



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HARROGATE LADIES' COLLEGE

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Harrogate Ladies' College

Full Name of College	Harrogate Ladies' College		
DfE Number	815/6012		
EYFS Number	EY400425		
Registered Charity Number	529579		
Address	Harrogate Ladies' College Clarence Drive Harrogate North Yorkshire HG1 2QG		
Telephone Number	01423 504543		
Fax Number	01423 568893		
Email Address	enquire@hlc.org.uk		
Headmistress	Mrs Rhiannon Wilkinson		
Chair of Governors	Mrs Sarah Pullan		
Age Range	2 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	614		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (114 boys; 500 girls)		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	23	5-11: 183
	3-5 (EYFS):	94	11-18: 314
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	452	Capacity for flexi-boarding: 20
Number of Boarders	Total:	155	
	Full:	148	Weekly: 7
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	10 May 2011 to 11 May 2011		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in May 2006.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

A specific inspection of boarding was not carried out and the report does not contain judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. Any comments on boarding arising from this inspection are in the context of the school as a whole. The existing report on boarding was produced in January 2010 by the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit

- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	3
The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills	3
The quality of the pupils' personal development	4
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	5
3 ACTION POINTS	7
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	7
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	7
4 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	8
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	8
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	8
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	8
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	9
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	10

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Harrogate Ladies' College is an independent day and boarding school for pupils aged from two to eighteen years. The college has three parts: Bankfield, which includes most of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), for boys and girls aged two to four; Highfield, the prep school for boys and girls aged four to eleven, which includes the Reception class of the EYFS under separate leadership; and the senior school for girls aged eleven to eighteen. Each has its own head under the overall leadership of the headmistress of the senior school and they share a common governing body. There are currently 614 pupils of whom 155 are boarders, seven of whom board weekly. Boys constitute just over one third of pupils aged under eleven. The college opened in 1893 as a senior school, to educate girls, and moved to the present site in 1904. It became a member of the Allied Schools Group in 1928. Bankfield was opened in 1997 and the prep school in 1999. The college is a Christian foundation but welcomes pupils of all faiths or none.
- 1.2 The school is based around Edwardian buildings in Harrogate together with later additions, with boarding accommodated in four houses. The senior and junior schools are on a single site and Bankfield nearby. Since the last inspection in 2006, the school has refurbished part of the main school building as a business school. The chair of governors took up the post in 2010. The headmistress was appointed in 2009 and the head of the prep school in 2010.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide an education which is a liberating and life-enhancing experience, through a curriculum that helps to develop its pupils intellectually, morally, spiritually and creatively and encourages independent thought. It believes that everything that happens in the school must be in the interests of the pupils. It seeks to promote tolerance and fairness; commitment, self-discipline and a climate of high expectations; clarity of vision, flexibility and creativity and a sense of responsibility and respect.
- 1.4 Pupils are offered places in Bankfield as available and at the prep school following a visit and written assessment tests. Nearly all girls proceed from the prep to the senior school, although a few join local maintained schools. Admission to the senior school is by written tests and interview. The average ability of pupils in all three schools is above the national average. Tests at age eleven confirm a wide range of abilities, including over a tenth of pupils being of below average ability.
- 1.5 Most pupils come from Yorkshire. One third of pupils in the senior school come from overseas, mostly from mainland China and Hong Kong. Pupils come mainly from professional households. There are 123 pupils who have English as an additional language (EAL), 95 of whom receive additional support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. There are 65 pupils who have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) of whom 30 receive specialist help with their learning.

- 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 tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Minors	Nursery
Majors	Nursery
Upstairs Majors	Nursery
Reception	Reception

Preparatory School

School	NC name
Prep 1	Year 1
Prep 2	Year 2
Prep 3	Year 3
Prep 4	Year 4
Prep 5	Year 5
Prep 6	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
Upper 3rd	Year 7
Lower 4 th	Year 8
Upper 4 th	Year 9
Lower 5 th	Year 10
Upper 5 th	Year 11
Lower 6 th	Year 12
Upper 6 th	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The pupils' overall achievement is excellent. The school's aims to develop its pupils intellectually and encourage independent thought are met well. Pupils of all abilities and ages, achieve consistently well in response to good, often excellent teaching which shows high expectations of pupils. Pupils with LDD achieve at equivalent levels to their peers. Those with EAL achieve high standards, particularly in the sixth form, supported by strong provision. The achievement of more able pupils, and those with particular talents, is good, enabled by a range of opportunities outside the classroom to develop their interests. They make rapid progress when teaching provides tasks tailored to their potential, for example in science and literacy in the prep school and physical education in the senior school, but these are not consistently offered. Pupils demonstrate high levels of achievement in creative subjects, exemplified by excellent singing in choirs at all ages, and in art and design technology (DT).
- 2.2 Pupils develop consistently good knowledge, skills and understanding, including the use of information and communication technology (ICT). They are highly articulate. Year 4 pupils gave fluent accounts of how they spent money allocated to buy playtime resources. Pupils develop high linguistic skills across a range of modern foreign languages (MFL). Writing skills are well developed, and numeracy and mathematical skills are strong, as are knowledge and understanding of science. Sixth-form physicists handle data in graphic form highly effectively. Pupils regularly achieve national and county representative honours in lacrosse and others have enjoyed national success in athletics, netball and fell running competitions. They participate successfully in mathematics challenges and many achieve excellent results in instrumental and speech examinations, including distinctions at high grades for their age.
- 2.3 The following analysis of examination attainment uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010, the most recent three-year period for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained schools and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Those at A level have been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools and in line with those for maintained selective schools. In 2010 81% of A-level results were at grades A* to B. Many pupils achieve places at universities with rigorous entry requirements. The pupils' attainment in the prep school cannot be judged in relation to average performance in national tests, but, on the evidence available from their work in class and in workbooks, it is high in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment, together with the consistently good teaching observed in the prep school indicates that pupils make good progress relative to pupils of similar ability. Progress is exceptional in Years 7 to 11.
- 2.4 Pupils are highly effective learners, responding well to varied styles of teaching. They study hard, showing excellent focus. They co-operate productively and thrive when encouraged to work independently. Their work is presented with great care and precision in many cases.

- 2.5 The excellent quality of the curriculum in both the prep and senior schools contributes strongly to their learning. In the prep, younger pupils benefit from the consistency of approach provided by teaching in most subjects from class teachers. Older prep pupils develop well in response to teaching by specialists, often from the senior school, providing consistency across the two sections. In Years 7 to 9 pupils benefit from a broad curriculum with particularly good opportunities to study MFL. They are well prepared to choose from a good range of options at GCSE and an excellent, extensive programme of A-level subjects. At all ages, well-structured schemes of work in personal, social and health education (PSHE) contribute highly effectively to the pupils' personal development, supported by many and varied opportunities for physical development. Creative opportunities in music, drama, and art and design enable the development of a wide range of skills and interests. The curricular provision is enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities. From 'funky feet' in the prep to an 'international women in film club' in the senior school, pupils receive imaginative opportunities to develop wider interests; form tutors monitor these and report to parents about them.
- 2.6 Consistently good, often excellent teaching supports the pupils' learning highly effectively. Many pupils commented on the willingness of staff to give help outside lessons at any time. Teaching demonstrates a variety of styles, which the pupils appreciate. It is always effectively planned and consistently shows high levels of subject knowledge. The best includes a wealth of different activities to stimulate the pupils' interest. When teaching offers less variety of approach or creates a less stimulating atmosphere, pupils maintain an appropriate level of progress through their highly developed learning skills and excellent focus, but there are insufficient opportunities for more rapid progress. Teaching shows good awareness of the pupils' needs, although the provision of challenge for more able pupils is sometimes inconsistent in the senior school. A good range of library and other resources supports learning. Oral feedback in lessons includes helpful advice on how to improve. Much marking, for example in MFL, provides good targets for future achievement, but this is not yet consistent across all subject areas. The school has developed its use of assessment data to monitor the pupils' progress and is considering how to improve the use of standardised benchmarks further to support teaching.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.7 The pupils' excellent personal development successfully reflects the school's aim that pupils should develop morally, spiritually and creatively and gain a sense of responsibility and respect. They demonstrate high levels of confidence, exhibited very effectively in a senior assembly presentation on food. Prep school pupils showed high levels of self-esteem when invited to consider personal challenges in response to a presentation on climbing mountains. Pupils in GCSE religious studies wrote persuasively, debating the existence of God. Pupils develop strong moral awareness, supporting petitions on behalf of those unjustly imprisoned and showing a clear understanding of the need for codes of behaviour and their implications from the very youngest age.
- 2.8 The pupils' welcoming attitude to visitors and new pupils, and their excellent social skills testify to the school's support for their social development. Pupils in both the prep and senior schools readily take on roles of responsibility, such as serving on the food committee, and those in Year 12 act as heads of house. Older pupils support younger, strengthening ties between sections of the school. Strong cultural awareness is apparent in response to outstanding opportunities, such as regular

trips abroad for sports and cultural activities. The school's multi-cultural community promotes a stimulating range of experiences which pupils share easily, mixing well. Pupils develop a good understanding of Western art and language cultures through excellent opportunities such as the foreign film club and regular art trips and concert-giving. Enthusiastic participation in drama supports successful house plays and school productions.

- 2.9 The pupils' very high levels of personal development are supported by outstanding pastoral care and excellent arrangements to ensure their welfare, health and safety. Pupils of all ages feel well supported and show equal concern for one another. Pupils commented on the care received from both boarding and day staff, from form tutors, and medical staff. This strongly reflects the school's aim that everything it does should be in the interests of the pupils. Parents expressed high satisfaction with the pastoral care provided. Highly successful procedures are in place to promote good behaviour. The school has excellent arrangements to safeguard pupils, including boarders, and these are implemented highly effectively, with appropriate training for staff in place. It has strong measures to guard against bullying and pupils are confident that any such issues are dealt with well should they occur. Planning for access for those with physical or learning needs is good. Attendance and admission registers are kept methodically. Excellent arrangements exist for pupils who are unwell. Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are strong. The school promotes healthy living through PSHE, sporting opportunities and healthy choices at mealtimes.
- 2.10 Boarding makes a significant contribution to school life and is a key element of the school's ethos, enabling provision for all senior school pupils to stretch into the evening, for example by providing opportunities for homework to be completed after school. Boarders benefit from the wide range of activities and are given good additional opportunities at weekends which they appreciate. Good provision for study in the evenings, whether through study bedrooms for older pupils or the availability of library resources, assists the pupils' academic development. Boarders from all backgrounds enthusiastically enter into the life of the school and enjoy good relationships. The school has begun to extend the range of backgrounds from which boarders are drawn with success, particularly in the sixth form and has increased opportunities for boarding on a flexible basis. Accommodation in town houses near to the main school buildings gives boarders access to privacy but allows for easy communication.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.11 Governance gives effective support to the school's provision for the pupils' development. It provides strong oversight of those areas where it has legal responsibilities. Recent rigorous financial oversight has placed the school on a secure footing from which realistic strategic planning for future development can take place. Governors are well informed about senior managers' development of the ethos of the school and support their planning for future development. They have given effective support to recent initiatives to integrate the operational practices of different sections of the school. Although no structure for the formal appraisal of the headmistress is currently in place, plans exist to use the experience of relevant governors to facilitate this, building on the good informal appraisal which currently operates. The governing body includes a range of expertise across different fields. This includes good provision for oversight of the EYFS and of boarding. Membership fruitfully reflects the school's ties with the Allied Schools Group.

Governors ensure that appropriate resources and staffing are in place to support the pupils' learning, together with well-kept buildings.

- 2.12 Strong leadership has ensured that the school has recently arrived at a point where detailed planning for the future can be put in place across all areas of the school's activities. This includes the development of boarding, the curriculum, closer links between different sections of the school and, when finances allow, buildings. Senior leaders have a very clear vision of the school that they feel best serves the interests of the pupils, in line with its aims. They show energy and resolve in pursuing it, reflected in the pupils' successful academic progress and excellent personal development.
- 2.13 Good self-evaluation is a significant element in the school's successful management overall. It leads to well-focused, carefully refined policy, particularly strong in the area of pastoral care. This has been implemented and monitored highly successfully to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety. Many recent developments focus on further improving teaching and learning, such as agreeing principles of best practice in the prep school and the revision of arrangements to support individual pupils' needs in the senior school. These are supported by recent initiatives to promote the sharing of best practice in both sections of the school, for example through peer lesson observation. Many have begun to bear fruit with effective and enthusiastic support from middle managers, but not all are yet fully implemented and monitored. A regular system of staff appraisal identifies appropriate areas for professional development and is well focused on benefits to pupils. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff and governors to work with children, and their recording, are robust. The school community embraces a large number of secretarial, administrative and other non-teaching staff, who play an effective part in supporting pupils.
- 2.14 The quality of the school's links with parents is excellent. The school encourages parents to attend events, sports fixtures and performances. It offers events to support parents with information about bringing up contemporary teenagers. These opportunities are enhanced by the work of an active parents' association which organises fundraising events such as a Burns Night supper. Methods of communication are strong and appreciated by parents. The school provides all the required information to parents of pupils and prospective pupils through its website and other materials.
- 2.15 Parents showed strong satisfaction with the school in their questionnaire responses, particularly with the curriculum and extra-curricular provision and the school's promotion of worthwhile attitudes. These views were confirmed by inspection findings.
- 2.16 Parents receive regular information about their children's work and progress through excellent quality reports, most containing clear targets for improvement. An effective complaints procedure is in place, although no complaints have been received recently. Parental concerns are dealt with sensitively, reasonably and promptly.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.
- 3.2 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 4 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
 - 1. Ensure that all teaching reflects the qualities of the most stimulating, utilising the pupils' highly effective learning skills, and provides targets for improvement and, in the senior school, appropriate levels of challenge for the more able.
 - 2. Improve management and communication in the EYFS by providing a cohesive and unified approach to the development of policy and procedures.
 - 3. Undertake more formal monitoring of the EYFS and use the information gained to identify development priorities.

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

4.(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good with some outstanding features. These include the outcomes for children, relationships between children and staff and links with parents. Children achieve well, making good and sometimes outstanding progress. They are well cared for and safeguarded effectively. The leadership and management of the EYFS is good overall. Issues from the previous inspection have been addressed. However, the absence of an overall leader reduces communication across the provision and limits opportunities for review, evaluation and development planning.

4.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.2 Leadership and management of the EYFS are good. The children's safety is a priority. Their health, safety and well-being are enhanced by the consistent implementation of suitable policies and procedures. The setting actively promotes equality and inclusion. The experienced and well qualified staff use resources well to promote learning. Parents have good opportunities to engage in their child's learning and are very supportive of the school. Links with the local authority, the prep department and other receiving schools contribute to smooth transitions at every level. The split-site arrangements, together with separate management structures for the Reception and pre-school years, reduce the quality of communication and opportunities to plan for future development. Informal monitoring of teaching and learning takes place in both settings, but there is no unified development plan.

4.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage

4.3 Provision for the children's learning, development and welfare, including those under three, is good. An outstanding feature is the quality of the outdoor area in Bankfield which is used well to promote children's physical, social and creative development. However, the limitations of the accommodation, and its impact on the organization of teaching groups in Bankfield, reduce the access that older children have to these facilities. Reception children have their own small play area and benefit from sharing playtimes with prep school pupils. In both settings staff provide interesting and varied learning opportunities for children, suited to their individual needs and based on good assessments. There is an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-chosen activities. All staff are vigilant in their care of children, and they help them to develop safe and healthy habits and to behave well. Observation is increasingly being used to set individual next steps in learning. Children's educational experiences are enhanced by the many visitors to the settings and after-school activities such as tennis coaching.

4.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage

- 4.4 The outcomes for the children in the EYFS, including those under three, are outstanding. Children are very happy and enjoy their time in the setting. They acquire good language and communication skills. Younger children develop good co-ordination and skills of enquiry by exploring different objects and materials such as sand, water and paint. Children increase their knowledge and understanding of the world, learning about people who help them and studying people from different countries. They demonstrate very good levels of independence by managing their own snack boxes and dressing themselves. They understand the need to wash their hands, make healthy choices at mealtimes and exercise regularly. They feel safe and secure in the setting through the regular reassurance and encouragement they receive from staff. The Reception children demonstrate proficiency in early writing and number and by the end of that year, most meet or exceed the Early Learning Goals.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 4.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.

Complaints since the last inspection

- 4.6 Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a sample of lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mr Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Laura Brook	Key Stage Coordinator (COBIS and HMC School)
Mrs Hilary French	Head (GSA School)
Mrs Sheila Boyle	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Pamela Pollock	Early Years Team Inspector (Head of Early Years, GSA School)