

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Cothill House

Full Name of the School	<b>Cothill House</b>
DCSF Number	<b>931/6075</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>309639</b>
Address	<b>Cothill, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX13 6JL.</b>
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Email Address	<b>office@cothill.net</b>
Headmaster	<b>Mr Neil Brooks</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>The Rt Hon Lord Wakeham, DL</b>
Age Range	<b>8 to 13</b>
Gender	<b>Boys</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> November 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.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Characteristics of the School

- 1.1 Cothill House is a boys' boarding school set in extensive grounds in rural Oxfordshire. It was founded in 1860 at Packington Hall and moved to its present site in 1870. Since 1967 it has been run by the Cothill Educational Trust. In addition to Cothill, the trust has owned a château at Sauveterre in France since 1988 and now owns four other schools and a science centre. Inspectors made a visit to Chandlings Manor School where the Year 8 pupils from Cothill House have their boarding accommodation. No visit was made to Sauveterre, but as all Year 7 pupils spend one term there, being taught entirely in French and playing a part in the local French community, inspectors both discussed and considered the impact that experience had on pupils' education as a whole.
- 1.2 The current headmaster has been in post since 2003 having been on the staff for some years. His predecessor is in charge of all the trust's schools in his role as Principal. He is involved in overall strategic direction and financial management, but leaves day-to-day running to those in charge. He is also, and has been for some years, a governor.
- 1.3 All pupils in the school are boarders and all are boys. Currently 240 pupils in Years 4 to 8 are on the school roll, with the size of year groups increasing towards the top of the school. The majority of pupils come from the south-east and are preparing to move on to boarding public schools, mainly those catering only for boys. Most pupils come from pre-prep or prep schools, including some from the trust's own schools and a few from overseas British communities. Fourteen boys have English as an additional language (EAL), six of whom receive support for this. Very few pupils are from ethnic minorities.
- 1.4 Pupils are largely from professional backgrounds. They are admitted after an acquaintance morning but without formal testing. Their ability range is broad but above the national average, being typical of the socio-economic background from which they come. Sixty boys have been identified by the school as requiring learning support. No pupils have statements of educational need. A small number of boys receive sibling discount and five receive funding from the Ministry of Defence or the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.
- 1.5 The school aims to treat each boy as an individual, build confidence and nourish qualities of kindness and consideration. It aims to send boys on to their senior schools well prepared for the challenges and opportunities that they will encounter.
- 1.6 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
Sixes	Year 4
Fives	Year 5
Lower Removes	Year 6
Middle Removes	Year 7
Removes, IA and IS	Year 8

## **2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

### **The Educational Experience Provided**

- 2.1 The school provides an excellent all-round education consistent with its declared aims and philosophy. All pupils are treated as individuals and their needs are extremely well catered for in a caring environment. This results in excellent preparation for the demanding challenges they will meet in the next stage of their education.
- 2.2 Since the last inspection the library and information and communications technology (ICT) facilities have been improved. The library provides a splendid resource for pupils with a large selection of books housed in a particularly attractive environment. Independent research skills are encouraged, and all boys are taught study skills in Years 7 and 8. The art and pottery facilities have been extended and the school has addressed the provision of personal, social and health education (PSHE). A planned programme of PSHE is now taught by form tutors. Interactive whiteboards have been introduced together with appropriate training for staff in their use. General Studies has been introduced for all year groups. The PE provision has been enhanced with gymnastics now taught in Years 4 and 5, with older boys being able to opt for this in their activity time.
- 2.3 The school provides an outstanding range and variety of educational experiences consistent with its aims. The pupils are confident and look forward to new challenges. The experiences enjoyed by them include academic, sporting, artistic, creative and technical activities, and the choice of over forty extra-curricular activities caters for their interests and skills. Involvement in team sports and in musical ensembles helps them to grow in self-esteem and self-confidence. The behaviour of the pupils is exemplary in all areas of the school, in class, in the corridors, in the dining room and in the play areas. They enjoy art, pottery, design and woodwork in clubs, in their free time and if they are unable to take part in the games programme.
- 2.4 Pupils are given many opportunities for their talents to be nurtured and this enables them to make excellent progress in their particular spheres. Boys who excel at sport are able to join rugby and cricket clubs outside school as well as playing for school teams. Talented musicians and artists are encouraged to enter for scholarships. School colours are awarded to boys who excel and who are committed to an area of expertise, be it in drama, music equestrian or other pursuits. Distinctions are awarded by the headmaster for excellence in any aspect of school life.
- 2.5 The curriculum as a whole gives all pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific and technological development as well as providing outstanding opportunities for aesthetic and creative development through the arts. The music department runs both a junior and senior choir, orchestra, wind group, jazz band and brass group among others, which many of the pupils take part in with great enjoyment. Speaking and listening skills are enhanced in English, as well as debating and public speaking skills. Concerts and plays provide the pupils with the chance to perform in public, thus contributing to their aesthetic and creative development.
- 2.6 The pupils' experience of personal, social and health education reflects the school's aims and ethos. The school enjoys a wide range of extra-curricular activities, links with the community and charitable work. Debating, film making, fencing, karate, chess, squash and climbing are just a few of the wonderful opportunities for boys of all ages at Cothill House. Lecturers are invited to visit the school and speak on a variety of subjects from the Army to global warming. Recently a tetraplegic man spoke to the boys about how he copes with his

- disabilities. Another lecturer spoke about the trail to Titicaca. The school has raised considerable sums of money for charity.
- 2.7 The boys are well prepared to move on to their senior schools through thorough preparation for common entrance (CE) and scholarship examinations. The CE results are excellent and the boys are well prepared for common entrance and scholarship examinations set by the various senior schools to which they are destined. Advanced work is given to the boys from early in their final year to ensure that this preparation is thorough. The boarding environment allows the boys to become independent in readiness for life at their senior boarding schools.
- 2.8 The detailed curriculum policy sets out clearly the aims of the school to provide as broad and exciting a curriculum as possible that exposes pupils to a very wide range of subjects, activities and challenges. The curriculum is reviewed regularly by the school's leaders in order to monitor and evaluate the subjects taught.
- 2.9 The learning support department is outstanding, and disseminates detailed information to all staff about all boys, including those who have learning difficulties. Provision is made for boys with difficulties to have extra lessons to meet their individual needs. For pupils who do not have English as their first language, arrangements are made for assessment of their EAL needs on their arrival, and these are catered for.
- 2.10 Year 7 pupils spend an entire term, either in the autumn or spring, at the Chateau de Sauveterre where they are taught all subjects in French. They consequently have the chance to become involved in French culture and to learn to speak French first-hand. Boys who have already spent a term at Sauveterre regard the experience as unforgettable, and others are already greatly looking forward to it.
- 2.11 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

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

- 2.12 The quality of pupils' learning and achievements is good in relation to their abilities. The school achieves its aims to prepare pupils well for the challenges and opportunities they will encounter in their senior schools, through teaching them how to learn, and by building their confidence through the introduction of new challenges. The strengths identified at the time of the last inspection have been maintained.
- 2.13 Significant levels of knowledge, skill and critical and creative thinking and understanding are achieved in the subjects studied, as well as in the activities followed outside the taught curriculum. Teachers successfully encourage pupils to use imagination and creativity in their writing. Critical skills are well developed in General Studies where Year 5 boys examine legal and ethical issues.
- 2.14 Pupils speak and listen confidently in a wide variety of contexts. They are articulate and are able to converse with their peers and adults with ease. They participate actively in discussions in lessons. They listen to one another's ideas and viewpoints sympathetically and respond accordingly. Careful listening was seen in a Year 6 music lesson when pupils were required to identify the changes in style and orchestration of a piece of music. Pupils learn to write with growing confidence and enjoyment.

- 2.15 Pupils have solid knowledge of basic concepts in mathematics. Increasing opportunity is being provided for the use of ICT skills across subject areas. Year 8 boys were preparing ICT generated presentations to deliver speeches in an assembly, and Year 5 boys were researching the power of nature.
- 2.16 No significant differences were seen in terms of relative attainment between different groups of pupils. Those identified as needing learning support make good progress, given their ability levels, and the learning support department has developed a successful spelling programme which is much valued by the pupils. Gifted and talented pupils are recognised and opportunities are provided to nurture their skills be they academic, sporting or musical. Some boys have had their stories published in a collection of prep school short stories. Pupils for whom English is not their first language also achieve at an appropriate level.
- 2.17 Pupils do not take national tests. However, the evidence of lesson observations, discussion with pupils and the scrutiny of pupils' work, both in their books and on display, shows that at the age of thirteen, pupils' standards are good. Results of the last three years show that pupils have achieved a significant number of top grades in common entrance examinations, and scholarships have been awarded to top senior schools. Pupils are well guided by the headmaster in their choice of next school.
- 2.18 The school has a considerable list of both individual and team achievements in a variety of areas. Pupils achieve well in music, as individuals in Associated Board music examinations, and in ensembles and the orchestra. Pupils exhibit considerable skills in sport and their teams compete successfully. Success has been celebrated in cricket, football, art and equestrian events at county level and at national level in bagpipe playing. The introduction of a new colours system encompasses excellence not only in team sports but in areas such as music, art, drama and individual sports. All success, achievement and effort whatever the ability or skills level is celebrated and is often publicised on the headmaster's notice board.
- 2.19 Pupils develop good skills and positive attitudes for work and study. They are introduced to prep from Year 5 where they learn to work quietly and independently. Lesson observations and work scrutiny show that pupils in all years organise their work well and are beginning to develop competent study skills. There was evidence of planning using spider diagrams and bullet points and a Year 8 group were learning how to make a one page summary of the relationship theme in 'Journey's End'.
- 2.20 Pupils work co-operatively at all times; they respect each other's views and offer good support to one another. There was evidence of paired and group work throughout the curriculum. Year 6 worked in groups to investigate friction and in French Year 8 groups worked on tenses and negatives in pairs. Outside the taught curriculum pupils cooperate in sports teams, music ensembles and orchestra and in school productions.
- 2.21 Pupils' concentration and application to tasks are consistently good. They move purposefully from room to room and settle quickly into the new lesson, where they focus their minds promptly and enjoy the learning experiences that are offered. In the vast majority of lessons pupils were observed to be totally absorbed in the task. Pupils enjoy the breadth and scope of all the activities on offer and clearly derive much benefit from them. This is captured on film in the school's website archived videos where pupils are totally immersed in the re-enactment of the Battle of Cambrai or pursuing Guido Fawkes on bonfire night.

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

- 2.22 The social, moral, spiritual and cultural awareness of the pupils is outstanding, maintaining the standard reported at the time of the last inspection. Boys are kind and considerate of others and a basic courtesies poster is displayed in classrooms. The school is successful in meeting its aims in this regard.
- 2.23 Pupils' spiritual awareness is outstanding. The school's Christian ethos is evident and sensitively takes account of the needs of the few pupils from other faith backgrounds. A rabbi is currently visiting the school to help a pupil to prepare for his bar mitzvah. Pupils are given the opportunity to explore Christian beliefs and practice in RS lessons and in church services. The daily life of the school community and the excellent relationships pupils have with each other and with adults contribute significantly to the development of pupils' character and self-worth. A sense of wonderment and insight into things beyond their immediate experience was observed in the reaction of pupils to presentations on the theme of East and West in an assembly conducted by Year 8 pupils.
- 2.24 Pupils develop a strong moral awareness and are well able to identify the difference between right and wrong. They respect and appreciate the need for rules. In pupil interviews they referred to the Code of Conduct and Golden Rules which are displayed in classrooms and there is an assumption amongst them that these rules will be adhered to. Confidence was expressed that any bullying, should it occur, would be swiftly dealt with by staff. Posters about bullying are also displayed in the classrooms.
- 2.25 Pupils' social development is outstanding. Pupils are encouraged to think of others as well as themselves. They are encouraged to accept responsibility for their own behaviour for example by locking and unlocking school facilities that they may wish to use. Year 8 prefects are organised by the head boy who meets with the headmaster every morning. The boarding ethos of the school is evident in the strong sense of community, with its emphasis on family. Boarders are very much treated as family, and all boarders have access to the headmaster's home. Pupils respond well to the many opportunities for them to take responsibility, from leading teams to organizing group competitions. They have an understanding of public institutions and services, and recently attended a lecture about 10 Downing Street. PSHE, delivered through form periods, aims to prepare pupils to play an active role as citizens. In discussion with pupils and from observation as they perform their duties in the school it is clear that they are developing an understanding of what it means to be a citizen.
- 2.26 Pupils have good levels of cultural awareness and are provided with opportunities to appreciate their own and other cultures. Year 7 are totally immersed in French culture during the term they spend in the chateau in Sauveterre and some Year 6 pupils experience German culture on a trip to Berlin. Art work includes aboriginal art and totem poles. Pupils enjoy and appreciate music of all types.
- 2.27 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.28 Teaching is good overall, and in some cases is outstanding. This promotes high achievement and encourages pupils to do their best. Staff are well qualified and keen for their pupils to achieve the highest standards. The good quality of teaching found at the time of the last inspection has been maintained and developed, and the school meets its aims to provide appropriate challenges for each individual.
- 2.29 All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and those for whom English is not their first language, make good progress, acquire new knowledge and develop their skills and understanding. The learning support department screens all pupils at the start of each year and provides all staff with comprehensive notes on those boys who have difficulties with their learning. This information is used to excellent effect by most, but not all, staff.
- 2.30 Teachers' expectations of the pupils vary but in the vast majority of lessons they encourage the pupils to become interested in their work and motivate them to do well. In the lessons where the best practice occurs the pace is brisk and teachers ask their pupils to think and learn for themselves. In a Year 6 Science lesson boys were encouraged to discover through testing which materials were ideal for producing friction.
- 2.31 Skilled use of tasks set at the appropriate level enhances the best teaching. Year 8 pupils were challenged to think critically in English resulting in some vivid descriptive writing to create a sense of tension. The vast majority of lessons are well planned and having started promptly move at a brisk pace with the available time being used to the full. The most successful lessons involve the boys in a range of activities including role play, discussion and practical or paired work. In a Year 7 Latin lesson boys worked well in pairs to solve grammatical problems. Where teaching is not so effective, a lack of variety in presentation, or work which is not challenging, fails to motivate the pupils or capture their enthusiasm.
- 2.32 Teachers have considerable knowledge of their subjects, and share their enthusiasms with their pupils. This was especially evident in history and languages. In an outstanding music session boys were inspired by a variety of approaches and were able to play complicated jazz rhythms successfully by the end of the session.
- 2.33 In all lessons seen the behaviour of the pupils was excellent. Strong relationships based on mutual respect are evident between pupils and teachers. This results in confident, self assured boys who respond in a productive and positive manner. The vast majority of teachers know their pupils well and respond to their needs although in a minority of lessons more notice needed to be taken of the excellent notes produced by the learning support department.
- 2.34 All the teaching departments have good levels of resources which are used effectively to support learning. Increasing use is being made of ICT within the curriculum and the library is used to great effect by pupils researching for project work and by all pupils for their personal reading material. Sports equipment is plentiful and the music department has excellent resources.
- 2.35 Since the last inspection, the school has made improvements in its assessment procedures. Good systems are being developed to track pupils' development and progress in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils complete helpful self evaluation sheets and each week they are given a report on whether they are making enough effort in each subject. Boys who are underperforming are seen individually by the headmaster as are those who have earned a distinction. Daily staff meetings include a time for discussion by staff on individuals who may not be performing or behaving as well as is expected.

- 2.36 A comprehensive whole-school marking policy is in place. In some subjects this is being followed rigorously but there is inconsistency in its application across all subjects. In a few subjects a cursory tick or single word comment is often accepted practice with a lack of helpful comments to inform pupils on how to improve the content of their work.
- 2.37 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

### **3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS**

#### **The Quality of Pastoral Care, and the Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils**

- 3.1 The quality of pastoral care is outstanding, as is the school's commitment to the welfare health and safety of the pupils. Excellent relationships and a strong sense of community stem from this. The boys speak warmly of the outstanding care given by the headmaster and his wife, teachers, and the support staff. The school fulfils its aims to treat each boy as an individual, inspire confidence and nurture kindness and consideration for others. The very good quality of pastoral care found at the time of the last inspection has been maintained.
- 3.2 Staff and boys know each other extremely well. The boys are treated as individuals. They are encouraged to do their best, whatever their ability or natural aptitude, and they grow in confidence as a result.
- 3.3 Expectations of work and behaviour are high, but boys appreciate that the staff have their interest at heart and are concerned for them as individuals. One boy summed it up: "If you are feeling down and upset you know some member of staff will approach you and help to cheer you up." Another said, "When you first arrive at Cothill you are homesick but you soon forget about it because of the care you get from the teachers, the matrons and the nurse."
- 3.4 The staff transmit an enthusiasm for the pupils' welfare and interests and this is reflected in the vast and diverse programme of activities provided each week. The cultural trips and events such as the rock concert, the flamboyant fireworks displays and the leavers' trip enhance the enjoyment of feeling part of the community.
- 3.5 The school has many ways of ensuring that every boy is well looked after. The headmaster's weekly reports give a clear indication to pupils of their effort in the classroom, the boarding houses' various competitions help the pupils to know their contribution in their domestic life, and the 'groups' competition adds another dimension to school life.
- 3.6 The support staff make a major contribution to the pastoral process and attend to the needs of the pupils. The senior and junior matrons ensure that the pupils have a clean and tidy environment in which to work and play, and the nursing sister is always on hand to administer medication and comfort. Meals are well organized and orderly, and food is plentiful and of good quality. Healthy eating is encouraged and staff sit with pupils during meals to promote good table manners and appropriate conversation.
- 3.7 The boys are well disciplined and accept the clear boundaries that are set for them. They are encouraged to respect the school community and property and this was witnessed during the inspection. Pupils are unfailingly courteous to visitors and keen to direct them to their destination within the school.
- 3.8 The school has a clear child protection policy. Those with responsibility for appointing staff take appropriate steps to ensure their suitability. The school is alert to health and safety hazards and risk assessments are carried out for all activities.
- 3.9 Good fire safety procedures are in place. Fire extinguishers are tested annually. Fire alarms are tested regularly. The school organizes frequent fire practices during the day and at night. They are logged centrally to monitor coverage of different times and places.

- 3.10 Maintenance of the school's health and safety arrangements is heavily dependent on the direct involvement of the Cothill Trust bursar. He has ensured that the school is a safe happy place where pupils can grow and develop in secure surroundings.
- 3.11 The school's admissions procedure is thorough and the admissions register is accurate and correctly maintained.
- 3.12 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**

- 3.13 The quality of links with parents and the community is outstanding. The school fulfils its aims to prepare boys for the challenges which lie ahead and to nourish qualities of kindness and consideration for others.
- 3.14 The school provides prospective parents with all required information. All required policies are available on the school website.
- 3.15 The quality of reports to parents has improved. Instead of commenting on what has been taught staff now concentrate on the pupil's attitude to learning and on what learning has taken place. Targets for future improvement are set. Comments by parents on the termly reports are welcomed.
- 3.16 Almost all parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The overwhelming majority are extremely happy with the education, opportunities, care and support provided by the school. They and their sons appreciate the availability of the headmaster should there be any issues to discuss. The boarding provision and the staff who run it were highly praised.
- 3.17 Excellent opportunities exist for parents to be involved in aspects of the work and life of the school. They are invited to attend matches, both mid week and at weekends, and plays, concerts and recitals. They are encouraged to look at the 'weeklies' in their son's classroom to see progress before the 'open house' parent/teacher meetings, held termly for each year group. Comments on the termly reports are welcomed and the headmaster is always available should there be an issue to discuss. Teaching staff will be available should a parent wish to discuss a pupil's progress in an individual subject.
- 3.18 The school handles the concerns of parents promptly and with due care. The complaints procedure and many other school policies are available on the school's website. This is a valuable resource both for parents and prospective parents.
- 3.19 The school maintains excellent links with the wider community. The choirs have held charity concerts in Malmesbury Abbey in aid of Youth Action Wiltshire and at St Luke's, Chelsea, in aid of Jo's Trust as well as singing in local churches. The choir tour to France provides the boys with further wonderful cultural experience. Educational visits include the Imperial War Museum, HMS Victory, art exhibitions, Salisbury cathedral, drama workshops and the Vale of the White Horse. All of these visits have contributed to a deeper understanding by the pupils of the subjects being studied. The school has donated towards a new organ and hymn books at a local church. Pupils worship at this church each week during term time. Cothill House raises considerable sums for charities: the British Legion, Boxes for Soldiers, Sea-Saw, Oxford 'Town and Gown' raising money for research into muscular dystrophy and the RNLI. Pupils are aware that they are raising money for those less fortunate than themselves. The bursar is a governor of the local primary school with which the school has strong links. A peripatetic music teacher is shared between the two schools and in the holidays the pupils from the local school use the art facilities at Cothill.

- 3.20 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the provision of information and the manner in which complaints are to be handled [Standards 6 and 7].

### **The Quality of Boarding Education**

- 3.21 The quality of the boarding experience is outstanding, contributing much to boys' all-round education and the fulfillment of the school's aims. Boys greatly enjoy boarding as they reported to the inspectors during interviews.
- 3.22 Relationships between the boys and with staff are warm and open and boys are encouraged to share their views and to voice any worries. The uniqueness of the passage of moving from the main school building in Year 4 to the Bungalow in Year 5, then back to the main school for Years 6 and 7, to a term in France and then finally to Chandlings Manor enhances and enriches the boarding experience. The boys say that they feel secure and well supported and they speak highly of the personal and very individual care they receive from all the staff involved in boarding.
- 3.23 The school offers an extensive range of evening and weekend activities, offering a full boarding experience that is supported by the tireless enthusiasm of staff. There is something for everyone and a great deal of thought goes into ensuring that there is plenty for boys to do at the weekend. Several pupils said that Sunday was the best day of the week and that time always went very quickly. The access to the design and woodwork departments with specialist staff on Saturdays and Sundays is very popular.
- 3.24 The boarding ethos permeates school life. All staff contribute to the activities programme and the respect and rapport between boys and staff are underpinned by the time spent together in shared interests outside the classroom.
- 3.25 The accommodation in the various boarding houses is comfortable, well lit and airy. All the furniture is well maintained and appropriate for the age groups. The boarding staff are committed to the welfare of the pupils and this was reflected in the pupils' comments.
- 3.26 Pupils are encouraged to eat a healthy diet by the member of staff sitting on each table at meal times. Table manners are monitored. There is a choice of food which, at lunchtime, includes a salad bar. Pupils are encouraged by the head of table to converse during the meals until grace is said at the end of the session. There are two sittings. Tea (supper) is served at 5.45 pm and at bedtime boys receive a sandwich, a piece of fruit and a drink. The food is mostly very popular amongst the boys although there was some negativity about the afternoon tea. The pupils have "grub" (tuck) boxes.
- 3.27 Healthy exercise forms a substantial part of each day with a formal sports session offered every day except Sunday. Boys are encouraged to be sensibly adventurous and they learn how to keep themselves and others safe. They enjoy the freedom of playing in many parts of the school's grounds and recognise that this privilege carries the responsibility of keeping to the rules and staying safely within bounds.
- 3.28 The support staff which includes matrons, medical staff, domestic and laundry staff ensure that pupils are living in a clean and healthy environment. There is a full time nurse and a doctor visits twice a week. There is a doctor on duty during inter-school contact sports fixtures.

- 3.29 The school has met all the recommendations set out by the latest boarding inspection (October 2008).

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 The school is well governed by the Cothill Educational Trust which owns several other schools. The trust is committed to the school and fully supports its aims and continuing development. Since the last inspection there have been several building and refurbishment projects all of which have been appreciated by pupils, staff and parents.
- 4.2 The principal of the trust is the former headmaster of Cothill House and he has a key role in the management and strategic planning of the trust, whilst giving full autonomy to the headmaster who is responsible for the day to day running of the school. The principal's office is close by the school and he visits regularly and is the main channel between members of the trust and the school. He works closely with the trust bursar, whose office is within the school. The bursar, assisted by the domestic bursar is responsible for all health and safety and child protection aspects of the school and keeps the accurate centralised register of appointments. The trust members are fully committed to providing high quality education for the pupils but their input into educational development is limited. They receive information in the headmaster's termly report and fully support him. Some teaching staff have occasional opportunities to meet with governors but would welcome more.
- 4.3 Governance of the school is supported by appropriate structures and minuted meetings. The governors ensure that the fabric and human and material resources of the school are of the best possible quality. Governors are aware of their financial and legal responsibilities and regularly review policies for health and safety and safeguarding.

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

- 4.4 The quality of leadership and management is good, maintaining the standard seen at the time of the last inspection. Clear direction is provided by the senior management team and this enables the school to fulfil its aims and ensures high quality care for the pupils. The pastoral care is particularly effective and all pupils are treated as individuals, which gives them a feeling of self-worth and makes them proud to be pupils at Cothill.
- 4.5 The school's leaders are effective in analysing the needs and setting priorities for future development and these are clearly set out in the school development plan. Heads of department are responsible for monitoring staff in their departments and comprehensive records of lesson observations are kept. Regular timetabled departmental meetings are held to ensure that all teaching staff are fully aware of issues which arise and planning and discussion can take place. Minutes are kept of all meetings.
- 4.6 Policies are in place for all aspects of school life and the curriculum and these are reviewed and updated regularly. The monitoring of marking is inconsistent and targets for future improvement are not set regularly. The school is well resourced and pupils benefit from the valuable contribution which this make to their learning.
- 4.7 Teaching and support staff are suitably deployed. When staff are appointed all appropriate checks, including those required by the Criminal Records Bureau, are made and excellent records are kept. Induction training for new staff is good, with the school participating in the national scheme for the induction of newly qualified teachers. Procedures for newly qualified staff are effective and implemented successfully. Opportunities for in-service training are available both for individuals and for the whole staff. In-service training takes

place at the start of each term for the whole staff and many individual members of both the teaching and support staff attend courses outside the school.

- 4.8 An informal staff appraisal system is in place with emphasis being placed on relationships with the school's leaders and an open door approach. However, a self evaluation procedure for staff is currently being considered by the management team.
- 4.9 The school's location on a large rural site provides a stimulating environment. Good use is made by all the pupils of the excellent facilities on offer. The extensive well kept grounds, which include a golf course, provide a splendid setting for sporting and recreational events and are a credit to the groundsman and his team. The bursarial, medical, housekeeping and catering staff share the pupils' pride in the school and their contribution is valued by the parents, boys and school leaders. The administration of the school is extremely efficient and reflects positively on the work of the school secretary and her staff.
- 4.10 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.11 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 Cothill House successfully fulfils its aims to prepare boys for the challenges which lie ahead, whilst building their confidence and nourishing qualities of kindness and consideration for others. A strong family ethos and community spirit permeate the school and pupils are loyal and proud to be members of it. The school achieves its aims and meets the needs of its pupils effectively. The boarding environment provides wide ranging opportunities to help pupils achieve their full potential. The sense of space at Cothill and the opportunity to spend a term in Year 7 at the Chateau in Sauveterre enhance the provision. The school gives pupils a broad educational experience through the curriculum. In addition, both the excellent extra-curricular programme and good, and on occasions, outstanding teaching combine to enable pupils to achieve high standards. Pupils respond well to their teachers and have excellent attitudes to their learning. Their behaviour is exemplary and most successful provision is made for their personal development. The pastoral care given by all the staff of the school is outstanding and exceptionally good links have been made with the wider community. The headmaster and his dedicated team approach all aspects of school life with enthusiasm and commitment, with the needs of the pupils continually to the fore.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection the school has built a new Hall, enlarged the Art department and improved the Library and ICT facilities. This has enabled more independent research to take place. Programmes of study skills and General Studies have been introduced. The school now has a development plan in which key issues have been identified and a format for staff self evaluation is under discussion. A programme to monitor teaching is now in place. Heads of department regularly observe lessons within their departments and comprehensive records are kept. The school is well placed to make further progress.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### **Next Steps**

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. In order to develop further the education it provides, it should take the following steps:
1. ensure that the excellent advice and data given to staff by the learning support department is used to full effect;
  2. develop further the sharing of good practice in teaching and establish a consistency of approach to the marking of pupils' work in accordance with existing policies.
- 5.5 No action is required in respect of regulatory requirements.

## **6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> November 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 facilities. 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 Penny Horsman	Reporting Inspector
Mr Pete Brooks	Headmaster, IAPS school
Mr Douglas Buchanan	Assistant Head, IAPS school
Mrs Jacqueline Merva	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mrs Sara Taylor	Director of Studies, IAPS school