

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## INSPECTION REPORT ON

### Worth School

Full Name of the School	<b>Worth School</b>
DCSF Number	<b>938/6208</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1093914</b>
Address	<b>Paddockhurst Road, Turners Hill, West Sussex RH10 4SD.</b>
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Proprietor	<b>Worth Abbey</b>
President of Trustees	<b>Abbot Christopher Jamison</b>
Chairman of Governors	<b>Mr Kevin Smyth</b>
Age Range	<b>11-18</b>
Gender	<b>Boys</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007</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 and May 2007.

The inspection was carried out in conjunction with Ofsted, Children's Directorate. The Ofsted report is available separately at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](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 Worth is a boarding and day school for boys aged between 11 and 18 years. It is located on a 500 acre estate in West Sussex, alongside Worth Abbey. The school was founded in 1933, at the same time as the community, by monks who moved from the abbey at Downside. Initially a preparatory school, the school has admitted senior boys since 1959, and the decision to admit girls from 2008 had been taken just before the inspection. The current headmaster has been in post since April 2007. The governing body has responsibility for overseeing the school's day-to-day running and finances. The school occupies buildings owned by Worth Abbey and for which the school has a full repairing lease. Capital developments are undertaken by Worth Abbey when requested by the school. Monastic consent is obtained for any major strategic changes identified by the school's governors.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a broad education and balanced lifestyle, rooted in the Benedictine tradition, which both values individuals and fosters the community life of learning, worship, friendship and service. It also aims to provide a supportive environment, where every pupil is encouraged to realise their full potential. It believes that, whilst its examination results reflect the school's high academic standards, they are not the sole focus of the school; staff believe that a balanced lifestyle not only benefits each pupil's development, but is also increasingly valued within the world of work, where they believe that teamwork, imagination and service are central to many successful businesses.
- 1.3 The school currently has 431 pupils, who come from a wide variety of backgrounds. About one-third live locally and attend as day pupils. However, the majority of are boarders and, although most of these come from the United Kingdom, a smaller proportion come from overseas.
- 1.4 Pupils normally join the school at the age of 11, 13 or 16, following entrance tests or GCSE examinations. Whilst the school aims mainly to admit pupils with the ability to access higher education, it also seeks to assist those with a genuine boarding need, or with other particular needs the school can meet. The school gives priority to those from a Catholic background, but welcomes those of other Christian and non-Christian faiths.
- 1.5 Overall, pupils' average ability is above the national average for all maintained secondary schools. If they perform in line with their abilities, their results will be above the national average for such schools. In total 135 have been identified as having learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD), of whom 81 receive specific support funded by their parents. One has a statement of special educational need (SEN). The school has 42 pupils for whom English is not their first language, of whom 21 receive support. Nearly all pupils leave to higher education.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## 2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

### The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 The school provides a well-integrated all-round education, consistent with its aim to offer a broad academic curriculum suitable for all its pupils. Since the last inspection, the school has introduced the International Baccalaureate (IB) as an option alongside A levels; it has also increased the time allocated to prep and introduced more academic societies.
- 2.2 The curriculum is well balanced. In line with the school's Benedictine ethos, religious studies (RS) is taught from Years 7 to 11; in addition, A-level pupils take a course in Christian living, whilst IB pupils study the theory of knowledge. Recent changes to the timetable have increased the amount of private study time during the school day and focussed teaching into more conducive parts of the working day. Pupils benefit from the calm and purposeful atmosphere which pervades teaching and learning across the whole curriculum.
- 2.3 The curriculum supports pupils' linguistic, mathematical, scientific, human and social development, alongside many opportunities to develop physically, aesthetically and creatively. The core curriculum in Years 7 to 9 is supplemented by drama, and by the option to study Latin. Additional languages beyond the formal timetable include Greek, Chinese, Italian and Russian. Some GCSE examinations, such as languages taken by bilingual pupils and music, may be taken early in Year 10. The choice between A level and IB allows sixth-form pupils to choose the education that most suits their needs, from amongst a wide range of subjects which includes electronics, media studies and music technology.
- 2.4 Academic societies, such as the Walter Monckton society, support the curriculum, particularly for sixth-form pupils. A further range of societies is being developed for pupils in Years 7 to 11. Many departments run educational visits. For example, economics pupils visit the Bank of England and Lloyds of London; historians visit Krakow and biologists visit the Quantock Hills for fieldwork. Modern language students undertake French, German and Spanish exchanges. Retreats and days of reflection are run by the chaplaincy. These are seen as particularly significant and popular.
- 2.5 On activities after school, pupils can start new interests or develop existing interests further. A significant number of pupils said in a questionnaire conducted in the term previous to the inspection that the range of activities was too narrow. The choice has since been extended and pupils are now offered a wealth of interesting pursuits both on and off-site. These include gardening, car maintenance, golf, chess, rock climbing and invasion games, in addition to voluntary service. The lively sports programme at all levels places an emphasis on the school's three major sports, whilst other sports such as fencing are also strong; this summer, the 1<sup>st</sup> XV and U16 Rugby teams toured South Africa. Both parents and pupils are exceptionally enthusiastic about and committed to school music; the importance of the Abbey ensures that choral music maintains a high profile. A full and varied programme of concerts includes collaboration with the art department. Pupils of all ages benefit from the range of dramatic and musical productions; both the music and drama departments organise regular tours overseas. Overall, pupils take full advantage of this programme and develop a worthwhile range of interests, maintaining a good balance between academic and other pursuits; they become interesting young people.
- 2.6 The school encourages pupils to explore the world of work and thus to be well prepared for adult life. Pupils can take part in the Independent Schools Careers Organisation aptitude tests in Year 11 if they wish. A successful careers fair is run each year during Advanced Curriculum Extension week, together with a business conference. The well-supported Young Enterprise scheme is included in the activities programme. Pupils are largely

- responsible for organising their own work experience; the newly appointed head of careers provides support and encouragement where needed. All pupils receive thorough support and guidance throughout the process of applying to university.
- 2.7 Curriculum planning is coordinated with efficiency, energy and vision, and the school is committed to ensuring that all pupils have full access to all that the school provides. The planning of a further curriculum review was already underway at the time of the inspection.
- 2.8 Pupils with any degree of learning difficulty say they are well supported through the learning support department. Emphasis is placed on developing independence and self-confidence and, after an individual educational plan (IEP) has been written, support is given in a variety of ways, varying from individual or group sessions to help from learning support assistants in classes. The team of support teachers is energetically and effectively led, and it offers a range of specialist skills, both linguistic and mathematical. Communication between teachers and the learning support department is frequent and helpful. However, although some good practice was observed, teachers are not always fully aware of pupils' needs; as a result, IEPs are not always used effectively to support their work. Where any pupil has a formal statement, appropriate and monitored provision is in place.
- 2.9 A number of boys receive support for English as an additional language (EAL). They are identified either through screening at the point of entry or through self-referral. Boys speak warmly of the EAL teaching they receive, whether in groups or individually. Clear and appropriate teaching is provided, targets are set, learning is good and imaginative use is made of information and communications technology (ICT). All boys on the EAL register have IEPs, and their progress is monitored until they need no further support. Particular support is given with specialist vocabulary, which boys appreciate, although this is not done consistently in all subjects.
- 2.10 The Learning Resource Centre (LRC) provides a warm, friendly environment for additional support, and it is easy for boys to ask for individual help, both from members of the department and from the librarian.
- 2.11 Extension work and support for gifted and talented pupils is offered by some departments, for example through links with local universities, although day-to-day support through differentiated teaching is not consistent. The particular ethos of the school ensures that pupils are encouraged to think about a wide range of issues and the most able pupils, in particular, respond well to this. The number of academic societies is proliferating, with increasing expectation that pupils will attend and thus extend their knowledge beyond the curriculum.
- 2.12 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

## **Pupils' Learning and Achievements**

- 2.13 Pupils leave Worth, not only achieving considerable success in the standards of their work, but also having become mature learners with a wide range of study skills, as the school intends. These standards have been maintained since the last inspection.
- 2.14 From the time they join the school, pupils grapple well with difficult questions, such as 'What is God like?'. By the time they reach GCSE, they show a good understanding of abstract concepts, for example in science, and are able to analyse problems, such as in electronics and mathematics. They use vocabulary accurately and are skilled in ICT. In the sixth form, they build on these achievements quickly, grasping new ideas and applying their knowledge effectively to new situations. They are articulate when discussing complex ideas and think laterally. They discuss topics such as the nature of freedom and the rise of Fascism. Excellent support enables pupils with LDD and pupils with EAL to progress equally well.
- 2.15 At both GCSE and A level, the school's results over the most recent three years for which comparative data is available, have been well above the national average for all maintained schools and thus good for pupils' abilities. At GCSE, just under half the grades are either A\* or A, and at A level nearly three-quarters are A or B grades. At both levels, the school's results are in line with those in maintained selective schools, despite a more modest ability range. The analysis of progress against standardised norms, show that pupils make good progress as they study for both GCSE and A level. In the IB, pupils also do well, since the school's results are above worldwide averages and in line with the higher UK averages; normally all candidates achieve the Diploma.
- 2.16 Outside the classroom, pupils achieve much success in a diverse range of interests. Music is pursued to a high standard, with a good proportion of instrumentalists gaining distinctions and performing well in musical groups. Pupils' artwork displayed around the school shows creative flair. Although inspectors were unable to observe the performance of drama, pupils are proud of the standards achieved in a wide range of productions, some of which include pupils from other schools in the area. A large number of pupils have obtained The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and one is a national chess champion for his age. The school encourages pupils in interests they pursue outside school.
- 2.17 Pupils benefit greatly from the school's emphasis on developing a community of learners. They speak fluently, in both English and modern languages. This enables them to participate fully in class discussion, but they also address the school in the Abbey Church in a relaxed and confident way. During the inspection, pupils were heard discussing topics as diverse as the Stuarts, cubic graphs and electronics, and pupils explained ideas clearly to inspectors in interviews. Pupils express themselves effectively in a range of genres, ranging from creative writing to more factual projects. Challenging writing is seen across the curriculum.
- 2.18 Pupils' work showed many examples of advanced numerical work in all three sciences and elsewhere. Their ICT skills are exploited through their use of the internet for research, together with word processing and presentational software to present ideas. However, they make less frequent use of spreadsheets and databases outside ICT lessons. They much appreciate the extensive use of interactive whiteboards in lessons.
- 2.19 Pupils engage well with question-and-answer sessions in lessons, showing themselves well able to consider the pros and cons of an argument, to think for themselves, to form their own views and to analyse issues in a wide range of subjects. They are self-critical and learn from experience. In most areas, they make good use of opportunities for independent research and share learning, presenting their ideas clearly and effectively. However, in some areas of the

curriculum, such as science, pupils say that opportunities for this are more limited. Pupils appreciate that they have different ways of learning.

- 2.20 Pupils show impressive study skills and most maintain well-structured, logical and well-organised notes. They work together well, helping each other with difficult ideas and learning from those around them. In almost all lessons, they are well disciplined, hard-working and determined, enjoying their work and persevering until the task is done. Only occasionally does their attention and interest flag, when the content of the lesson is more mundane. They work well in unusual contexts, for example when learning through video-conferencing.

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

- 2.21 At Worth, all aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. The Rule of St Benedict permeates through the school community and affects every aspect of the education provided; it is the foundation of the school's aims and values, as it was at the time of the last inspection. The school thus has at its heart that 'nothing must be put before the worship of God.'
- 2.22 With the monastery and Abbey at its heart, Worth provides an exceptional environment in which pupils' spiritual development is outstanding. The presence of the monastic community and the close links between monastery and school create a sense of positive calm amongst staff and pupils alike, and a shared sense of purpose. Pupils recognise the value of the wisdom that the monks provide, the importance of collective worship and the way in which the Rule of St Benedict encourages them to think about the fundamental questions of life and about those less fortunate than themselves. The chaplaincy, with a part-time Anglican chaplain and lay members of the RS department, as well as monks, provides a special focus for pupils' spiritual development but opportunities also abound in lessons, assemblies and worship. The chaplaincy provides evening parties with much-enjoyed tea and toast for groups of pupils, informal celebrations of the liturgy in its small chapel, and workshops and retreats for groups of pupils, staff and parents; these include the annual Confirmation retreat and other days of reflection. Through these, the Worth community embraces pupils, staff, parents and extended families alike.
- 2.23 Pupils of all ages are involved in saying house prayers and in leading whole-school assemblies and acts of worship. They do this with confidence and poise, and yet retain their humility. The large numbers of boys who have come together on these occasions wait in a quiet and reflective manner beforehand; in all worship pupils show a real sense of prayerfulness and reflection. Whatever their own belief, they feel comfortable in the Abbey Church, and with the sense of holiness which pervades it. Pupils also write freely about personal and spiritual experiences in the magazine *Identity* which is edited by a team of Year 13 boys; much of this writing is remarkable in its maturity and ability to address difficult and complex issues such as bereavement and depression.
- 2.24 Worth pupils also develop a strong personal morality. They behave well towards each other and towards all whom they meet, and have a clear sense of right and wrong. The Rule of St Benedict exhorts them to look outwards; for example, a house assembly involved Year 12 boys speaking about the recent human rights problem in Myanmar. Sixth-form pupils attend lectures on Christian living by a variety of staff and monks, which include topics such as religion in the media and inter-religious dialogue. Pupils discuss morality in RS and in other subjects as well. Environmental issues are very much to the fore and the *Eco-Worth* group of pupils is impressive in its desire to improve environmental awareness.

- 2.25 Pupils develop socially in the close school community. They speak freely of this community and the friendships they have made within it. Opportunities for social development are plentiful; for example, an induction programme of competitions for pupils in Year 9, called *superstars*, helps to integrate new and existing pupils. Relationships between senior and junior boys are very good and many senior boys help with activities for the younger boys; for instance Year 12 boys take a significant leadership role within the houses. Pupils, who in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were critical of the lack of opportunity to have their voices heard, are now very pleased that the new school and house councils allow them to do just that. Pupils develop a strong sense of social conscience through opportunities to provide service to the local community.
- 2.26 Social development is enhanced by the personal, social and moral education (PSME) programme, which is delivered by tutors; more robust monitoring and evaluation of this programme is now beginning to take place. The programme in Years 7 to 11 enables pupils to keep abreast of current affairs and take citizenship seriously; they show a good knowledge of public services. Current issues are often highlighted in prayers in the Abbey Church and in houses. Thus the links are constantly made between the Rule of St Benedict and day-to-day living. In the sixth form, 'Headway' lectures involve visiting speakers on themes such as alcoholism, prison experience and drugs, and increase pupils' awareness of the challenges which face them.
- 2.27 The Rule of St Benedict exhorts members of the community to look outwards towards other cultures and to those less fortunate than themselves. This they do in many ways. International students are well integrated and imbue the school with a natural awareness of other cultures. Pupils also take part in many trips abroad which give them a sense of their place in the world. For example, Year 9 pupils travel to World War I battlefields for a trip which seeks to help them empathise with the soldiers of the time; on their return they take part in a 'Living Together' day to reflect on their experiences. The South African Rugby tour involved visits to townships as well as Rugby events. Through art, music and drama pupils develop a sense of their own cultural identity as well as of different cultures and traditions.
- 2.28 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

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

- 2.29 The high proportion of teaching that is good or better underpins the considerable progress pupils make and the way in which they develop into active learners and fulfil their potential, reflecting the school's aims. Teaching is more consistent than it was at the time of the last inspection but, although there is some good practice, marking is still inconsistent.
- 2.30 This quality of teaching is firmly based on teachers' excellent relationships with, and knowledge of, their pupils. Pupils hugely appreciate the support they receive, both through formal structures such as supported prep and also when members of staff give time freely out of class. Work is often adapted by teachers to pupils' differing abilities and effective support is usually given to those with LDD or EAL. Only occasionally does a pupil struggle because the task is too hard, or say that work has been too easy.
- 2.31 Pupils are often fulsome in praise of their teachers. They particularly appreciate the wide variety of methods that are employed and the interesting way in which most lessons are presented. The great majority of lessons are lively and well paced, with effective explanation of objectives and drawing together of ideas at the end. Concepts are built up logically, partly through teachers engaging pupils in demanding discussion. In these lessons, teachers create

a co-operative experience in which pupils take a good deal of responsibility for their learning: using research, asking questions, evaluating their own progress and sharing their own ideas with others. Teachers encourage this sense of responsibility by expecting pupils to form their own judgments, by encouraging thinking through carefully phrased questions and by ensuring that the most able pupils are challenged fully. Questioning is used well to bring out boys' ideas and then refine them. A minority of teaching lacks opportunities to fully engage pupils or the flexibility to respond to their questions; in some lessons the pace is too slow. This teaching lacks the sense of drive and excitement seen elsewhere. Pupils say that in these lessons they have fewer opportunities to work independently.

- 2.32 Teaching is based on secure subject knowledge and the ability to make effective use of resources such as interactive whiteboards. In the great majority of lessons, teachers also convey a real interest in their subject, which pupils appreciate. In almost all lessons, teachers take a relaxed but firm approach to their classes, encouraging wide participation whilst maintaining a sense of focus. Only occasionally is a level of chatter permitted which distracts.
- 2.33 Marking is often done well, and pupils appreciate the helpful and thorough diagnostic comments they receive in some subjects and from some teachers, and find this process helps them to improve. This effective marking is prompt, clear and constructive, and is complemented by useful oral feedback in class. A minority of marking provides more limited help to pupils; it gives few comments on how to improve and fails to set targets at which they can aim. Heads of department are clear about the importance of marking but in some cases fail to monitor it closely enough to eliminate less good practice. The school is aware of this and is taking steps to improve monitoring practice.
- 2.34 Teachers working with those on the learning support register, and with those receiving support for EAL, have a clear system for setting and monitoring targets, both for individuals or for groups. For other pupils, information from assessment is sometimes used to set targets or to plan the next piece of work, but this is not yet done systematically. However, effort and progress grades have recently become sharper and more focused.
- 2.35 Over longer periods, information from assessment is not used fully to monitor pupils' progress against national norms. Predicted grades are sometimes analysed retrospectively but are not yet used comprehensively to monitor progress as it occurs. The new management information system has the potential to allow easy, systematic and comprehensive recording of data and thus to make target setting and monitoring more straightforward.
- 2.36 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 A key strength of the school is the outstanding ethos of care for the individual pupil that permeates through the entire community, as at the time of the last inspection. This was endorsed by pupils, who commented warmly upon the openness and accessibility of teachers, housemasters, tutors and ancillary staff, coupled with the underlying support and friendship of the monastic community. This reflects the school's aims exceptionally well.
- 3.2 The house structure provides an extremely secure pastoral framework within which all pupils and teachers are allocated to a house. Day and boarding pupils are well integrated in the school and are supported equally well by housemasters and other assistants. Relationships are outstanding at all levels. The small house-based tutor groups are given sufficient time and opportunity for tutors to get to know their tutees on a personal level, monitor their academic progress, give advice to individuals, and provide a pastoral link to parents and the housemaster.
- 3.3 The quality of advice and guidance is excellent. The four periods a week allocated in Year 7 help ensure that new boys have a smooth transition into the new routines and expectations. This number is reduced as pupils move up through the school but pupils comment that tutors and other teachers are accessible at other times to provide support; the relationships upon which pastoral care depends are first class. This is particularly appreciated when important decisions need to be made. The confidential internal reporting systems are highly effective in monitoring boys about whom there are any concerns.
- 3.4 The teaching of PSME by tutors ensures that the moral and ethical ethos is not seen as divorced from academic progress, but pervades all aspects of school life. Pupils value the sense of community, with older boys given responsibility to help younger ones and group activities, such as the charities drive, integrating boys from all years and talents. Individual strengths and achievements are recognised and celebrated. As a result, the school provides a happy, purposeful, supportive and caring environment, in which there is a calm sense of mutual respect and common purpose.
- 3.5 Pupils respect school rules and largely abide by them. Discipline, both in lessons and around the school, is usually maintained by a light touch, and boys generally agree that, when sanctions are needed, they are fair. Praise from teachers is frequent, but some pupils feel the school needs a more consistent system of rewards to counterbalance the rigour of the detention regime.
- 3.6 The school eats together and pupils and staff mix in an informal manner. Pupils have welcomed recent improvements in the standard and choice of food. The caterers are very flexible in providing food throughout the day, ensuring that all the boys are well fed. The medical centre provides well for boys who are ill or injured, as do the numerous staff who have first aid training. Pupils hugely appreciate the school counsellor who is available on two days a week, and at other times if necessary. Procedures for dealing with child protection issues are thorough, as are those for health and safety and fire, and for recording attendance and admissions.
- 3.7 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**

- 3.8 The school has an outstanding partnership, both with parents and with the wider community, building on all it achieved at the time of the last inspection. It therefore fulfils its aims that parents should ‘belong’ and that it should offer hospitality. Parents speak warmly of the education and support provided for their children.
- 3.9 The parents of just under half the pupils responded to a questionnaire distributed before the inspection. Their responses were overwhelmingly positive, in particular about the quality of teaching, the progress their children make, the guidance and support their children receive, and the attitudes the school inculcates – with all of which inspectors agreed. A minority of parents felt that the school had not dealt with their concerns properly, but inspectors examined some of the most recent correspondence and found that the school is helpful and willing to highlight areas where its practice could be improved.
- 3.10 Through a full and well-publicised calendar of events, parents have excellent opportunities to be involved in school activities and in the work and progress of their children. The Abbey Church, in particular, provides a focus for both the wider community and for parents. The well-established Friends of Worth welcomes new, current and former parents. They raise funds to support the school, organise events for parents and successfully support them as their children move through the school. The school also provides well-attended seminars and retreats for parents. These have focused on parenting and spiritual growth; recent topics have included promoting spiritual growth in adolescence and the pressures of modern living, prayer and meditation.
- 3.11 Parents are kept exceptionally well informed, both about the school and about their children’s progress, through effective parent conferences and informative reports. By developing an effective relationship with housemasters and tutors, parents can raise issues in between reports. Both formal and informal communication with parents is effective, efficient and meaningful. Parents receive a most comprehensive handbook. The school handles parents’ concerns with care and scrutiny of typical correspondence showed it is honest about areas where the school could improve.
- 3.12 The school organises an exceptional range of links with the local and wider communities through a strong community service programme; both boys and the community benefit from this support. Activities range from the Brighton soup-run for the homeless to assisting teachers at the local primary school, from helping at a day care centre for older local residents to forming links with a school for pupils with disabilities in Germany and from sharing ICT facilities with a local school to a ‘flying squad’ gardening service. The school works with a consortium of local maintained secondary schools through concerts, plays and shared curricular activities.
- 3.13 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**

- 3.14 Pupils benefit much from their boarding experience. This ensures that the school fulfils its aims that pupils should be part of a strong community and develop respect for others. Boarding accommodation has improved since the previous inspection.
- 3.15 The relationships among pupils, and between pupils and staff, within the houses are outstanding. Pupils talk warmly about the support, guidance and friendship they receive. The quality of leadership is excellent and ensures that the large numbers of boarders in each house are looked after in a very caring environment. In addition, prefects play an integral role in supporting the boarding staff, and this is much valued by younger pupils.
- 3.16 The range of activities available to boarders is extensive. They have an increasingly well-organised programme of Sunday activities which they appreciate. The opportunity to socialise with friends after prep on weekday evenings provides important relaxation for boarders in their busy lives. Regular informal, social meetings with housemasters, tutors, and chaplains add considerable value and enjoyment to the lives of boarders.
- 3.17 Boarding accommodation meets pupils' needs well, though houses vary in quality. That for Year 13 pupils is outstanding. The school is aware that that while two houses for younger boys provide them with spacious rooms and good quality furniture, the refurbishment in a third is yet to be completed, though a successful start has been made. Access to ICT in the boarding houses significantly increases opportunities for independent study away from the main teaching areas. Recreational rooms are well equipped with indoor games.

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

### **The Quality of Governance**

- 4.1 Worth School benefits from high quality support from both its governors and the monastic community. Key changes in the structure of governance since the last inspection have strengthened the links between school and monastery, whilst protecting the position of each.
- 4.2 The school exists through the vision and commitment of the monastic community to the education of young people; many developments benefit from the long term view that is taken and from the stability the monastery provides at a time of change. The Abbot, as president, provides strong leadership combined with support and wisdom to the school. The monks are a vital part of school life, through prayer, through the sense of community they provide and through the key roles that some play within the school. Whilst rooted in the tradition to which it subscribes, the monastic community is bold in looking to the future, for instance through deciding to admit girls from 2008.
- 4.3 The school governors, under their chairman, bring valuable and wide-ranging experience and expertise, in education, in finance and in a wide range of business backgrounds. Their business is well conducted and they are kept fully informed about all aspects of school life. The structure of sub-committees serves the school well.
- 4.4 Governors are well aware of their responsibilities, for example for child protection and health and safety. They have appropriate procedures in place to deal with them. New governors attend induction and others attend external training, and governors regularly assess areas of risk relevant to the school.
- 4.5 Education sub-committee meetings show that governors have a good knowledge of the school and discuss educational issues in some depth; for example, they have recently discussed what is meant by a Catholic approach to PSME. Governors provide the school with considerable challenge, whilst respecting the fact that their role is to govern not to manage. Staff appreciate opportunities to meet them, and the interest they take in the school.

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

- 4.6 Strong leadership and clear vision combine to provide Worth School with the sense of identity and community which enable it to fulfil its aim to be a Benedictine school in a changing world, as at the time of the last inspection.
- 4.7 Staff at all levels regard the headmaster and senior management team (SMT) highly, appreciating the sense of educational direction they give to the school and the way that an appropriate balance is maintained between the school's various ambitions for its pupils. The headmaster has quickly identified fresh priorities, especially in departmental leadership, and the reviews carried out by heads of department since his arrival provide a generally clear and lucid account of each department's strengths and the areas for development. This greater accountability is welcomed and heads of department have responded, to varying degrees, by providing a greater level of monitoring of work in their areas; however, monitoring needs to be more consistent, as the school is aware. Members of the SMT work closely with those they manage, to provide support and oversight on a regular basis. Pastoral care and boarding are led well.
- 4.8 The school maintains a healthy balance between the desire to move forward and a concern to maintain the core Benedictine values, which lie at the heart of its work. In recognition of

this, development planning places the Rule of St Benedict alongside current concerns, to provide a touchstone against which priorities can be measured. Beyond this, the development plan lays out objectives and how they are to be achieved in a useful and positive way. Staff at all levels appreciate the new opportunities to play a part in a number of reviews of school practice, just as pupils appreciate the role they will play through a variety of pupil councils.

- 4.9 In most respects, policies are thorough and implemented fully. However, in some areas, limitations in monitoring lead to inconsistencies in practice, for example over the marking of pupils' work. Although middle managers are very willing to take responsibility for their areas, some are more diffident about collecting and evaluating evidence.
- 4.10 Overall, the school is well staffed and is able to recruit staff of high calibre when vacancies arise. Increasing technical support, for example for art, has usefully released time for teachers to concentrate on core activities.
- 4.11 Professional development is given a high priority, and staff appreciate the time and effort that is put into induction and appraisal. Newly qualified teachers are well supported. Of particular note is the time taken at induction to convey the school's core values, enabling all staff to work to common goals. Regular review and support is now built into the relationship between the SMT and heads of department.
- 4.12 The school is well resourced, with ICT as a key priority. The LRC provides a particularly attractive working environment used by staff as well as pupils. Financial management is strong, and relationships between school and monastery have clear boundaries and responsibilities. The school runs efficiently from day to day. The considerable commitment of all support staff contributes largely to this. Communication is much helped by the extensive use of email both by pupils and by staff. The grounds are immaculate.
- 4.13 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].
- 4.14 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 The Rule of St Benedict, which provides the core values for both monastery and school, pervades all aspects of the school community and every aspect of boys' education, underpinning the way in which the school meets its aims. Attention to the Rule secures a healthy balance between the academic, personal and spiritual aspects of pupils' development and supports a community which is calm in atmosphere, confident in itself and has a shared sense of purpose. Fundamental questions are seen to be as important as A-level grades, reflection as important as activity and helping each other as the natural thing to do. The monastery provides a natural heartbeat for the life of the school, through its own life of prayer, through its setting for the prayer and worship of the school, and through the contribution made to pupils' lives by the monks. Good standards in academic work are underpinned by the way pupils learn to take responsibility for their learning, and are supported by a high proportion of good teaching which is stimulating, challenging and well focussed on pupils' varying needs. A minority of teaching gives little opportunity for independent thought. Assessment is not yet used systematically to guide pupils' work, as the school is aware. Pastoral care is of the highest quality, both in the school as a whole and in boarding houses, and the school enjoys exceptional links with parents and the local community. All this is achieved through clear vision and leadership from monastery, governors and senior staff. Recent developments in the work of heads of department have, in particular, extended their monitoring role, though this is not yet done consistently.
- 5.2 Since the last inspection, the school has adopted the IB alongside A levels. Teaching is more consistent but, although there is some good practice, marking is still inconsistent. The school has extended its strong links with parents and the community, and boarding accommodation has improved. Key changes in the structure of governance have strengthened the links between school and monastery, whilst protecting the position of each. The school, as a reflective organisation, is well aware of how it now needs to move forward.
- 5.3 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

### Next Steps

- 5.4 The school has no major weaknesses. To improve further the high quality of education it provides it should:
1. develop further the monitoring role of heads of department, in particular to
    - spread best practice as widely as possible,
    - eliminate the small amount of teaching that is less stimulating than the rest,
    - ensure that information from assessment is used more systematically and that marking always shows pupils how to improve their work.
- 5.5 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is required.

## 6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The inspectors examined samples of pupils' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with pupils. They held discussions with teaching and non-teaching staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions, assemblies and worship in the Abbey Church. 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.
- 6.2 National Minimum Boarding Standards were inspected by a team of two inspectors from Ofsted inspectors over three days.

### List of Inspectors

Mr Ian Newton	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Elizabeth Cairncross	Head, HMC School
Mr Stephen Holroyd	Head of Department, HMC School
Mrs Kate McCarey	Former Housemistress and current teacher, HMC School
Mr Alan Cooper	Professional Tutor and Housemaster, HMC School
Mr Nigel Lashbrook	Head, HMC School
Mr Daniel Phillips	Head of Department, HMC School