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Chairman of Governors**

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Dear Parents

**ISI Inspection March 2004: Senior School**

I am delighted to write with details of the Inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI). There are many things to celebrate and some to consider.

**APPROACH TO INSPECTION**

The Governing Body takes Inspection particularly seriously. In recent years there have been alterations and improvements in events, premises, management systems, and many other aspects of school life. Governors were keen to have both Senior and Junior Schools inspected simultaneously and to commission substantial teams to do so. This subjected the detail of school life to the greatest possible scrutiny. We know that parents and staff would not wish it otherwise, though I am conscious of the pressures which this placed on the Headmaster and Common Room, not least since this is the first term in which ISI have looked at the many legal requirements imposed by the new Education Act.

**AVAILABILITY OF REPORTS**

Governors had already decided to make the full text of both reports available to parents. A copy accompanies. There is also a section of the website devoted to Inspection.

**BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT**

The Senior School was last inspected in 1998. There were eight recommendations:

• A school development plan	• Improved pastoral care
• An effective management team	• Effective independent study
• Improved staff training	• Extended community links
• An ICT policy and improved ICT	• A Health and Safety policy

The 2004 Report concludes that PGS has moved forward very purposefully since its previous inspection. More remarkably it observes that a number of aspects previously considered in need of improvement have since become major strengths. Governors are delighted at this accolade for the vigorous way in which the school has responded to the previous Inspection. We have every intention of repeating this approach.

## THE BASIC OPERATIONS OF THE SCHOOL

PGS divides its operations into three parts (academic, pastoral and extra curricular), and it seeks to offer the highest standards in each. The Report offers great encouragement in each respect.

- **Academic.** The Report notes ‘significant improvements in both attainment and pupils’ progress.’ Inspectors look not only at public exam results but also at entrance standards. They also make comparisons with other schools. They conclude that ‘Results in GCSE and A Level are consistently *far above* those of comparable schools.’ The italicised words are a form of Inspection code: *far above* indicates the highest accolade the Inspectors can give. I congratulate all pupils and staff on this magnificent achievement.
- **Pastoral.** Since the school went independent there have been constant efforts to raise standards of pastoral care. It is excellent now to read that ‘the quality of pastoral care is very good and a major strength of the school.’
- **Extra Curricular Activity.** This has likewise has been found a major strength. My colleagues and I were particularly delighted to hear, for example, that the weakest as well as the strongest pupils receive high quality coaching in sport.

## OTHER STRENGTHS

The Report contains much praise for PGS pupils (eg the quality of their learning, their attitudes, their behaviour, and their relationships with staff), as also for our academic departments. It is excellent to read of some outstanding teaching. Elsewhere, there is praise for our extended premises, the very good quality of resources for learning, the very good provision for spiritual, moral, cultural and social development, and the outstanding programme of links with the community. The Inspectors consider Governors’ aims clear and systems efficient, and remark that the Bursar exerts tight controls. The Headmaster is described as providing ‘visionary and strong leadership’ whilst remaining readily accessible to parents and pupils. He is ‘ably and well supported’ by his senior team.

## MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS

The school has been found to have no serious weaknesses and there is much rejoicing at the fact that, by contrast with the previous Report, there are only two recommendations. Governors intend to address these immediately.

- **Library.** The new Library would already have been completed had Cambridge House not unexpectedly come on the market in 2000. The plans are most exciting. Work will commence before the end of this term.
- **Spreading best practice.** The Inspectors found many examples of academic and pastoral best practice. They felt that we should be spreading this, and that at present there are too many examples of unevenness. A full professional development programme will be in place before the end of the autumn term.

## CONCLUSION

There are many other strengths mentioned in the Report, and, as is only to be expected, a number of additional suggestions for improvement. May I thank all parents, not only for their general support of the school, but also most particularly for the help they have given over the Inspection, in responding to surveys over a period of years, as well as by returning, in large number, the Inspection questionnaire. The school is deeply fortunate in the energy, loyalty and good will of its parental body. I commend this Report to parents, again congratulate all whom the Report praises, and look forward with confidence and excitement to the years ahead.

Yours sincerely