INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST JAMES INDEPENDENT SCHOOL FOR SENIOR BOYS

STANDARD INSPECTION

FINAL VISIT

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INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St James Independent School for Senior Boys

Full Name of School/College	**St James Independent School for Senior Boys**			
DCSF Number	**318/6080**			
Registered Charity Number	**270156**			
Address	**St James independent School for Senior Boys** **19 Cross Deep** **Heath Road** **Twickenham** **Middlesex** **TW1 4QG**			
Telephone Number	**020 8892 2002**			
Fax Number	**020 8892 4442**			
Email Address	**communications@stjamesboys.co.uk**			
Head	**Mr David Boddy**			
Chair of Governors	**Mr Jeremy Sinclair**			
Age Range	**11 to 18**			
Total Number of Pupils	**302**			
Gender of Pupils	**Boys**			
Numbers by Age			11-16	**248**
			16-18:	**54**
Number of Day Pupils	**285**		Capacity for flexi-boarding:	
Number of Boarders	Total:	**17**		
	Full:	**17**	Weekly:	
Inspection date	**26 Jan 2010 to 27 Jan 2010**			
Final (team) visit	**22 Feb 2010 to 24 Feb 2010**			

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PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule.* It consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in February 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

(a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
(b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
(c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
(d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
(e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
(f) The premises and accommodation
(g) The provision of information
(h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard 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.

The inspection of boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Children's Directorate of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in October 2009 and can be found at 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. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

1.1 St James Independent School for Senior Boys was founded in 1975 and is situated beside the River Thames in Twickenham. It occupies what was originally a very large house on the site of which is a grotto associated with the poet Alexander Pope. The school has very limited outdoor space and makes extensive use of local sports facilities. The school has 302 pupils on roll, all boys, aged from 11 to 18 years, with a sixth form of 54 pupils. The school does not select its pupils on academic ability and the ability range overall is slightly above the national average. Within that range, ability varies significantly, with about one-third of pupils being academically able, as well as about one-quarter who have some form of learning difficulty and disability, most of whom receive learning support. The school has one pupil with a statement of special educational needs funded by the local authority. Sixteen boys have English as an additional language of whom two receive support for their English. The pupils come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds. The great majority of them live in West London and travel daily to the school. Seventeen boys are boarders at the school.

1.2 The school is part of the St James Independent Schools group which has an over-arching governing body. Delegated responsibility for governance of the senior boys' school is taken on by the ten members of Pope's Villa Governors' Committee.

1.3 The school's aim is "….to provide a holistic education which inspires boys through a philosophical approach to human development. It aims to provide learning opportunities that nourish the body, mind and spirit of each pupil through an expansive curriculum based on classical and modern languages, sciences and humanities, as well as music, drama, art, sport, the teaching of philosophy and the daily practice of meditation. It emphasises the ability to speak well and the development of character as much as the achievement of academic results that aim to surpass the pupils' own expectations."

1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

2.1 St James Independent School for Senior Boys is a civilised learning community. Staff, boys and parents co-operate very well to support the school and to help it meet its aims. Achievement is good, and boys make good progress. Boys of all abilities, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities, as well as the most able boys, are extremely well supported by their teachers, who show remarkable commitment to their needs. The result is that their personal development is excellent. The mainstream curriculum is satisfactory but lacks sufficient technological education. Some elements of the curriculum including 'quiet time' and philosophy vary in their quality and impact. Extra-curricular activities are good. Governance and leadership are good and have prepared the school well for its move to better and more spacious accommodation in September 2010. The school has been meticulous in ensuring that its policies, procedures and documentation meet regulatory requirements in full. The school has thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors.

2.2 Parents indicate in their pre-inspection questionnaire responses that they like the school and its approach. In discussion with inspectors, the boys indicate that they enjoy school and feel well cared for.

2.3 The school has met most of the recommendations from the previous inspection report. The recommendation from the previous report about the development of technology within the curriculum has only been met in part, and more work is needed in this area.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2003, as subsequently amended.

(ii) Recommended action

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that all pupils have appropriate experience of technology.
2. Share best practice to raise the quality of teaching overall.
3. Ensure that the time used for 'quiet time' and philosophy is best used to meet the learning needs of all the pupils.

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3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills

3.1 Standards are high. The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills is good. They are well educated in accordance with the school's principal aims, particularly in the achievement of academic results that surpass the pupils' own expectations. The school has made notable improvements in response to the recommendations in the previous inspection report and these are having a positive impact on achievement. Results in GCSE and A-level examinations over the last three years for which nationally comparative data is available have been high when compared with the national averages for boys in all maintained schools. GCSE results for 2006 to 2008 show a steady improvement, with the percentage of A* to B grades increasing significantly.

3.2 At A level, results are good in relation to boys in all maintained schools. They show an upward trend from 2006 to 2008: the percentage of A to B grades rose. In 2008, the school's A to B percentage at A level was just above that for boys in maintained selective schools, a considerable achievement for a school which does not select on ability. In addition, more leavers are now applying to highly competitive universities including Oxford or Cambridge.

3.3 The boys have good levels of knowledge, understanding and skill across the curriculum, and extra-curricular activities help to promote these qualities. The pupils communicate with confidence and skill, benefiting from an emphasis on language development and speaking. The development of their mathematical and scientific skills is good. Their technological skills are developed in part through regular experience of information and communication technology (ICT), but design and technology skills are limited by the lack of provision for the subject in the curriculum.

3.4 The pupils make good progress over time in relation to their ability profile which is slightly above the national average. The boys are usually eager, willing learners who demonstrate application and perseverance in their work and in almost all lessons, particularly when actively engaged by interesting tasks. They work well individually and co-operatively; many lessons provide opportunities for paired and group work, which is undertaken to good effect without fuss. Pupils can show initiative and think independently when confronted with challenging questions or problems, and older boys in particular show creativity and a willingness to examine pre-conceptions, for example, in their work in art.

3.5 Good and consistent sporting achievement, especially in rugby, is exemplified by recent successes in the Independent Schools Association National Sevens tournament.

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3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)

3.6 The curriculum is satisfactory overall and generally meets the aims of the school by helping boys to achieve personal growth and fulfil their potential. The school's provision for boys with learning difficulties and disabilities gives good support for their learning in the keys skills of literacy and numeracy. The curriculum has improved since the previous inspection. It now provides lessons in geography, and the provision for technological education has improved through the introduction of ICT lessons and a suitably equipped computer suite. However, the school does not provide for practical experience in design and technology. The school has plans to introduce a practical technology element, in anticipation of its move to larger premises from September 2010.

3.7 The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 and 8 is suitably broad and covers the key areas of literacy, numeracy and science, with suitable provision for languages, humanities, including geography, and sport, as well as provision for aesthetic development through art, music, singing and drama. The curriculum reflects the school's aims, with the inclusion of Sanskrit, Latin, philosophy and 'quiet time'. The curriculum in Year 9 is reduced to allow pupils to focus early on chosen GCSE subjects, but they all continue to undertake a reasonably broad curriculum that includes sport, drama, singing and religious studies. In Years 7 to 9 the school makes suitable provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education.

3.8 The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 continues to provide appropriate breadth. The range of options has increased since the time of the previous inspection and now includes drama, geography, German and ICT. In Years 12 and 13 the curriculum choice is good for a school of this size and enables sixth formers to select from a range of AS and A-level courses.

3.9 The school provides a distinctive course for all its pupils on philosophy, but the content of the course does not take enough account of the pupils' age and varying abilities, or relate sufficiently to their own experience. Pupils of all ages are expected to sit in silence for the equivalent of 70 minutes per week in "quiet time". The quality of this element of the curriculum varies in its impact. Some pupils meditate, some pupils take the opportunity to read and others simply sit in silence.

3.10 The school's extra-curricular provision is good and ensures that pupils have access to drama, music and sport outside lessons, as well as clubs and societies. The school makes good provision for boys to listen to outside speakers, who talk to them on a wide range of topics including journalism, fashion, education and religion. Pupils have links with the wider community through a growing work experience programme, and some senior pupils are taking Latin into local primary schools. They reach out into the community by helping on a practical basis locally, such as 'mapping the trees' in an adjacent park or fund raising for charities further afield, such as the Tea Leaf Trust or the Haiti disaster fund. Both of these charities were chosen by the pupils themselves.

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3.(c) The contribution of teaching

3.11 The quality of teaching is good overall. Teaching has improved since the previous inspection and is generally effective in promoting progress and educating in line with the school's aims, since attention is given to personal development alongside academic achievement. Teaching enables boys to think independently and to develop a keen interest in learning.

3.12 Teaching provides good and well-focused oral guidance in how pupils can improve. For example, in a Year 8 English lesson the teacher guided pupils to respond appropriately to speeches written and delivered by their class-mates to the whole class, and all gave valuable, positive criticism. The school has developed an appraisal system for teachers in response to the previous inspection report and is now providing carefully for, and tracking, pupils with English as an additional language.

3.13 A significant minority of teaching is excellent, with widespread and active pupil involvement, a brisk pace, appropriate materials for the group and a clear focus on learning objectives. In such lessons, pupils rise to the challenge and achieve impressive standards for their abilities. Teachers usually plan their lessons well, have good subject knowledge and enjoy positive, relaxed relationships with pupils. They have high expectations and are able to keep the boys' interest. However, there is also a minority of teaching where progress is limited because time is not well managed and teachers talk too much at too high a level for all the pupils to understand, resulting in too little involvement by the pupils.

3.14 Teaching and learning resources are suitable and generally well used. Learning resources have improved since the previous inspection, including better organisation of the school library. Most rooms are now equipped with interactive white boards and computers, and these enhance teaching in many lessons.

3.15 Teachers make provision for the needs of individual pupils. For example, in a Year 11 mathematics lesson, more able pupils were beginning to prepare for AS examinations. The work of the learning support unit and the presence of support teachers in some lessons are strengths.

3.16 There has been considerable progress in the use of assessment data and analysis tools to support learning in Years 7 to 11 and at A level. Marking is regular, thorough and helpful. The appointment of a co-ordinator for assessment is having a positive influence on the quality of marking and assessment. Comments help pupils understand how to improve, and the practice of setting targets for a piece of work or a more extended period is used increasingly well in a number of subjects.

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4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

4.(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils

4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is excellent. It fully supports the school's aim of a holistic education and has been maintained at this high level since the previous inspection.

4.2 Pupils develop excellent spiritual awareness from their involvement in music, art, drama and 'quiet time'. Pupils' focus and concentration are supported well by the pause and a dedication practised at the start and end of each lesson. The pupils distinguish right from wrong. They understand the need for a rewards and sanctions system, and they regard the one in their own school as fair and consistent. They are very aware of how fortunate they are and actively work to help others less fortunate than themselves through involvement in charity work. The boys have highly developed social skills. Their roles as prefects or members of the school council and its various committees are effective in developing their social skills. They develop very well culturally through participation in debates with other local schools and through musical performances with their sister school. A comprehensive programme of overseas visits, 'activities week' and assemblies where festivals and celebrations of many faiths are explained ensures that pupils have a very good understanding of their own and other cultures.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety

4.3 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent. The quality of care was described at the previous inspection as high and this level has been increased. Support is extensive and boys, without hesitation, name a variety of adults in school to whom they can turn if they are concerned or troubled. This support system includes the form teachers and the recently introduced heads of year. The school's provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is comprehensive and much valued by the boys. Sixth-form boys welcome the sessions where careers advice and interview practice are offered. Outside advisors visit to provide helpful guidance for the university admissions process. Currently, the opportunities for experience of the workplace are limited, but there are plans to build up an experience programme.

4.4 The boys demonstrate excellent relationships with the staff and with each other. This is evident in the easy rapport between pupils of all ages, and was seen clearly at a discussion where Year 7 and Year 13 pupils were present and where they mixed well, listened attentively and spoke confidently to each other.

4.5 There is an expectation of good behaviour which pervades throughout the school. The anti-bullying policy is unambiguous and well understood by pupils and staff. The pupils are clear that bullying is unacceptable and know who to speak to if they feel that there is any evidence of bullying. The process is distinctive in that the head of the school council, a sixth form boy, is involved. Pupils feel that this is a positive move, and that, combined with appropriate intervention by teachers, it contributes to good behaviour in the school. The sanctions for poor behaviour are explicit and fair, and the merit rewards used by the staff are valued by the pupils.

4.6 Safeguarding policies are comprehensive and well understood by staff. Appropriate child protection training is given to all the staff, including peripatetic teachers. Pupils

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know of these arrangements. All required checks to ensure the suitability of adults to work with children are undertaken.

4.7 The school has effective precautions against fire and other possible risks such as the close proximity to the river and the science laboratories. Regular fire drills are carried out. Risk assessments, including those for school trips and visits, are comprehensive and overseen by a well-trained external visits co-ordinator as well as an external health and safety advisor. The care and facilities provided for sick children are good, with well-qualified staff supported by a suitable number of staff with first aid qualifications.

4.8 The school has good educational access for pupils with disabilities and has a suitable plan for improvement. Attendance and admissions registers are well maintained and kept securely for the appropriate length of time.

4.9 Despite the fact that outdoor space on the current site is limited, the boys exercise outside, including three sessions of timetabled sport on a site some distance from the school. Whilst some pupil and parent pre-inspection questionnaire responses expressed disquiet about the vegetarian nature of the food, pupils explained how this fits in with the ethos of the whole school and agreed that it is nutritious and sufficient in quantity.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

4.10 The quality of boarding education is good. Boarding provision at the school was inspected by Ofsted in October 2009 and all areas of provision were found to be good. The provision has a homely, caring, family atmosphere and is run in a way that is very much in line with the school's aims for holistic education. The provision is well led by a committed and energetic team, and plays a valuable part in the boarders' education and personal development. The boarding accommodation is well maintained and provides a private space for the older boys with a shared sitting room that provides facilities for making drinks and snacks. There are good facilities for evening activities and supper is a time for all of the boarders to sit together and share food, and clearing up in a way that they might at home. Communication with parents and ICT facilities are appropriate for the needs of the boys.

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5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 Governance is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The governing body has been significantly reorganised and supports effectively the aims of the school to develop pupils to the best of their ability. The governing body has put in place the necessary measures to ensure that they meet their responsibilities for educational standards, financial planning, and investment in staff, accommodation and resources. The governing body has taken an active role in holding the headmaster to account and in working with him to establish a vision for the future of the school. Governors have been instrumental in negotiating and securing the school's move to premises at Ashford in Surrey, to give the school much more space and improved accommodation, and allow it to grow.

5.2 The governing body brings to its work a range of professional skills that support the school well. It has carefully scrutinised the school's policy documents including those for the important area of regulatory requirements, and has helped to ensure that they are appropriate and meet requirements. The governing body has ensured that it remains fully aware of developments in the school through regular reports from the headmaster and from members of the senior team covering specific topics relevant to its responsibilities, including child protection and health and safety.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

5.3 Leadership and management are good, and reflect the school's aim to ensure that pupils achieve their potential. Since the previous inspection, and in response to its recommendations, the school has put in place new arrangements that have improved management and made it more systematic. The whole staff have worked very hard over the last few years to establish and manage the excellent personal development that pupils now achieve. The headmaster leads the school well, and has played a key role in establishing its positive ethos. He has been successful in initiating improvements in management, using his own management experience outside education. The school's self-evaluation is generally good, although it sometimes lacks the concise and focused view necessary to ensure that the aims of the school are clear to all.

5.4 Supporting the headmaster, the members of the senior management team are instrumental in ensuring that the school is well run on a day to day basis. They have been exacting and meticulous in checking that the school's policies and documentation meet regulatory requirements in full, and support planning and teaching across the curriculum. The school has thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors.

5.5 Middle managers are conscientious and effective in managing their subjects and areas of responsibility. They have put in place well-constructed departmental handbooks that guide their approaches to teaching and assessment and indicate clearly the range of work pupils will cover. Departmental development plans are of good quality and are suitably focused on planning to meet pupils' learning needs.

5.6 Management is successful in securing, supporting, developing and motivating staff. Staff training in safeguarding, and welfare, health and safety are all securely in place. The school has introduced an appraisal system for teachers that helps to

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identify strengths, areas for development and personal targets. The provision of professional development linked to the appraisal system is beginning to have a positive effect, but is in need of further work to help improve teaching. The system does not yet ensure that judgements of performance for appraisal reports are based on agreed and explicit criteria, particularly in the area of the quality of teaching.

5.7 The small but complex school site is well managed, administrative and support staff are loyal, efficient and very helpful to pupils and teachers, and kitchen staff take great care to ensure that meals are attractively presented and that service is well organised. These factors play an important role in ensuring the excellent personal development of the boys.

5.(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians

5.8 The school has excellent links with its parents, carers and guardians, building on the already good links seen at the time of the previous inspection. The strength of these links is important in realising the school's aims of holistic education and personal development. The school's strong and active link with parents plays a key role in helping boys achieve excellent levels of personal development.

5.9 Parents have a very positive view of the availability of information about the school, about encouragement to become involved and about the handling of their concerns by the school. The great majority of parents feel that they can communicate easily with the school, increasingly by electronic means, with email addresses for form tutors normally provided. Parents value the school's use of text messaging to send reminders of events and to contact them in specific groups. There is a school website with a secure parents' area, and the introduction of several 'blogs', aimed mainly at the sixth formers, has been welcomed as helpful to communication. A regular half-term newsletter about sport has recently been supplemented by another about the progress of the school's move to the new site at Ashford.

5.10 Prospective parents are given the necessary information about the school. Parents of new boys are invited to a series of meetings in the first term and all parents receive a generous flow of information about the progress of their sons. The two full reports a year are supported by grade sheets and a form tutor review, to which subject teachers furnish comments. There are also two consultation evenings: one with form tutors and one with subject teachers.

5.11 The pastoral programme provides very good parental involvement. Talks given to boys during the day on topics such as drugs and safety online are offered to parents in the evening. Events such as plays, operas and current affairs talks offer chances for parents to participate fully in the life of the school.

5.12 The Friends of St James, an organisation with representatives from parents of each form in the school, makes a valuable contribution to school fund raising.

5.13 The school has a published complaints policy and parental concerns are handled quickly and sensitively.

What the school should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

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INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and 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 Peter Jones	Reporting Inspector
Mr Stephen Gray	Team Inspector (Director of Studies, HMC)
Mrs Carole Baker	Team Inspector (Head, ISA)
Mr David Pritchard	Team Inspector (Head of Dept, HMC)

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