

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS COUNCIL
(ISC)**

INSPECTION OF

SHREWSBURY HOUSE SCHOOL

By the

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE
(ISI)**

On

8th – 11th May, 2006

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INSPECTION REPORT ON

Shrewsbury House School

Full Name of the School	Shrewsbury House School
DfES Number	3146002
Registered Charity Number	277324
Address	107 Ditton Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6RL
Telephone Number	020 8399 3066
Fax Number	020 8399 9529
Email Address	office@shspost.co.uk
Headteacher	Mr. M. Ross
Chair of Governors	Mr. A. Weiss
Age Range	7 – 14 years
Gender	Boys
Inspection Dates	8th - 11th May, 2006

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 has 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.

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 Shrewsbury House School is an independent preparatory day school for boys, founded in 1865. It came close to closure in 1979, when it was taken over by a group of parents, most of whom were on the governing body when the present headmaster was appointed in 1988. By 2000, the school had 294 boys on roll, and the numbers have remained stable since then.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide both an academic and broad education; to give a comprehensive preparation for the various examinations required by independent Senior Schools; to develop sound work attitudes and habits; to promote spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to advance individual development, including instilling self-esteem, confidence and wholeheartedness. There is great emphasis placed on ensuring that boys participate in sport, music, the arts and any other sphere of endeavour in which they demonstrate an interest.
- 1.3 Entry to the school is gained by one of two possible routes. The Guaranteed Places scheme is a non-competitive testing process available to some of the boys whose parents regard Shrewsbury House as their first choice school. The number of candidates is limited by the number of places available through that process. Places for the test are secured on a first-come-first-served basis. At least one fifth of places after this process is complete are filled by a competitive entry examination.
- 1.4 The school is on a quiet road in Surbiton, and is based around a fine old house with a playing field attached; it has been extended very significantly over the years. The facilities have been improved including by the acquisition of further playing fields in 2002, and the completion of two new wings. The first of these, including a new cafeteria, dining area, a new theatre/assembly hall adjoining a new music centre, which has eight practice/tuition rooms, along with a new entrance lobby and new office facilities, was completed in 2004. The second new wing was completed in 2005. This comprises fourteen rooms; ten replacement classrooms, including two new science laboratories; and new art, pottery and technology rooms, and a large new library. The school has developed the use of its website significantly, so that homework, subject notes and general communications with parents are all available through its interactive areas; it is also in the process of equipping each classroom with flat desks for every boy in the class, which enclose desktop computers which can be released at the pull of the handle.
- 1.5 Boys' average ability is above the national average. If they are performing in line with their abilities, their results will be above the average for all maintained primary schools.
- 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.

School	NC name
Forms 6	Year 3
Forms 5	Year 4
Forms 4	Year 5
Forms 3	Year 6
Forms 2	Year 7
Forms 1	Year 8

2. THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The Educational Experience Provided

- 2.1 Shrewsbury House very successfully reflects the aims and philosophy of the school in the education it provides. The school provides a wide variety of educational opportunities; these experiences, in which the boys' intellectual, personal, physical and aesthetic needs are well met, support breadth of learning very well. The opportunities also allow boys to build on their own interests and aptitudes. The curriculum provided has been broadened even more since the last inspection, to provide a very good balance of creative, physical, academic and aesthetic activities.
- 2.2 Key emphasis is given to ensuring boys' participation, wholeheartedly, in a range of school activities. Their experiences are enriched by extra-curricular activities; the programme offered is extensive, varied and flexible. No boy is turned away from an activity after school; the inclusive nature of the education provided leads the school to open a second parallel club instead. The range of activities both enriches and complements the formal curriculum. Whilst exemplary attention is given to preparation for senior school, including for the necessary examinations, this never detracts from the breadth of activity offered.
- 2.3 The broad education provided gives boys experiences that really foster and encourage a wide range of interest and understanding, as well as a very solid grounding in literacy, numeracy, science and technology. Of particular note is the increasing emphasis given within the school to the use of computers. Computers are rapidly being made available for each boy in each class, providing admirable and innovative opportunities to use computers in the way they will in later life.
- 2.4 The school also provides very well for their social, physical, aesthetic and creative development. Boys are given opportunities to develop speaking and listening skills through working collaboratively in pairs and in groups; drama production in year groups gives every boy the opportunity to take a significant role, as well as participate regularly in more minor roles. The proportion of boys taking individual music lessons, the number who then play in a band or ensemble, and the quality of music provided in the curriculum, make music overall a key and very successful part of school life.
- 2.5 The curriculum is planned effectively and provides excellent equality of access and opportunity for the boys. Long-, medium- and short-term planning are detailed and thorough, and support both teaching and learning well.
- 2.6 The school is predominantly selective in its intake, and because it is clear with parents from the outset about what special educational needs it is able to support and which it is not, there are few boys requiring special provision. There are no boys for whom English is an additional or foreign language who are at an early stage of language acquisition; similarly there are none with a statement of special educational needs. When occasionally boys are identified as having particular needs, support planning is very ably led by the deputy head. At these times, the school works hard to provide appropriate support without withdrawing the boy from lessons, and stays in very close contact with the parents; it is almost invariably able to help the individual make the necessary progress.
- 2.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the curriculum [Standard 1].

Pupils' Learning and Achievements

- 2.8 The boys at Shrewsbury House have continued to be educated very well: they achieve good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in both academic and non academic endeavours. They also learn to apply these skills effectively and creatively. They are particularly successful in meeting the relevant school aims, namely the development of sound work attitudes and habits, and preparation for senior school; the boys undoubtedly develop the appropriate skills and attitudes essential for success in learning, both in life at senior school, and in later life.
- 2.9 Of particular note, is the broad achievement of boys: any individual is likely to show particular skill and understanding in one or more academic subjects, represent the school in a range of sports, take minor and major roles in school plays, create in art, pottery or design technology; and play a musical instrument individually and as part of a group. In addition, he might learn magic, participate in martial arts or shoot. Overall, the school is justly proud of the boys who participate widely and with enthusiasm as much as those who have a special and specific talent.
- 2.10 The school does not enter its boys for the nationally standardised tests at the end of key stages, but carries out a wide range of testing which gives a broad picture of attainment. Boys are of above average ability when they first enter the school. At ages 7, 11 and 13, as seen in their work and in class, the attainment of boys is good, in comparison to their abilities and well above the national average expected of pupils of these ages in the maintained sector. Results over the last few years from the Common Entrance examination taken at the end of the Year 8 suggest strongly that the levels of attainment meet the standard required by the relevant senior schools. The school has a very good record of assisting boys gain scholarships (academic, musical, all-rounders and sporting) to top senior schools. School sports teams do very well against local and national opposition, regularly winning at the top levels: they regularly compete at the highest levels, and win. The majority of boys play musical instruments, many to a high standard; all regularly take part in drama productions.
- 2.11 The boys are clearly products of a well balanced education. They are articulate, but listen carefully; they debate issues with confidence, but also with sensitivity; they argue cogently, and frequently show they can think for themselves; they read intelligently and can write fluently. They are able to apply mathematical concepts effectively in contexts other than in mathematics lessons and use information and communication technology (ICT) with precision in many situations.
- 2.12 Almost always, the boys are well organised without too much prompting, especially as they mature. They study and work co-operatively with others in class, in teams and in creative activities. Most work well on their own, settle quickly, apply themselves with enthusiasm and persevere in the whole range of school accomplishments.

Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development of Pupils

- 2.13 The all-round personal development of the boys is an important aim of the school; it is successful in meeting it. Judged to be very positive at the time of the previous inspection, this aspect has continued to be a central part of school life. The school's emphasis on team games, on musical ensemble playing and drama productions has notable impact in all four areas. Boys' moral and social development is particularly strong; spiritual and cultural development is also good. Support for the boys' understanding of the multi-cultural nature of society is less well established.

- 2.14 Boys develop well spiritually through assemblies, religious education (RE) lessons and other areas of the curriculum, such as in a geography lesson when Year 7 boys discussed issues surrounding poverty. The level of understanding of the boys of how other human beings might feel, and how that impacted on their own sense of well being, was noteworthy. Assemblies also sometimes provide opportunities for reflection, for example when Year 3 boys heard the story of Pandora's box and were able to consider the need for hope when facing difficulties. Thus through the curriculum and through other school activities, the boys acquire a sense of identity and self-worth, as well as deepening personal insight. As they mature and benefit further from the school's support, boys gradually understand more about human values and beliefs, including religious beliefs, and about the way in which they affect other peoples' lives. The strength of the relationships and the positive atmosphere at school enhance the boys' confidence and thus they have a well developed awareness of their own identity. Enhancement of the boys' spiritual development is inconsistent, as the quality of discussion of spirituality developed in tutor times and house assemblies is variable.
- 2.15 Not only through the curriculum and through sport, but from the excellent role models presented by staff, boys quickly develop their ability to distinguish right from wrong. They show an instinctive respect for the school's rules, in part due to careful discussion of the reasons behind these. The extensive participation in team games promotes a sense of fairness and all boys play matches for the school, thereby enjoying social interaction with children from other schools and the opportunity to show their well developed moral sense. For example, Year 8 boys were reminded clearly and positively about correct cricket etiquette, which they then adhered to; they were also reminded about the need to support fellow team members, whether successful or not, which they also did, sensibly but enthusiastically.
- 2.16 Social development is very good. The boys accept responsibility for their behaviour, often show initiative, and understand how they can and should contribute to school life. The school has high expectations of manners and the boys are courteous and polite to visitors. In classrooms, a poster in the shape of a football reminds boys of the school's code of conduct and the school's raising of over £27,000 for the King's World Trust and the local Dysart School for the physically disabled pupils is celebrated in a prominent display under the heading 'Shrewsbury House considers others', which further enhances the boys' social development. The older boys have many opportunities to show leadership and take responsibility in school: middle boys are less well provided with such opportunities.
- 2.17 Boys develop well culturally and in particular develop a good appreciation of their own culture. There are many opportunities to develop cultural awareness, including a visit to Pompeii every two years, the annual residential trip to France and a wide range of sporting tours, open to every boy in the year group, to countries such as Grenada and South Africa. The Headmaster's Club, which is open to all boys, as appropriate, helps to widen cultural experience through a programme of films, theatre groups and invited speakers. Other parts of the taught curriculum help boys to widen their appreciation of cultural traditions.
- 2.18 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [Standard 2].

The Quality of Teaching (Including Assessment)

- 2.19 The quality of teaching is good; there were many examples of excellent teaching seen throughout the school and a very small number of lessons that were not satisfactory. The strength of teaching supports the overall aims of the school very well. This is a further

improvement from the last inspection when teaching was also good overall, but less outstanding teaching was seen.

- 2.20 Particular strengths in much of the teaching seen were in the planning of lessons, the use of a range of methods to encourage learning and in the management of class time. All teachers know their boys well; they show good understanding of the boys' aptitudes, needs and prior attainments. Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a sensible range of resources to enthuse and underline learning. Boys of all abilities acquire new knowledge well and make good progress according to their ability; they increase their understanding of a topic and develop new skills. Teachers encourage boys to behave responsibly at all times.
- 2.21 In the very best teaching seen in a wide range of subjects, the main characteristic that marked it out was the passion and enthusiasm with which information was presented and discussed. There was often a real buzz of excitement from the boys. Teachers worked with the boys to create an atmosphere of anticipation; this led to impressive learning. The teaching fostered in boys not just the ability to apply intellectual, physical or creative knowledge, but real interest in their work, and the ability to think for themselves. These lessons were creative, often involved taking risks with activities that could be, for example, noisy or provoke strong reactions from the boys; the result of this was boys who were inspired and challenged. The best teachers presented information confidently and with real enthusiasm; management of boys' behaviour in these lessons was excellent, because it was almost invisible. An RE lesson illustrates this: Year 7 boys discussed the story of David's affair with Bathsheba and his subsequent murder of her husband, which could well have prompted silliness or inappropriate comments. But the exciting way in which it was presented and the manner in which the boys were challenged to think about the moral dilemmas the story illustrates, made the learning a very powerful experience.
- 2.22 In the few lessons seen in the school that were not entirely satisfactory, the subject matter under consideration was presented in a rather dull manner and there was little sparkle; teaching methods were predictable, with everyday resources and an atmosphere of routine, rather than of wonder.
- 2.23 The overall quality of games coaching is noteworthy. By employing coaches who have a real experience of specific sports, often to a high standard, the school is providing role models to whom the boys really look up and from whom they can learn important lessons relevant far beyond the games field.
- 2.24 Teachers are rigorous in the setting and marking of class and home work. The school has set up very effective systems for boys' performance to be evaluated, by reference to one of the school's aims, that of preparation for senior school. The information that comes from this marking feeds into the regular reporting system for parents and is appreciated by them. It often has a clear impact on the work that is set subsequently by the teacher. In many instances, verbal feedback accompanies the marking of work, which is very helpful to the boys. However, not all of the written marking provides sufficient commentary on specifically how boys could improve the work further, which highlights inconsistency in teachers' understanding of the assessment system. Thus whilst the boys understand the grading system very well, they are not consistently clear about how to improve their work.
- 2.25 The school meets the regulatory requirements for teaching [Standard 1].

3. THE QUALITY OF CARE AND RELATIONSHIPS

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

- 3.1 The high quality of pastoral care is good with some outstanding features; it is a strength of the school. It is welcoming and the welfare of the boys is well provided for. This was a strength at the time of the last inspection too; the school continues to be successful in meeting its aim to instil 'confidence and wholeheartedness' in the boys.
- 3.2 Teachers and other staff provide very effective support and guidance for the boys; in relation to the preparation for examinations, it is outstanding. The boys feel that staff work hard on their behalf and that they are approachable for additional help when there is a need. The concerned approach displayed by staff is underpinned very effectively by the arrangements for the pastoral care, very well led by the deputy head. There are good opportunities for teachers to discuss with boys issues such as team work, manners, boys' behaviour and other pastoral issues, for example during tutor periods, year group meetings and in assemblies. The programming of topics at these times is largely informal and there is no formal monitoring of the work of tutors which results in inconsistent coverage; but the overwhelming effect in the school is positive.
- 3.3 The quality of relationships, both between staff and boys, and amongst the boys themselves, is outstanding. Classrooms are warm and friendly places in which the boys are clear that the teachers are concerned for their well-being. The measures to promote good behaviour, specifically an effective code of conduct and a strong anti-bullying policy promote excellent behaviour both in class and around the building. The boys know to whom they should go if they experience bullying, but reported none. Staff are very good role models; they treat the boys with respect and expect to be treated with respect in return. They have high expectations of the boys' behaviour and the consistency of approach ensures boys almost always meet these expectations.
- 3.4 The school successfully safeguards the health, welfare and safety of the boys and regularly takes professional advice to support their own procedures. Measures to reduce risk are satisfactory; the school is a safe and healthy environment for both boys and staff. Child protection measures are good.
- 3.5 Boys are registered correctly when they arrive at school and later in the day. The school has a clear procedure for boys who feel unwell during school time, and a range of staff trained to administer first aid if required. Should a boy be unable to continue his normal activities, there is a suitable space set aside for them to rest or to wait to be collected, which is quiet but near to adults, in case of need. The school is meticulous in pursuing the required regulatory checks on all staff employed at the school.
- 3.6 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

- 3.7 The school has worked hard to create a constructive and mutually beneficial partnership with parents, and useful links with the wider community. These aspects of school life were good at the time of the last inspection and have developed further since then.
- 3.8 A significant majority of parents returned the questionnaire prior to the inspection, and there was widespread praise for the school ethos and procedures. Parents are clearly more than satisfied with the education and support provided for their children; the inspectors agree that the provision is high quality. There is a comprehensive system for handling complaints which is secure and well understood, though it is rarely necessary.
- 3.9 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in activities at the school: socially, sporting and musically, as well as fundraising events, and there is a thriving Parents Association. They are able to be suitably involved in the work of their children through an informative and regularly updated website, and through the boys' prep books. There are good opportunities for formal discussion with staff about their children at parents' meetings; this is supplemented by an 'open door' policy at the school for more informal meetings. Staff also respond efficiently to e-mail queries from parents. They are also kept well informed about school events, especially the numerous sporting and musical activities. These form an important link between the school and home.
- 3.10 Parents are content with the information they receive from the school, the main source of which comes in the form of weekly newsletters posted on the website. They also receive work cards twice a term which provide comprehensive details of their child's progress and effort. They also receive full reports twice a year, which provide parents with a wider view of their children's efforts, achievements and attainments.
- 3.11 The school promotes positive links with the wider community. It plays an active part in local life, for example at Harvest Festival, when gifts brought in to school are donated to local elderly people in need. There is joint use of school facilities, and the school holds its Christmas Carol at a local church: this is well attended by the community. Significant funds are raised for local children with learning disabilities. The impact of these links is to enhance further the personal development of the boys. The understanding they gain of people less fortunate than themselves and the circumstances in which they live, both in the United Kingdom and overseas, supports their growing maturity. It has a tangible positive effect on the way that the boys understand and treat one another in school, too.
- 3.12 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].

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The Quality of Governance

- 4.1 The quality of governance is good; some aspects are excellent, especially the long-term strategic and financial planning. Governors support the school's aims effectively and have ensured that all three issues raised at the time of the last inspection, though minor, have been successfully remedied. Governors' detailed knowledge of the school and their long-term commitment to it is a key part of its continuing success. The structure of the governing body and the management arrangements relating to it are well defined; they enable sound oversight of the school and contribute effectively to its strategic operation. In particular, the strategic and financial planning for the school's future is excellent. Management of the premises and investment in resources are very well directed. There is clear accord amongst governors as to their role in maintaining the ethos, the high quality and further development of the school, as well as in ensuring compliance with regulatory and legal requirements. Rigorous procedures for the regular review of the safety of the boys are in place; one governor takes specific responsibility for child protection and special educational needs. There is appropriate involvement in the school and regular opportunities to meet with staff. As part of a good working relationship between governors and the headmaster, the latter is provided with both affirmative support and constructive challenge, as required.

The Quality of Leadership and Management

- 4.2 Leadership and management are good; the school is successful in meeting its aims because of this. The management of the school has become even more secure and effective since the last inspection and leadership continues to be a strength.
- 4.3 The headmaster provides excellent leadership, being unwavering in pursuit of the school's aims and purposes; he is pivotal to the success of the school. He is very well supported by the deputy head and by the senior management team; together, they are effective in analysing the school's needs, setting priorities wisely and planning to meet those priorities prudently. For example, the school is successful in securing and motivating high quality teaching and coaching staff.
- 4.4 The headmaster provides a clear and decisive sense of direction, which with the support of senior teachers and other staff, has produced radical improvements in the curriculum and facilities provided for the boys. In particular, working closely with ICT staff, the aligning of 21st Century computer technology with a traditional Prep School ethos is exciting and innovative; although not yet complete, this expansion of ICT use and competence is already effective. Similarly, the redevelopment of the library has improved the facility very significantly and it is now a stimulating and fundamental part of boys' lives at school.
- 4.5 Heads of department provide proficient subject management. They are effective in drawing up and implementing appropriate procedures and policies, with the senior management team, in checking and reviewing the effectiveness of these. They use opportunities to observe colleagues teaching to improve standards and work hard to develop their departments further. Teachers' professional development is not planned to maximise impact on boys' learning, nor necessarily in line with the school's development plan. Not all staff are as aware of current or recent advances in education as they might be; thus opportunities to support further the quality of teaching and learning, and the curriculum are missed.

- 4.6 The school is administered and supported proficiently and conscientiously: secretarial, bursarial, maintenance and catering support is provided effectively and with minimal fuss, so that managers and teaching staff can concentrate on the boys. The physical fabric of the building is well cared for, and the grounds are maintained in excellent condition. Financial resources are well managed, so that they secure appropriate resources that support the educational aims of the school, and help to meet the needs of the school's boys.
- 4.7 The school meets the regulatory requirements for the suitability of proprietors and staff and for premises and accommodation [Standards 4 and 5].

5. CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Overall Conclusions

- 5.1 The school is very successful in meeting its aims. Shrewsbury House School is an harmonious community that is effective in providing a broad range of subjects and activities; there are good opportunities for all boys to achieve their potential. There is a pleasant relaxed atmosphere, boys are very well behaved, but they work hard and do well in academic and other spheres. The provision of music and sport are strengths of the school.
- 5.2 Boys' achievements throughout the school are often considerable, in academic subjects, in sport and in music, art and drama. These achievements are due to good quality teaching, strong leadership, prudent governance, and efficient structures and systems to support learning; the headmaster leads from the front and is pivotal to the success of the school. Teachers' use of information on what boys have learned and how they could do better is not as effective as it could be. The headmaster, teachers, coaches and staff are dedicated and committed; they encourage high achievement from boys of all aptitudes. The education opportunities provided are available to all boys; the headmaster and staff place great emphasis on inclusivity in all activities. The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 5.3 Curriculum and resource development has been innovative and successfully embeds 21st Century technology in a traditional prep school ethos with a genuine family atmosphere. Staff are supported well by the school's managers, but the process of professional development is not as well-defined as it should be. The boys themselves are a credit to the school and to their parents; they are pleasant, confident, well behaved and responsible. Opportunities to enhance further boys' understanding of other cultures are not as consistent as they should be. Boys are rightly proud of their school and thrive in an environment where they are both challenged to do their best, and nurtured and well cared for.
- 5.4 Strengths identified during the last inspection have been successfully built upon; the minor weaknesses have been tackled successfully.
- 5.5 The school meets all the regulatory requirements.

Next Steps

- 5.6 In order to build further on the many strengths of the school, it should consider the following:
1. developing a more consistent approach to the use of ongoing assessment in helping boys of all abilities make further improvements to the standard of their work;
 2. aligning more closely the plan for the further development of teachers' professional expertise and training, with that for whole school development;
 3. supporting further all teachers who require further assistance in the use of information and communication technology;
 4. exploring ways of providing more experiences that help boys' appreciation of and respect for other cultures;
- 5.7 No action in respect of regulatory requirements is needed.

6. SUMMARY OF INSPECTION EVIDENCE

- 6.1 The inspection was carried out from 8th to 11th May 2006. The inspectors examined samples of boys' work, observed lessons and conducted formal interviews with boys. 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. The responses of parents to a pre-inspection questionnaire were analysed, and the inspectors examined a range of documentation made available by the school.

List of Inspectors

M Evans	ISI Reporting Inspector
L Andrews	Head of Design Technology and Year 5, Preparatory School (IAPS)
H Riches	Director of Studies, Boys Preparatory School (IAPS)
D Westcombe	Headmaster, Preparatory School (IAPS)
L Duncan	Headmistress, Preparatory School (IAPS)
J Moores	Deputy Head, Preparatory School (IAPS)