, the planning is in line with the National Curriculum programme, and achieves good continuity, regardless of location of classrooms. The schemes of work and policy documents are of good quality in the junior school but of variable quality in the senior school. The best schemes include attention paid to depth of coverage, good use of resources and adherence to relevant whole school policies, such as the marking policy. The documents are revised regularly by the subject co-ordinators in the junior school, and by subject leaders in the senior school, and monitored by senior management.
- 2.8 The pupils with SEN, and those who are identified by the school as having LDD, benefit from an exceptionally strong programme because it includes individual education plans and very closely monitored support in and out of lessons, fully shared with subject and class teachers, and the local authority, where appropriate. The development of strategy for gifted or talented is currently underway and some progress is being made. However, the school does not yet have a sufficiently detailed overall strategy for extending the experience of the most able pupils. Departments often have incomplete and non-specific planning for the most able pupils so that opportunities to challenge and extend them are sometimes missed in the classroom. Good extra help is provided for pupils who have EAL so that, overall, equal access to the curriculum and to the extra-curricular activities is provided for every pupil.
- 2.9 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.10 Pupils achieve good standards at all ages, in line with their ability. They are securely grounded in knowledge, skills and understanding of their academic subjects, supporting the school aims. They achieve success in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. Their enthusiasm and enjoyment for their studies and activities is palpable, particularly in the junior school, and they learn together with mutual encouragement and respect. Most are self-confident learners who accept responsibility for their learning willingly, often offering help to others. In most lessons, pupils are eager to learn and are inquisitive. They use the knowledge thus gained in exploring further new ground so that they leave the school with good learning skills and with secure foundations across the curriculum.
- 2.11 In numeracy and literacy, good standards are reached throughout the school. By Year 9 pupils can work out percentage profit and loss competently in problem solving activities, and can devise sophisticated and well-structured, cohesive plans for balanced written arguments. Pupils display imaginative creative ability from an early age, as demonstrated in the Year 3 work on *Gorwen the Dragon* that was exciting, yet structured and clear. In the same year group, pupils are beginning to adapt their writing creatively to appeal to different audiences. On a number of occasions during the inspection, for example in PSHE lessons in both sections of the school, pupils showed they are able to respond critically, sometimes with a maturity beyond their years.
- 2.12 Foundation Stage pupils achieve strongly on all the Early Learning Goals, above the expected level for this age, with many of them already embarking on National Curriculum

work before they enter Year 1. National tests are not taken, but other tests, that are standardised against all schools nationally, are used in most year groups. The results of these, considered alongside the work seen, show standards achieved are good in both sections of the school; they are above the averages achieved nationally in all maintained schools, and in line with pupils' average ability. Internal examination results show that pupils' breadth of knowledge, skills and understanding is good, in relation to the National Curriculum level appropriate to their age, in almost all subjects, and in some subjects it is well above those averages. Standards observed in lessons concur. For instance, pupils in Year 2 know French with sufficient fluency to respond to the whole lesson conducted in the language, and understand simple instructions. Year 5 pupils are already able to deal with 6-figure grid references in geography. In Year 9, pupils can analyse subject matter very well, as they demonstrated in several subjects, for instance English and RE. No significant differences were observed in attainment between different groups of pupils, subjects or curriculum areas.

- 2.13 The school teams achieve success in various sports, particularly rugby, where they regularly record good victories, often against larger schools. Individual success is enjoyed in a number of fields including football, rugby, badminton, music and drama.
- 2.14 Pupils develop good skills and learning attitudes. They are articulate, as they demonstrated in interviews with the inspectors. They listen effectively to their teachers and to each other. This culture is encouraged as early as in the Nursery, and continues successfully throughout the school; for instance in a Year 7 science lesson on forces, pupils' inquisitiveness and listening skills led to rapid progress. They quickly develop the ability to read intelligently and at an early age they are able to write increasingly fluently in their notebooks and in their creative writing books. By the time they are in Year 10, they write fluent and detailed original notes, for instance in English when they planned successful critical analyses on the R. K. Narayan short story *Leela's Friend*. Literacy skills are competently developed throughout the school and across the curriculum.
- 2.15 Numeracy skills are also strong and pupils can apply their skills, both in mathematics lessons and elsewhere. Children in the Foundation Stage are already using mathematics as an integral part of classroom activities, whether it be counting each other to complete the register in Nursery, or watching the clock to time the baking of the rock buns in Reception. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, pupils were adept at recognising and using coins, and understood their worth. In the senior school, pupils in Year 6 used numeracy skills well to produce profit and loss accounts for a school tuck shop in an ICT exercise. In Year 9 music, pupils used calculation skills to compose sequences of bars using various rhythms.
- 2.16 Pupils develop good ICT skills during lessons in this subject and use these skills in some other subjects. For example, Reception children already use programmable toys and the interactive whiteboard effectively. Other examples were observed in both sections of the school, as in a Year 9 science lesson, where pupils used their ICT skills very ably in plotting line graphs to compare two variables.
- 2.17 When pupils are invited to reason and argue a case in their lessons, they do so effectively. They answer questions willingly and with conviction, and think and speak for themselves from an early age. Year 1 pupils can make predictions and reason intelligently to form personal views, as they did in discussing how long a candle would burn inside different sized jars. Pupils organise their work neatly from an early age, but writing their own notes and working independently develops more slowly. Although pupils in a Year 10 English lesson made their own notes summarising a factual report, elsewhere in the school independent learning skills are less developed. One reason for this is the limited nature of facilities and resources in the senior library. This is too small in area for the number of pupils and age range it covers, and has too few books, so that it is not able to fully support learning.

- 2.18 Pupils work with each other willingly, from a very early age, throughout the curriculum. In a Year 2 PE lesson, pupils worked together very successfully in teams and, in a Year 7 geography lesson, working in groups of four, pupils identified different types of map, showing consideration and respect for each other so that they made good progress together. Whether getting ready for a particular activity or working in small groups, they collaborate productively with each other at all ages, completing tasks with a minimum of fuss. Lessons start promptly and pupils arrive and prepare for a lesson clearly expecting to settle and to learn. Concentration levels are good, for instance in Year 8 mathematics lesson, where pupils were engrossed in their work on multiplication of decimals. Most pupils throughout the school clearly derive considerable enjoyment from their work and activities.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.19 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good with some outstanding features. The excellent quality of relationships at all levels within the community supports the school aim to develop happy, reliable young men with a social conscience and warmth towards others.
- 2.20 The spiritual development of pupils is strong. Boys from different cultural and religious backgrounds show self-confidence and self-esteem as well as increasing self-knowledge, from an early age. RE lessons reinforce this development strongly in the senior school. Participation in the orchestra and choirs results in pupils of all abilities developing confidence and self-esteem. The school enables its pupils to reflect on the meaning and purpose of life in assemblies and lessons. In a senior school assembly they responded to a story about developing self knowledge, showing their awareness of the importance of learning from experience. Pupils clearly value and respect the beliefs and opinions of others. They behave in an inclusive and supportive manner with each other from an early age. Frequently, a spiritual response was evident. In a Year 1 science lesson on fire, for instance, there was a moment of shared amazement when the candle went out beneath the jar. In a Year 7 discussion of a sensitive and poignant subject, a pupil recited a poem he had written, connected with the subject, which resulted in spontaneous applause. Commensurate with their age, they are able to discuss ethical issues with developing knowledge and insight. For instance, in a junior school assembly, pupils considered environmental issues through song, based on positive actions for a better world. A Year 9 group discussed the issue of drink driving with increasing understanding.
- 2.21 Moral awareness is particularly strong because the school helps pupils to acquire a highly developed sense of right and wrong. This results in growing confidence, and pupils exhibit self-awareness and an open-mindedness to other viewpoints. They clearly understand the needs of others and respond to them. Pupils' very good understanding of moral issues and respect for the law are carefully nurtured throughout the school. Year 6 pupils, for instance, showed maturity in discussing why good behaviour in lessons is desirable. Pupils are fully aware of the school rules, which they have helped devise. They respect them and understand that they exist for the benefit of the school community. By being involved in raising money for charities, they clearly demonstrate their good understanding of their obligations to one another as well as to those who are less fortunate than themselves.
- 2.22 Social development is good. The school provides many opportunities for pupils to learn to play their part in the community. For instance, the school councils, junior and senior, help pupils to begin to understand how society functions. Elements of citizenship, including knowledge of public institutions and services in England, were covered in a recent visit to the city council which assisted senior boys to deepen their understanding in a meaningful and

practical way. Pupils respond fruitfully to opportunities to take responsibility throughout the school, culminating in the school prefect positions for the oldest year group.

- 2.23 Good cultural development is shown by the pupils' awareness of the diversity of the community that is Britain today, their awareness of their own culture, and the world in which they live. They are genuinely respectful of the different cultural heritages that they encounter at school. The school is careful to include experiences of the music, art and literature of many cultures in its life, for instance in art displays in the junior school. The African drumming sessions in both sections of the school are much enjoyed by the participants and add to cultural experience. Visits to places of worship of different world faiths further enhance their understanding of other cultures.
- 2.24 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.25 Teaching throughout the school is good overall and contributes strongly to the school's academic and social aims, helping pupils of all abilities to make progress and achieve good standards. Support for those with LDD is particularly strong. Though marking is characteristically positive, praising and encouraging, it does not always point the way forward. A good assessment system operates that enables the school to measure its performance against national norms.
- 2.26 Teaching methods are geared, in general, to helping all the ability groups to learn. All teachers are aware of those in need of additional help and this is provided by varying means, including excellent, planned use of the classroom assistants. Identification and specialist support for those with SEN and LDD are outstanding, and any pupils with EAL who need language support are quickly identified and also well-supported. Those whom the school considers to be gifted or talented are not always challenged sufficiently in class either by subject matter or by the setting of more open-ended questions, so that their progress is sometimes inconsistent with their ability. The school is devising strategies to make sure the most able are challenged effectively, but the impact of these strategies is not yet evident, except in a very small number of lessons. In the best lessons teaching is stimulating, challenging and exciting, such as a Year 2 French lesson, where a sequence of miming, singing, speaking and listening in an atmosphere of fun and purpose was enjoyed by all.
- 2.27 Teaching encourages pupils to apply themselves purposefully to their work. The Foundation Stage environment is organised so that pupils become self sufficient; they know where to find things and are free to access them, which fosters their independence. For older pupils, independent learning is promoted in some subjects. A good example was in a Year 9 English lesson where pupils were guided to analyse language register and tone in a thoughtful and reflective manner that led to rapid progress. However, over-reliance on teacher-directed work was seen in both sections of the school and, where this happens, individual learning and enquiry are limited.
- 2.28 Effort is encouraged. In physical activities, pupils receive strong support urging them to succeed throughout the school. In Year 2, for example, pupils made good progress through praise and encouragement to improve their skills at forward rolls and leapfrogs. In the senior school Year 7 pupils were coached with drive and humour to hone their passing skills in rugby. Creative effort is encouraged in the junior school, for instance in technology, where Year 1 pupils were inspired by the lively and informed discussion about the techniques of designing pop-up books. The fostering of creative effort is more limited in the senior school. Among the reasons for this are that a limited variety of teaching strategies is used in some

lessons and expectations that are not high enough, so that little creative effort is required of the pupils. However, some good examples were observed, for instance in a Year 6 English lesson, where pupils worked with enthusiasm in discussing the points of view of different characters to create their own diary entries. The tasks were pitched at just the right level for the pupils, winning their prolonged involvement and application.

- 2.29 Day-to-day lesson planning is good overall in both sections of the school. The best feature is the clear identification of learning objectives, with useful references to prior learning and next steps. The most effective lessons plan for a good variety of teaching methods. For instance in a Year 4 PSHE lesson a number of different strategies were used, including recall, discussion, partner-work and individual feedback. However, in some lessons, planning fails to set out methods to enhance the challenge and vary the content of what is given to higher attaining pupils. The best teaching is carefully adapted to meet the particular needs of individual pupils by, for example, setting different tasks for pupils of differing ability.
- 2.30 All teachers have adequate knowledge and understanding of their subject for the level they teach, and some have especially good knowledge which facilitates full exploration of topics, through apt questioning. Junior school pupils benefit further from the use of specialist teachers, for instance in French and PE. Apart from the senior library, resources are good. Teachers are skilled at using all the resources to support learning. Off-site facilities, used by the senior school pupils, overcome the limitations of the facilities on site. ICT resources are particularly good and used frequently for cross-curricular work, as well as for teaching ICT skills. In a Year 10 chemistry lesson, pupils used technology imaginatively to devise presentations on the structure of the earth. Teachers expect pupils to behave responsibly and to work hard and give them every encouragement to do so. Because relationships between pupils and staff are so good, such expectations are fulfilled, creating a very positive and enthusiastic learning environment throughout both sections of the school, in which pupils thrive intellectually.
- 2.31 The best examples of written marking follow the whole school marking policy and offer positive and supportive comments, pointing the way forward. In some cases however, work is merely ticked. As is appropriate for younger pupils, marking is often immediate and verbal. This method works very well indeed throughout the school in PE lessons, where constant praise and reassurance is the norm and pupils make rapid progress. Regular internal examinations ensure that teachers can ascertain whether what is taught has been learned. Performance and achievement are evaluated through good, recently introduced standardised assessments in the senior school, which guide next steps for every subject, and the information emerging is just beginning to be used successfully to impact on learning. In the junior school, the standardised information available, for the core subjects, is used well. Day-to-day assessment and end-of-unit assessment are both used successfully in both sections of the school to plan teaching.
- 2.32 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 Staff provide an outstanding level of care that assures the well-being of their pupils. Welfare, health and safety have been the subject of recent and thorough review; improvements are being made and the standard is now good overall. Staff know their pupils and relate well to them. Exemplary relationships which promote effective learning and a caring atmosphere prevail, meeting the aims of the school.
- 3.2 Pupils feel securely supported in and out of the classroom and say that they are treated fairly. Pupils trust their teachers, who take care to carry out their pastoral duties very conscientiously. Form tutors, in charge of their classes in the senior school, and class teachers, who take that role in the junior school, are the first point of reference for the high-quality support and guidance. Throughout the school, positive feedback is a key feature which ensures motivation and the development of self-worth; another key feature is the effort staff make to settle any emerging anxieties at the start of the day.
- 3.3 The structures, policies and procedures established to support and secure the well being of pupils are carefully thought out and efficiently applied. The close working relationships amongst the staff ensure that an effective collaborative network of support and guidance operates in both sections of the school. Regular staff meetings are used to discuss any pupils causing concern and to decide strategy. In the senior school the system of 'green cards', used for positive and negative issues, means that all staff can be updated promptly and efficiently about any emerging pastoral or academic matters, and is a useful, handy record, well known to all. Indeed, the main reason for the success of the procedures is that all staff and pupils know and trust the systems. The staff handbook gives clear guidance on the various pastoral roles and teachers are firmly supported by the management structure in fulfilling this part of their responsibility.
- 3.4 The excellent relationships between staff and pupils, and among pupils, are a strength of the school. Pupils typically say the teachers are 'very approachable'. At all ages they know to whom they can turn and they know something will be done. A strong feature of the arrangements is that staff offer support in a friendly and relaxed manner. Pupils mix harmoniously with their peers. They are kind, thoughtful and supportive of one another; they are confident and relaxed with staff and spontaneously celebrate their personal and team achievements. One pupil, on being asked 'what is special about your school?' immediately said 'the pupils share everything and look out for each other'.
- 3.5 Pupils are familiar with school procedures and clear about what they should do if they have concerns. They appreciate the ready involvement of their form tutors. Measures to promote responsible behaviour are clear, and focus on encouragement and positive reinforcement. Younger pupils say that the older ones 'show respect for us'. One example of the involvement of pupils in supporting consideration for others is the Year 5 class charter, which helps them to understand other people's feelings and to manage their own. New PSHE initiatives are also having a significant impact throughout the school. The anti-bullying policy operates effectively because the school makes sure that all know the procedure and that their concerns will not be brushed aside. Appropriate books are kept for recording incidents and accidents. Pupils and parents say that bullying rarely occurs, but that should they encounter it, pupils are aware of the action they should take, and are confident that the matter would be sensitively and effectively resolved.

- 3.6 Good, effective procedures for child protection are in place and training has been thorough. Clear liaison with the governing body occurs. The head of junior school is the child protection officer for the school, and additional training is booked for the new headmaster, as well as for the pastoral leader of the senior school, to strengthen the arrangements further.
- 3.7 Necessary measures have been taken to minimise the risk of fire and other hazards. Regular fire drills are carefully recorded. Risk assessment is successfully overseen by the governing body and supported by advice and reports from an outside agency, so that arrangements to ensure health and safety are effective on site and off. Lines of responsibility are clear. Staff and pupils' awareness of health and safety issues, for instance the importance of healthy eating, are high. Healthy, attractive and nutritious food is provided, which is much enjoyed by the pupils.
- 3.8 Medical records are kept centrally in the administrative centre, and supporting notices are available for staff that ensures they are aware of individual needs. First aid boxes are located around the school in sufficient quantity; the relevant policies are clear and a suitable number of staff are trained in first aid. Admissions and attendance registers are completed accurately and unexplained absence is followed up promptly. The school has dealt with the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, and all relevant discrimination legislation, and has a clear understanding of the health and safety guidelines. Pupils are nurtured well, their welfare is carefully fostered and they are happy and proud of their 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 established a good range of warm and supportive links with the parents, the overwhelming majority of whom are highly satisfied with the education and support provided for their children. The partnership with parents is good and improving, giving careful attention to this aspect of the school's aims. Links with the community are plentiful and well-developed, and contribute usefully to the fostering and promoting of good relationships with the outside world and a sense of belonging to the school community.
- 3.11 The responses received to the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly supportive. The most positive aspects identified by the parents are the quality of teaching, the suitability of the subjects offered, the worthwhile attitudes and values promoted, and the additional help provided for those with particular learning needs. A small minority of parents in the senior school felt that the standard of pupils' behaviour is not good enough. During the inspection, standards of pupil behaviour were very good. A few parents in both sections of the school thought that the school did not encourage them enough to be involved with its life and work. However, inspectors found a buzz of encouragement for parents to be involved, for instance by being invited to support school events, concerts and matches, and to support trips and visits. Recent initiatives include providing additional activities for involving parents in a book club, Mandarin lessons and a golf society. The new ventures are already reaping benefits in developing a partnership with parents that is focused on the welfare of the boys. School and parents are currently working together to form a parents' association.
- 3.12 Ample opportunity occurs for parents and school to exchange information. From Year 3, homework diaries provide an active, regular and effective interface between home and school. For the very youngest children, parent-school links are strong, with folders containing pupils' numeracy and literacy work which are given to parents at the end of each term. Written reports are sent out two or three times every term in the senior school and

annually in the junior school. They contain good commentary and include a new 'grade card' system that has recently been introduced for senior school boys. The cards, involving half-termly gold, silver or bronze awards for consistent and sustained effort, have been very well received by the boys and their parents. Advice is included on the reports as necessary. Parents' evenings are suitably frequent and focused, in both sections of the school. The curriculum summaries in the junior school, and similar informative parents' meetings throughout the school, provide useful advice about what pupils are studying. Very informative handbooks for parents are available on the school website which is kept up to date. Newsletters are regularly sent out, celebrating success in a broad range of activities and giving notice of events. An appropriate written complaints procedure is available and a review of written records, and the almost unanimous view of parents, shows that the school deals efficiently with such matters.

- 3.13 The school has varied links with the local community, including regular charitable giving. The annual visits to the local Jewish synagogue 'Leisure Club' is particularly popular. The boys sing and then chat to members of the club. For the younger ones, the joint holiday club with another local school is popular. Pupils enjoy links with outside clubs and societies in pursuit of their interests in rugby union, rugby league, football, tennis, sailing and badminton, among others. Association with local theatre is a further link, including pupil performance in a professional production in a city theatre. The junior school has outstanding links both at home and overseas, including energetic support of an orphanage in Egypt. Visits into school are made by, for instance, the local policeman and parents representing the world faiths. Visits out of school include residential visits for pupils as young as Year 1. In the senior school, such links are further developing. Throughout the school, these links all support and enrich pupils' education.
- 3.14 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 Prudent, clear-focused and wise governance has assured the success of the recent rapid changes and growth of the school. The merger has been controlled and managed successfully. Governance is pro-active and maintains secure oversight of the school through well-structured committees with aptly-chosen membership that includes a suitable range of expertise and experience. This ensures that governors make an effective contribution to the successful achievement of the school's aims.
- 4.2 Through appropriate training and the use of outside agencies, for instance in taking advice on health and safety matters, governors clearly understand their roles and responsibilities, particularly in respect of child protection, secure recruitment and health and safety. Governors' procedures are effective. Financial oversight is strong, under the day-to-day care of the bursar, and the procurement of resources throughout the school is efficient. The longer-term financial and educational development receives the governors' full attention and a clearly articulated whole school development plan, systematically growing the school, is endorsed by the governing body and is being carried out successfully. The interests of the junior school are catered for, as one governor has particular expertise in primary education and inspection.
- 4.3 Governors are interested and involved in the school, and are highly supportive. They know the school, and have positive and constructive relationships with staff. A particularly strong feature is the 'governor of the month' arrangement which encourages governors to spend time in school to become more familiar with school life. Regular meetings are held with staff, so that governors, through the headmaster, can provide them with support and advice and an appropriate level of challenge.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.4 Good leadership and management has permitted the school to respond to new initiatives, whilst keeping the fulfilment of the school aims firmly centre-stage. During the recent transition period, the leadership team, supported by the governors, managed the school effectively. Under the sensitive direction of the new headmaster, together they have evaluated thoroughly the school's strengths and weaknesses and identified and started on the next steps required for further improvement.
- 4.5 The clear direction and leadership provided by the headmaster are already beginning to have an impact, further strengthening the quality of education and very high levels of care provided. This results in good standards achieved and a happy, lively and purposeful ethos that pervades all areas of the school. The headmaster is ably assisted by the deputy head and the head of junior school. Together with the bursar, this leadership team all share a positive relationship that contributes effectively to the successful management of the school and to the fulfilment of the school's aims.
- 4.6 The internal management structures are very clear so that, despite the two sections of the school being about half a mile apart in physical distance, the school already works very well as one cohesive unit, with a developing common purpose. Middle managers' roles are in the course of clarification and development in both sections of the school. At present the monitoring of the teaching and learning lacks sufficient rigour. New contracts have just been issued alongside fresh copies of the job descriptions. The introduction of an agreed appraisal

process is at the planning stage. The far-reaching whole-school development plan resulted from wide consultation including staff and governors. The priorities, including development of the school buildings and growing the school, are being put into practice with speed and efficiency. In particular, the introduction of the first GCSE cohort, a few weeks ago, has been managed smoothly.

- 4.7 Regular management and staff meetings ensure corporate decision making and support the day-to-day running of the school. Termly staff meetings help all staff to keep abreast of developments and ensure that decisions are put into practice. A comprehensive set of useful policies has been developed by the leadership team and subject co-ordinators. These policies are to be reviewed annually and their effectiveness checked. The subject policies form a firm framework on which to build, whilst renewing and developing the curriculum.
- 4.8 Recruitment procedures for staff are good and thoroughly applied. All statutory checks are made prior to confirmation of appointment. The induction procedure for new staff is comprehensive and supportive. The whole-school policy for the induction of newly-qualified teachers satisfies requirements to allow them to achieve fully-qualified status. Teaching staff and classroom assistants are deployed astutely and contribute significantly to the pupils' learning and welfare. Catering and maintenance staff are hardworking and provide a good service to the school.
- 4.9 The arrangements for providing appropriate resources are well-managed by the bursar for the whole school and ensure that pupils' needs are met. The buildings are largely adapted as well as they can be for best use, and are kept in good repair. Displays of pupils' work in the junior school are of particularly high quality, stimulating learning. Building work is underway in the senior school, to address some shortcomings that were foreseen as inevitable as a result of expanding the age range, and also, to enhance and improve the facilities. An area in each section of the school is designated for use by pupils who are ill, but neither contains a washbasin. ICT resources are particularly good and arrangements for maintaining the quality of these resources are robust. The library in the junior school is a good resource but in the senior school the library facilities are inadequate. The junior school library is a comfortable area, attractive to pupils, with a good supply of up-to-date books relevant to the curriculum. It is further enriched by a plentiful selection of fiction. In the senior school, the library is too small, with too few books to support the effective development of library skills and independent learning.
- 4.10 Day-to-day organisation of the school is thorough and effective, managed skilfully by the deputy head in the senior school and the head of junior school in the junior school. Administrative support is managed capably and is efficient, so that the headmaster has time to lead the whole school effectively.
- 4.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff [Standard 4].
- 4.12 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) ensure there are appropriate facilities for pupils who are ill [Regulation 5(1)].
- 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 Newcastle School for Boys is fulfilling its aims well and providing a good educational experience for all its pupils. It is meeting successfully the twin challenges of merging two schools and expanding the former age range. The recently-appointed headmaster and other senior managers give the school strong leadership based on a fully shared vision. Relationships are excellent throughout the school. Boys are exceptionally well cared for. Good teaching overall, and pupils' strong personal development, underpins the achievement of good standards. Although plans are well-advanced, staff appraisal has not yet been formally introduced, and monitoring of teaching and learning is not fully effective, so that the school cannot be sure that best progress is achieved for each and every pupil, or that all teaching quality is as good as the best. Most resources and facilities are good and support the quality of education of the pupils, but the senior library is unsatisfactory.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, in February 2001, the two schools have merged and grown to become Newcastle School for Boys. It is now a different school with new arrangements for a wider age range and a changed management structure.
- 5.3 The school complies with most of the regulatory requirements, but does not at present meet Standard 5 (premises and accommodation).

Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has already identified the following priorities to help it move forward and improve further.
1. Introduce formal appraisal for all staff.
 2. Improve the monitoring of teaching and learning, for example by increasing focus on the following:
 - checking planning, to ensure consistency and progression and dealing with the classroom needs of all groups;
 - examining boys' work, to improve the quality and consistency of marking and assessment for learning, enabling boys to be given focused, individual learning targets which are easily accessible to all staff;
 - observing lessons regularly, so that the less successful aspects of teaching and learning can be identified and improved, and best practice shared.
 3. Improve senior school library provision to encourage boys to read for pleasure and undertake independent research and study.
- 5.5 In order to meet all the regulatory requirements, the school must:
- (1) ensure the facilities for pupils who are ill include a washbasin. [Regulation 5(1)].

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 12th to 15th November 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Elizabeth Henson	Former head, GSA junior school and assistant reporting inspector
Mr Stephen Duckitt	Headmaster IAPS school
Mrs Anna Evans	Headmistress, ISA school
Mr William Ibbotsen-Price	Headmaster, IAPS school
Miss Louise Savage	Head of Pre-prep, HMC school