

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Repton School

Full Name of the School	<b>Repton School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>830/6001</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>4390219</b>
Address	<b>Repton, Derbyshire DE65 6FH.</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01283 559200</b>
Fax Number	<b>01283 559223</b>
Email Address	<b>headmaster@repton.org.uk</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Robert Holroyd</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Jonathan Fry</b>
Age Range	<b>13 to 18</b>
Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009</b>

This inspection report follows the framework laid down by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). The inspection was carried out under the arrangements of the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership. It was also carried out under Section 162A(1)(b) of the Education Act 2002 as amended by the Education Act 2005, under the provisions of which the Secretary of State for Education and Skills accredited ISI as the body approved for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to ISC Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009.

The inspection was not carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Boarding Standards. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://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 .....	3
	The Educational Experience Provided .....	3
	Pupils' Learning and Achievements.....	4
	Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils .....	6
	The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment).....	7
3.	THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS .....	10
	The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils.....	10
	The Quality of Links with Parents and the Community .....	11
	The Quality of Boarding Education .....	13
4.	THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT ....	14
	The Quality of Governance .....	14
	The Quality of Leadership and Management .....	15
5.	CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS.....	17
	Overall Conclusions .....	17
	Next Steps.....	17
6.	SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE .....	18
	List of Inspectors .....	18

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Repton School was founded in 1557 under the will of Sir John Port, of Etwall, Derbyshire. His executors purchased the remains of the Augustinian Priory which had been established in the village in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and the beautiful Old Priory and Cloister Garth are still the central features of the school buildings which have grown and spread through the village down the centuries. Originally a day school for boys, Repton became a mainly boarding school in the middle of the nineteenth century. The school is now governed by a scheme drawn up under the Endowed Schools' Act of 1874 and subsequently amended. The school became fully co-educational in 1979.
- 1.2 The aim of the school is that every Reptonian should become a fulfilled individual and responsible citizen. The school believes that each pupil has a unique potential for achievement, and the school aims to provide an ordered community with the facilities and ethos to instruct, encourage and inspire pupils to develop their own talents and to play a full part in society.
- 1.3 The school places a strong emphasis on rigour in academic achievement and great store on the development of interests in fields as diverse as music, drama, art, design and information technologies and individual and team sports. It cultivates moral and spiritual awareness, high personal standards and good manners. In all these ways, the school believes that the richness of life of the boarding community at Repton develops young men and women with self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities, as well as respect and responsibility for others. The aim is to ensure that these formative years are not only enjoyable at the time but are recognised as the necessary preparation for citizenship in the years to come.
- 1.4 The number of pupils on roll at the time of the inspection was 635, of whom 462 were boarders. Years 9 to 11 have 351 pupils (146 girls); the sixth form consists of 153 boys and 131 girls. Numbers have risen significantly in recent years. The Old Priory has been refurbished to comprise a library and learning resource centre and much of the boarding accommodation has also been extended and refurbished. Accommodation for English, art, drama and music has been improved by building and conversion, and a new double-sized, synthetic hockey pitch has further added to the sports facilities. The current headmaster and a number of senior staff have all been appointed since the last inspection in 2003.
- 1.5 The majority of pupils entering Repton in Year 9 do so via Common Entrance, with rather more than half from the local sister school. The vast majority stay on in the sixth form where they are joined by significant numbers from other schools. Almost all students leaving from Year 13 progress into higher education. The school offers a range of scholarships and bursaries.
- 1.6 Standardised tests indicate that the average ability of pupils in Years 9 to 11 is well above the national average, albeit in the lower part of this range, and that of sixth-form pupils is in line with the national average. If pupils perform in line with their ability, their A-level results will be in line with the average for all maintained schools and their GCSE results well above. Ninety-eight pupils have learning difficulties and 28 of them receive specialist support. English is not the principal language for 54 pupils, 17 of whom receive additional support.

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

School	NC name
B Block	Year 9
A Block	Year 10
O Block	Year 11
Lower Sixth	Year 12
Upper Sixth	Year 13

## 2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Pupils enjoy a rich educational experience, as they did at the time of the last inspection, an experience which meets the school's aim that "every Reptonian should become a fulfilled individual and responsible citizen with rigour in academic achievement and interests in sport, music and the arts....". The provision for those who are gifted or talented has improved considerably and is now outstanding, as are the opportunities for art, music and sport, and the school's excellent range and quality of extra-curricular activities enable pupils to develop the 'wholeness' which is central to its ethos. Nevertheless, in spite of some improvements, the provision for technology remains limited, as the school is aware, and the timetable structure in Years 10 and 11 limits the curriculum choice of a very few pupils.
- 2.2 The school gives prominence to the development of speaking, listening, literacy and numeracy, and pupils gain valuable experience in all areas of the curriculum. Since the last inspection, much has been done to review and evaluate the educational experience, and to make it more responsive to individual needs. The timetabled provision for aesthetic and creative development is still limited in Year 9 despite some improvements, but the extensive extra-curricular range of art, music and drama activities provides opportunities for pupils to gain in confidence and self-esteem, and these activities are encouraged and actively supported by enthusiastic staff. Technological development is less effective as the curriculum lacks balance in this area. Timetabled provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is satisfactory and there is evidence that it is used across other subjects. Considerable importance is attached to both recreational and competitive sport, which contributes greatly to pupils' physical well-being and their personal development. The school offers a broad range of subjects at both GCSE and A level.
- 2.3 A comprehensive personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme is taught by tutors in Years 9, 10 and 11, and through a discrete lesson in Year 10. This provision is supplemented by outside speakers on particular topics and by the useful contribution made by subjects across the curriculum. However, not all tutors are well equipped to teach PSHCE or aspects of it and monitoring is not effective enough; the experience in Year 10 is more coherent. Pupils' personal experience is further enriched by a particularly extensive range of extra-curricular sporting and cultural activities. Links with the community are strong. The Year 12 community placements, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award service section, fund-raising for local and national charities, and activities such as the choral society, which includes parents and villagers, all make a valuable contribution. Pupils are encouraged to carry out work experience after GCSE examinations and before application to university. No formal programme is in place and it is clear that many do not participate, though the school has its own database of work experience placements, as well as making use of the extensive Old Reptonian network and parents of current pupils.
- 2.4 Pupils are well prepared for adult life. A comprehensive, varied programme guides pupils through their GCSE and A-level option choices, gap-year opportunities, job possibilities and university applications. Key careers literature is available in all houses and in the central careers library. The programme is enhanced by the use of psychometric testing administered through the Independent Schools Careers Organisation (ISCO), talks, booklets and many single events such as The Careers Forum and the Gap Fair, all of which are also shared with parents and supported by Old Reptonians. Individual careers guidance is in the hands of tutors, who have ample resources, and from the head of careers and the director of university entrance. Preparation for university entrance is particularly effective.

- 2.5 The curriculum is planned coherently and set out in writing. In general, it provides equality of access and opportunity for all pupils and promotes participation in a wide range of activities, though some inflexibility in timetabling limits the opportunities for technology and also results in a few pupils not being able to choose a modern foreign language in Year 10. The excellent handbook for heads of department provides clear guidance on departmental planning and organisation. Nevertheless, the quality of planning varies and while some handbooks, such as the ones for history and geography, are excellent, others are too general and lack specific guidance for staff; a few are clearly not working documents.
- 2.6 Those pupils requiring help to allow them to access fully the curriculum receive effective help from the head of learning support. Pupils undergo standardised tests on entry, parents are informed if significant problems are discovered, and educational psychologists' reports are obtained where necessary. The head of learning support draws up detailed individual education plans (IEPs) with clear and detailed objectives for pupils. The register of pupils with learning difficulties, containing a comment on the nature of the need, the support provided and suggestions for teaching strategies, is revised three times a year and all teachers have copies. Summaries of need and appropriate teaching strategies are attached to each pupil's academic profile which is held on the school's database. The head of learning support liaises with heads of department to provide further advice. Targets are reviewed four times a year. The quality of individual support by the specialist teachers is good but staffing constraints mean that pupils occasionally have to do set work under supervision. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are also identified early and receive specialist help. A generic document provides advice for subject teachers on how to address the needs of these pupils.
- 2.7 The provision for pupils who are gifted and/or talented has improved considerably since the last inspection and is now excellent. The pupils are identified through testing or classroom observation and placed on a register which is updated regularly. Each department is required to have a policy for developing their potential. In some lessons, though by no means all, teachers provide extension tasks; in French and mathematics, the ablest pupils make accelerated progress through GCSE to AS and A2 level. Subject-based, academic societies, such as the history society, provide opportunities to explore topics in greater depth and whole-school academic societies such as the Ramsey and Temple societies offer opportunities on a cross-curricular basis. Pupils also attend courses in the national Young Gifted and Talented programme. Talented musicians and sportsmen and women have opportunities to reach the highest level of achievement through elite squads and high-quality ensembles.
- 2.8 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

### **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.9 The school is successful in fulfilling its aim to promote achievement and develop individual potential across a wide range of subjects and activities. Pupils achieve well in public examinations in relation to their abilities and have made good progress since the last inspection, particularly at A level. This achievement is matched by an abundance of individual and group successes in a wide range of extra-curricular pursuits. Pupils are hard working and enthusiastic and are competent learners, though the skills required to make independent study effective are unevenly developed.
- 2.10 Pupils think logically and have acquired good levels of mathematical and speaking skills commensurate with their abilities. Pupils are articulate, as they demonstrated in lessons, in interviews and in general conversation, but the skills of extended writing are not always well developed, though the quality of some essays in English, Spanish and history was high,

revealing a personal response. Pupils demonstrate good ICT skills in ICT lessons and have opportunities to apply them in other subjects. Creative skills are well-developed, particularly in art subjects and music, and standards in all of these are outstanding.

- 2.11 GCSE results are far above the average for all maintained schools and in line with the averages for maintained selective schools. This represents good achievement. The proportion of A\* and A grades is more than four times the national average. The A-level results have improved considerably since the last inspection and are well above the average for all maintained schools, representing a very good performance, since available evidence indicates that the ability of the pupils on roll is average. The proportion of A and B grades has increased substantially since 2005 and in 2007 was the highest in the school's history. Standardised measures indicate that progress to GCSE and A level is well above national norms. No significant difference was found between different groups of pupils, subject or curricular areas.
- 2.12 In line with the school's aim for pupils to fulfil their potential in all spheres of activity, achievement is not confined to academic subjects. Pupils have distinguished themselves both as individuals and as members of teams in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Sport is particularly strong and teams perform well in county and regional tournaments. Boys and girls gain selection for county and regional teams in virtually all sports in which the school participates, and a number have achieved international recognition. This high level of individual performance is matched by depth; in each year group several teams are fielded to ensure that all who wish to represent the school have a chance to do so. The school's achievement in sport was recognised in 2008 when it was named Independent School of the Year in a national newspaper's 'School Sport Matters' awards.
- 2.13 Music, drama and art are also strong. Nearly half the pupils have instrumental lessons or perform in musical events. Numerous ensembles give concerts throughout the region and a number of pupils perform with the National Youth Orchestra and the National Youth Choir. Many pupils are involved in drama taking part in a full programme of house and school plays. In 2007, the history of Repton was presented in a 'Son et Lumiere'; the show ran for four nights and involved over 100 pupils. Art studios are open out of school hours and are popular with pupils who produce work of a high standard in their free time, encouraged by the artists in residence. The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme is popular and each year significant numbers gain their gold award. Pupils are successful in the Mathematics Olympiad and a number have won Arkwright scholarships. Conscious of their privileged position, pupils raise considerable sums for local, national and international charities.
- 2.14 Pupils' ability to study and make notes is developed unevenly across the subjects. It is good in English, history and religious studies, particularly in the sixth form but weaker in a number of subjects which rely too heavily on worksheets, dictated notes and printed handouts. Independent learning is one of the four strands of the academic development plan but, whilst progress has been made in this area, it is not a strong feature, as many of the tasks given are too tightly circumscribed and exploration is not sufficiently encouraged. The school is aware of this relative weakness and is addressing it. Nevertheless, in art, pupils develop their own conceptual ideas for their projects and portfolios, and in music Years 11 and 13 pupils independently organise and compose music using ICT. Much of the coursework, particularly at A level, was of a high standard.
- 2.15 Pupils work well co-operatively and are very tolerant towards one another, irrespective of ability differences. A Year 9 English group working on a poem gained in confidence as they worked in groups and demonstrated increasingly mature analysis. At an informal evening rehearsal of a Year 12 theatre studies scripted drama performance, pupils perfected and

refined their collective performance without adult guidance. Their skill, initiative and motivation as a cast were most impressive.

- 2.16 In general, a notable feature of the school is the rapidity with which pupils settle into their tasks. The enjoyment of study was evident in a large number of lessons, particularly where different styles of teaching were used and learning was fun. Pupils feel they make progress and are pleased with their achievement: at all ages they are willing to persevere at tasks in order to learn.

### **Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils**

- 2.17 The personal development of the individual is at the heart of the school's philosophy, and pupils at Repton show outstanding spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, as they did at the time of the last inspection. Pupils develop high self-esteem whilst remaining mindful of the needs and claims of other members of the school community and of the world beyond the school gates. The school's Christian ethos, the influence of the chaplaincy and the strong house system are all contributory factors, and the school's own efforts to promote and monitor personal development are having increasing effect. An audit of the spiritual, moral and cultural provision within curriculum subjects was undertaken in 2008 and now informs schemes of work in all departments.
- 2.18 Pupils show strong spiritual awareness; they are confident, considerate to others and morally aware, and the school is a tolerant and inclusive community. The many activities offered by the school enable pupils to develop self-esteem, self-confidence and knowledge of self. The Christian values that are the school's inheritance are evident in the pupils' everyday dealings with one another. Worship in the chapel is fundamental to the spiritual life of the community and offers pupils the opportunities to explore values and beliefs; they are stimulated to consider issues of spiritual awareness and knowledge of self. The chaplaincy plays a central role in the spiritual and personal development of the pupils. Within the curriculum, pupils have the opportunity to evaluate and discuss ethical and moral issues. For example, a Year 13 ethics and philosophy lesson discussed the relationship between moral behaviour and life after death. Extra-curricular activities such as the Christian Forum and the Fisher Society further promote pupils' spiritual development.
- 2.19 The school has high expectations of pupils' conduct and behaviour and pupils develop strong moral values. Pupils are set a good example by staff, both teaching and non-teaching, and are well able to distinguish between right and wrong. Standards of behaviour are generally high; pupils are sensitive to the needs of others and treat their fellows with respect and kindness. Pupils are encouraged to think of the effect of their actions on others and on the whole school community, and for the most part do so. The school has a clear code of conduct which pupils understand and respect, and misdemeanours are dealt with firmly but sensitively. The ethos of the school with its values and standards promotes moral development. Numerous opportunities through chapel assemblies, PSHCE, tutorials and much of the curriculum ensure that pupils are challenged to consider their responses to moral issues. A Year 10 PSHCE lesson about relationships touched on marriage break-up and a Year 11 physics lesson about fission and fusion discussed the ethics of nuclear power.
- 2.20 Pupils develop extremely well socially, accept responsibility for their behaviour, show initiative and understand how they can contribute to community life. Boarding houses reinforce the sense of family and community and provide opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills. House-based dining arrangements also promote very strong social development. Pupils identify strongly with their houses and take pride in representing them in the various house competitions. The qualities of leadership and teamwork are strong through the many activities which allow pupils to work as teams and take responsibility as

prefects, heads of houses and sports captains and within the Combined Cadet Force (CCF). The preparation and training given to prefects is a particular strength of the social development of senior pupils. Trips, adventurous pursuits and residential visits in this country and abroad provide further opportunities for pupils to develop socially. The PSHCE course provides regular input into pupils' education as citizens, and they acquire a sound knowledge of social and political institutions. The school's ethos is reflected in fund-raising and in voluntary work, most notably community action, to which many pupils give considerable time and effort. Pupils are aware that they are privileged, and work hard and successfully to help those in need through fund-raising for charitable causes, often initiating projects themselves and raising very considerable sums.

- 2.21 The school provides excellent opportunities for cultural enrichment and development. The music and drama traditions are strong and many pupils are accomplished performers who enrich the cultural dimension of the school through their participation in concerts and plays, both in school in house competitions and before the public. Pupils' creative art work displayed around the school is an inspiration to others and they gain considerably from working alongside artists in residence. Tolerance and harmony are strengths of the school and the presence of pupils of other nationalities in the houses contributes much to pupils' personal development. Through the RS programme, pupils learn about all the main religions, taking a comparative view of their faith practices and ethical positions on topics such as relationships, wealth and poverty and the environment. An aim for the current year is to develop further pupils' awareness of global and national perspectives and virtually all departments are contributing to this theme. Numerous overseas school visits, including music tours, to Italy, France, USA, Costa Rica and China, encourage the understanding and tolerance of different cultural traditions.
- 2.22 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

### **The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)**

- 2.23 The quality of teaching is good, maintaining the standard found at the last inspection. A significant number of lessons seen were excellent and occasionally inspirational. A minority of lessons, while competent, were insufficiently challenging and not well enough adapted to the aptitudes of the pupils. Teachers are conscientious, plan their lessons well and use their enthusiasm and good subject knowledge to benefit the pupils. Teaching is thorough, classroom relations are excellent, and pupils appreciate the support they are given. Assessment procedures have improved since the last inspection, and the school is building a useful data base of assessment information which heads of department are beginning to use to inform teaching and planning.
- 2.24 Since the last inspection, the school has done useful work through in-service training to expand the range of teaching styles and encourage independent learning, and this is beginning to have an effect but has yet to be translated into consistent practice. There is evidence of excellent teaching, but opportunities to share good practice through classroom observation by peers are too limited.
- 2.25 As is evident from the examination results, the committed and skilful teaching enables all pupils to achieve at least good results in relation to their ability, including those with learning difficulties or for whom English is an additional language. Teachers are well qualified and knowledgeable and, in many lessons, their enthusiasm for their subjects is matched by the pupils with equal enthusiasm, as they apply themselves to the tasks set. Year 13 pupils discussing the origins of The Depression were encouraged to contribute the results of their own researches to provide fuller answers for the group, for example. Expert sports coaching

- ensures that pupils are inspired to reach high and even international standards. Working with committed artists encourages pupils to emulate them.
- 2.26 In almost all lessons, pupils behave well and show respect for both teachers and their peers. Lessons are conducted in a friendly manner and teachers generally have a good rapport with their classes, and this encourages an atmosphere of supportive learning. In the best lessons, this rapport is enhanced by techniques that both challenge and involve the pupils actively in their learning, such as in a Year 9 lesson on designing an animal to survive in a desired environment. On the whole, pupils enjoy their lessons; even when the teaching is less stimulating they generally work with focus, care and co-operation to ensure learning.
- 2.27 Teachers know their pupils well and this is one of the school's strengths. They also have information provided by standardised tests, the new and increasingly comprehensive pupil database and IEPs which allow them to have a clearer understanding of pupils' aptitudes, needs and prior attainment. As a result, more lessons are well planned and varied and employ techniques consistent with the learning styles of the pupils. For example, a sixth-form group, studying America in the 1920s, was presented with tasks that matched their learning requirements. Currently, however, not enough use of this information is being made to indicate which teaching strategies should be used. There was little evidence in many lessons of matching tasks to the needs of those with learning difficulties or English as a second language, though both these groups enjoy skilled specialist teaching.
- 2.28 The school has ample high quality resources with which to teach the curriculum in all areas of the school, and they are well used. The library, which was criticised at the time of the last inspection, has been fully refurbished and restocked to a high standard, and is managed by a qualified librarian. It is now an excellent and well-used resource. Music provision is extremely good as is the new language centre which has added an extra dimension to language teaching. Most rooms have computers with inter-active whiteboards or data projectors, and in a number of lessons the use of ICT added significantly to the impact and enjoyment of the teaching. In 2006, teaching accommodation was reorganised and grouped by subject to the advantage of most subjects, but academic PE accommodation is cramped and science accommodation is in need of refurbishment, though ambitious plans have been prepared to remedy the latter.
- 2.29 The standard of assessment has improved since the last inspection and is more consistent across departments. Teachers complete regular and thorough assessment of pupils' work and use this information increasingly to monitor their progress. On average, pupils have two sets of examinations and four sets of mid-term assessments (MAs) each year. Furthermore, full reports are issued termly for all pupils. After each set of MAs or reports, pupils are interviewed by their tutors who give guidance as to future strategies. Pupils understand the grading on both MAs and reports and find it useful, though there is an inconsistency of grading in lower ability sets where attainment grades may be more optimistic than is warranted in order to give encouragement.
- 2.30 Most teachers mark work regularly, and some departments go through assignments thoroughly and discuss difficulties in class time. However, marking is uneven between and within departments and sometimes does not conform to the school marking policy. Some teachers write excellent diagnostic comments and clear indications on how pupils might improve, but often this is not the case and pupils receive bland comments of encouragement or simply ticks and a score.

- 2.31 The main advance since the last inspection has been in the use of standardised tests to establish a baseline from which to calculate pupils' progress to GCSE and A level. A very good management information system is in place which allows departments to enter assessment data and examination results and to monitor pupils' progress and set targets. Departments have received training in the use of this information and they are increasingly using it to evaluate and inform their planning and teaching, though the school recognises that this is still at an early stage. Senior management carries out a detailed analysis of examination results, calculating the overall achievement of each department and holding it to account.
- 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 The high quality of pastoral care, welfare, health and safety noted in the last report has been improved further. It is now excellent, and supports the school's aim to develop young men and women with self-esteem and confidence in their own abilities, as well as respect and responsibility for others. Tutors know their pupils well and give them every support. Informal relationships are excellent. The school has a comprehensive welfare policy, and health and safety standards are maintained in exemplary fashion throughout the school. Since the last report, further steps have been taken to ensure that standards of care are consistent across all houses, pupil welfare plans have been drawn up and a central bullying log is in place. Measures to secure pupils' welfare, health and safety are exemplary.
- 3.2 Tutors are central to the pastoral care system; they monitor pupils' personal development and academic progress and display high standards of care. House tutor groups are formed on a year basis for Years 9 to 11 and receive valued support from the tutor and the house. Sixth-form pupils are allocated tutors on an individual basis; this provision is less well co-ordinated and sometimes less effective. Day pupils are fully integrated into their houses; they have lunch there and are expected to stay until nine o'clock in the evening, taking part in all house activities. Pupils feel secure and valued and know that they always have a member of staff to whom to turn. Both parents and pupils expressed their appreciation of the quality of care and support.
- 3.3 Dedicated and effective housemasters and housemistresses are the lynchpins of the system. They set the tone and character of the houses, allocate tutors to Lower School forms and monitor their roles. The weekly, minuted meetings between housemasters and housemistresses, chaired by the headmaster, provide effective communication and ensure that all pupils are kept under review so that problems can be resolved quickly.
- 3.4 The quality of relationships is excellent throughout the school. Pupils speak highly of their teachers in all aspects of school life and believe that teachers genuinely care about their well-being. Mutual respect, between teachers and pupils and among the pupils themselves, is evident, and pupils respond extremely well to the school's encouragement to care for and show respect to others.
- 3.5 The school has an outstandingly strong community spirit, and this in itself engenders good discipline and behaviour. Pupils do not want to let down themselves, their school, or their peers. Effective policies to promote good discipline and behaviour deal constructively with unacceptable behaviour when it occurs. Pupils are clear that incidents of bullying are rare and that they are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The school has high expectations of pupils' behaviour and manners, exemplified by lunch taken in houses, which is a most civilised social occasion. Pupils look after and converse with guests with a maturity beyond their years. Pupils report that disciplined activity and good behaviour are the norm and disapprove strongly of any pupils who let down the school. They understand that rules are necessary in a civilised society, and peers help to maintain the respectful environment which the school enjoys. Prefects play an important part in the pastoral care system. Once selected, they undergo training, including with regard to bullying and child protection; they enjoy both status and respect for the role they play.

- 3.6 Practice in respect of child protection is exemplary. The child protection officers have received enhanced training, which is updated every two years. One of the governors has been designated to be responsible for child protection matters; she updates the comprehensive policy and reports to the board of governors annually. The school carries out comprehensive checks on the suitability of staff. All staff, teaching and non-teaching, have detailed documentation on the subject of child protection and their training is updated regularly during staff training days. Child protection training forms part of the induction process for all new members of staff. Registration is carried out efficiently, using an electronic system, the information being stored on disk. The admission register is also electronic and contains all necessary information.
- 3.7 The general provision for the welfare, health and safety of pupils is excellent. All health and safety policies are in place and are revised regularly. Incidents are reviewed at a termly meeting of the health and safety committee, the minutes of which are reviewed by a governor with specific health and safety responsibilities. The twice-yearly audit of health and safety is conducted by an external consultant. He submits reports on each visit to the bursar, who takes follow-up action with the relevant heads of departments and line managers. The reports are also copied to the nominated governor. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken; regular fire practices are logged and timed. Training in fire safety is part of the induction process for new staff and is renewed periodically. Full risk assessments are undertaken and these are reviewed annually.
- 3.8 The school has a comprehensive first aid policy and medical care is well organised. The medical centre is well equipped and is staffed by qualified personnel. Doctors from a local medical practice with which the school has close relations visit the school on a daily basis. The medical staff keep detailed, computerised records and pass all relevant information to pastoral and house staff at the end of the day. Pupils have access to a counsellor and relevant telephone numbers are posted on house notice boards. More than twenty staff, including all matrons, hold the qualification for first aid in the workplace, and a further seventeen have a general first aid qualification. The three-year accessibility plan under the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Act (SENDA) is up to date and all measures are being taken.
- 3.9 The system of house dining adds to the family feel, though inadequate monitoring means that the quality of food varies between the houses. The best meals are tasty, nutritious and healthy. Houses operate pupil food committees, which make sensible suggestions for further changes. The school encourages a healthy life style amongst its pupils by ensuring that they have a minimum of three hours exercise each week.
- 3.10 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**

- 3.11 The school has excellent links with the community and good links with parents, maintaining and in some cases improving the standards noted at the time of the last inspection. Parents are very happy with the quality of education that their children receive; they are well integrated into the life of the school and well informed about their children's progress and achievement, although end-of-term reporting has some shortcomings. The school makes a considerable contribution to the local community.

- 3.12 Nearly half the parents completed the pre-inspection questionnaire, and the vast majority of parents expressed satisfaction with the education their children receive. A substantial number went out of their way to express how highly they thought of the school and how happy their children were. In relation to only two areas did a significant minority of parents express concern, namely parents' involvement in the life of the school and the level of information and opportunities to discuss their child's progress. However, the inspection team considers that parents have plenty of opportunities to be involved in the life of the school through attending matches, concerts, drama performances, art exhibitions and charity fund-raising and social events. The team also considers that parents receive ample and relevant information about the school through the welcome packs for parents and pupils, the guides for option choices, university entrance, newsletters, interim grades and reports. Formal consultation evenings are held once a year for each year group (twice for Year 9), but where issues arise there is easy communication by email, telephone and face to face. Each pupil and teacher has a school email address and parents are able to email staff.
- 3.13 The school has a useful and informative website which is in the process of being updated for September 2009 when it will give parents the latest news from the school and added information through an online calendar of events. School policies in relation to anti-bullying and child protection are available for parents on the current school website and will be easier to find on the new one.
- 3.14 Parents are well informed about their children's progress through interim assessments which occur five times a year and end-of-term reports, three times a year. Discussions between pupils and tutors enable pupils to look at their strengths and areas for improvement. Nevertheless, the system has some weaknesses. The basis for attainment grades is not fully explained and the ones used in Years 10 and 11 do not necessarily correspond to GCSE grades in the lower sets. The quality of end-of-term reports is variable; whilst some are excellent, others are bland and do not give a clear picture as to what has been covered and what achieved, or give advice on how pupils can improve.
- 3.15 The ready availability of the headmaster, senior management, and housemasters and housemistresses means that most parental concerns are dealt with informally, speedily and sensitively. For the few more difficult issues, the school has a comprehensive complaints procedure which is available to parents on the school's website. Examination of documentation and correspondence indicates that such matters are dealt with thoroughly.
- 3.16 Through a wide variety of activities the school promotes excellent links with the local and wider community. The annual 'Sale of Work' involves members of the local community, staff, parents, governors and all pupils in fund raising activities to support over 50 local, national and international charities and organisations. A substantial number of Year 12 pupils are involved in community service on a weekly basis within the local area, with a number visiting the elderly or helping in primary schools and with riding for the disabled. Many school events are open to the local community, for example the public lecture programme, the music society, plays and concerts, notably the subscription concert series. Local residents and groups use the school's facilities.
- 3.17 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

## **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.18 The quality of the boarding provision at Repton School is excellent. It is a positive and enjoyable experience and, in accordance with its aims, makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development. Relationships are generally excellent both among pupils and between pupils and staff, and pupils feel well looked after. Both pupils and parents value greatly the benefits of the boarding experience and see it as the outstanding feature of the school. Since the last inspection, steps have been taken successfully to improve the consistency of practice between houses and the school has continued to refurbish and upgrade accommodation as necessary.
- 3.19 The Ofsted boarding inspection of 2007 concluded the provision was good overall; in two of the five categories it was graded outstanding and in the other three it was graded good. The Ofsted inspection team found no serious shortcomings and the recommendations made, in the areas of information sharing, appointment procedures and appraisal for matrons, have all been carried out.
- 3.20 Housemasters and housemistresses are most effective and give each house a distinctive character whilst respecting the need for consistency; they are valued by parents and widely respected by pupils. The deputy head (pastoral), who is also head of boarding, meets housemasters and housemistresses weekly to discuss pupil issues and to ensure that procedures are harmonised. Matrons are also key figures, often acting in a pastoral or counselling role. All are trained in child protection procedures. All those associated with boarding are appraised in that role and some are taking professional qualifications to prepare them for future boarding roles.
- 3.21 Relationships between pupils, and between pupils and the boarding staff, are excellent. Pupils are positive and supportive of one another and a relaxed, warm and friendly atmosphere prevails in all the boarding houses. Excellent relationships exist between pupils in different year groups. The sense of community is strong and inter-house competitions are hotly contested. Roles such as head of house and house prefect are taken seriously; they regard their principal role as encouraging and fostering house spirit. The house prefect system encourages responsibility and develops leadership skills.
- 3.22 In the evenings, apart from organised prep, there are often rehearsals and activities such as discussion groups, and pupils have access to the sports hall. Computers are available in the library and in each house; pupils have controlled internet access and individual email accounts so that they can keep in easy contact with their families. Individual houses run activities and outings both at weekends and on occasional evenings. The social events on a Saturday evening are very popular.
- 3.23 The boarding accommodation is of a high standard and a comprehensive programme of refurbishment ensures that the houses have a homely feel. All houses have a room dedicated to computer use, games rooms and a good range of well-equipped common rooms and good use is made of these. Rooms are pleasantly decorated with attractive modern furniture and public spaces have examples of pupils' art.

## **4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The board of governors has made an excellent contribution to the recent development of the school, particularly in the areas of strategic planning and financial management, and as guardians of the aims, ethos and traditions of the school. The governors are very well organised, take seriously their responsibilities as ‘critical friends’ and hold the school to account. They are actively involved in the life of the school.
- 4.2 The governing body of twenty members, including four hereditary governors, two representatives of Oxford and Cambridge, one elected by the teaching staff and a significant number of former pupils, has a wide range of professional, commercial and educational experience. Governors have a five-year term of office renewable until age seventy-five. The balance of expertise is kept under review by the chairman who has a list of potential governors; the appointment procedure is informal but all necessary checks are carried out. A standing committee and five sub-committees provide expert advice for different areas of school activity. The main governing body meets three times a year and the sub-committees two or three times. The system works well and minutes of meetings indicate that decisions are taken after lively and well-informed debate. The result is a well-considered development plan and a sound financial base.
- 4.3 The governing body is a member of the professional associations for governing bodies and boarding schools, and takes advantage of their in-service training, for instance in: child protection, the Charities Act, boarding provision and governor induction. Specific governors have responsibility for child protection, health and safety and risk assessment; they sit on the relevant committees, report to the governing body and are responsible for the annual review of the policies. The education sub-committee reviews the curriculum twice a year; at each meeting an academic department makes a presentation. As a result of pursuing a prudent financial policy, the governors have been able to effect improvements to all aspects of the school, as well as investing in a substantial programme of works, including the refurbishment of the Old Priory, the Old Mitre buildings and a number of boarding houses. Further major projects such as the theatre complex and the science centre are at an advanced stage of preparation.
- 4.4 The chairman is in regular contact with the school and local governors are frequent visitors, lunching in houses, seeing the school in operation and attending functions. These responsibilities and the various reports ensure that the governors have a very clear knowledge and understanding of the working of the school.

## **The Quality of Leadership and Management**

- 4.5 Leadership is outstanding and management is effective. Clear and decisive direction by the headmaster and senior management has brought improvements since the last inspection in all aspects of the school's activity, while maintaining and developing the school's core values. Academic results have improved, a new management structure has been created and the rigorous appraisal scheme has brought about greater consistency of performance. Staff, pupils and parents are aware of the improvements and are confident in the direction in which the school is moving. This confidence is confirmed by the substantial increase in the number of pupils on roll.
- 4.6 The school successfully fulfils its aims, achieving high standards in all areas of activity and in personal development, maintaining, through excellent pastoral care and the boarding experience, an ethos in which all are valued equally and the sense of family and community is strong.
- 4.7 The management structure has developed considerably since the last inspection and most of the senior managers, including the headmaster, have been appointed since that time. Members of the senior management team have clear responsibilities and carry them out efficiently, setting high standards whilst supporting those for whom they are responsible. They combine to form a very effective unit. Middle managers, including heads of department and heads of houses, are aware of their responsibilities and carry them out conscientiously, though the school recognises that they vary in their effectiveness.
- 4.8 The school's development plans are the result of a careful analysis of current performance and extensive consultation with interested parties. Priorities are clear to all, and all contribute to achieving them. Departmental heads submit their own costed development plans which are scrutinised carefully to ensure they are consistent with the overall plan. All necessary school policies are suitable and are reviewed every year in respect of child protection and health and safety and every two years for the rest. Managers at all levels are monitored regularly to ensure that they are fulfilling their responsibilities, though inconsistencies in the application of policies suggest that this monitoring is not rigorous enough. The school is aware of this and is putting in place a system of departmental review.
- 4.9 The school has a sufficient number of experienced and well-qualified staff. Recruitment procedures are secure and all necessary checks have been made, including those with the Criminal Records Bureau. The school participates in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers (NQTs), though there are currently none in the school. NQTs and teachers new to the school have found the induction process to be comprehensive, efficient and supportive. Communication is good, helped by regular staff briefings. Consultation procedures are excellent; regular, minuted meetings at all levels and clear ground rules ensure that all have an opportunity to contribute to the formation of school policy. The appraisal scheme is comprehensive and rigorous and has served the school well, but the model is time-consuming and consideration is being given to sharing the responsibility with more of the senior management team. Staff development is an important part of management; it is supported by substantial funding and priorities are increasingly being determined by the outcomes of appraisal.
- 4.10 Non-teaching staff are also well organised. Regular, minuted meetings of individual sections, and of section heads with the bursar, ensure that communication is generally effective. Non-teaching staff do not yet benefit from an appraisal and development scheme and not all feel that they are valued and are part of the school community. Nevertheless, all work with great commitment. The administration of this complex organisation is most efficient.

- 
- 4.11 Rigorous financial management has resulted in a plentiful supply of high quality resources in all areas. Budgetary proposals are subject to detailed scrutiny before being approved. The refurbishment, reorganisation and restocking of the library has resulted in a first class resource which is very well managed. Accommodation is constantly upgraded, though increasing numbers mean that space is sometimes at a premium, resulting in some limitation of activity. The standard of boarding accommodation is excellent, thanks to a rolling programme of refurbishment.
- 4.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

### Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 Repton School meets its aims and aspirations to a high degree. The broad range of academic experience, with very strong art, music and drama, is complemented by an equally broad range of sporting and other activities which make an important contribution to pupils' personal development. The whole experience is pervaded by a sense of community, to which teachers, pupils and all others who work at the school contribute in equal measure. At the heart of the community is the outstanding boarding experience. Pupils' personal development is excellent in all respects and they leave school as mature, confident young adults with well-developed self-belief and high moral standards. Mutual care and respect characterise all relationships. Links with parents are strong and the school contributes considerably to the wider community. Academic standards are good in relation to pupils' abilities and are matched by high standards in sporting and cultural activities. Links with parents are strong, although reporting has some shortcomings. The school's success is the consequence of skilled and dedicated teaching, a highly effective and committed governing body, and exceptional leadership by the headmaster and his senior colleagues. Management is strong overall but the school is aware that monitoring is not yet sufficiently rigorous and the role of middle managers is not fully developed. The appraisal scheme, which has been very effective, has not been sufficiently shared with senior colleagues.
- 5.2 The school has made considerable progress since the last ISI inspection and where standards were already high they have been maintained. The recommendation made at that time to improve the library provision has been amply addressed. A substantial programme of building works has taken place. Examination results have improved, particularly at A level where the proportion of A and B grades is at an all-time high. Results in activities, music, art and sport have also improved and include a national award for sports excellence. The school has made considerable progress in the development of learning support and in enabling the gifted and talented to achieve their potential. The introduction of the pupil database and the extension and analysis of standardised tests are having an increasing impact on teaching strategies but the school is aware that they are not yet fully developed.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 The quality of provision is such that there are no major weaknesses. To make further progress the school should:
1. further develop the management structure, concentrating on the role and effectiveness of middle managers and on the monitoring process;
  2. continue to refine assessment procedures, the use made of assessment data and the quality of reporting.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2009. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and the medical centre. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

### List of Inspectors

Mr John Marshall	Reporting Inspector
Mr Alan Cooper	Professional Tutor, HMC school
Mrs Vivienne Durham	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Joan Mumby	Headmistress, ISA school
Mrs Anne Musgrove	Houseparent, HMC school
Mr Stephen Roberts	Headmaster, HMC school
Mr Peter Williams	Former Headmaster, ISA school