



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**WESTHOLME SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	<b>Westholme School</b>
DfE Number	<b>889/6000</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY321259</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>526615</b>
Address	<b>Westholme School Wilmar Lodge Meins Road Blackburn Lancashire BB2 6QU</b>
Telephone Number	<b>01254 506070</b>
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Email Address	<b>principal@westholmeschool.com</b>
Principal	<b>Mrs Lillian Croston</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Kenneth Ainsworth</b>
Age Range	<b>2 to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>911</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed 2 to 11; girls 11 to 18 (769 girls; 142 boys)</b>
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>35</b> 5-11: <b>279</b> 3-5 (EYFS): <b>60</b> 11-18: <b>537</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Lisa Bolton</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection dates	<b>31 Jan 2012 to 03 Feb 2012</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State 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 2010. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

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

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and disability).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, although inspectors 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.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

## 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 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

Mrs Ruth McFarlane	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Valerie Clark	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mrs Barbara Brown	Team Inspector (Academic Head, ISA school)
Mrs Margot Brunson	Team Inspector (Head of Juniors, ISA school)
Mrs Maria Edwards	Team Inspector (Head of Prep Department, GSA school)
Mrs Laura Miller-Biddle	Team Inspector (Head of Department, ISA school)
Mr Martin Morris	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Stuart Nettleship	Team Inspector (Senior Master, ISA school)
Mrs Caroline Pellereau	Team Inspector (Head of Lower College, GSA school)
Mr Andrew Waddington	Team Inspector (Head of Department, ISA school)
Mrs Mary Hughes	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Westholme School is located on the rural outskirts of Blackburn and was founded in 1923 as a preparatory school. It has expanded over the years to comprise five day schools on three main sites within a mile of each other, educating boys and girls from 2 to 11 years, and girls up to the age of 18. Plans are in hand for a boys' senior school to open from September 2012 with a class of Year 7 pupils. The school is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school aims to help all pupils realise to the full their own aptitudes, abilities and qualities, and encourages a positive attitude to study. It sets out to create a caring community that offers help and guidance, and endeavours to provide a balanced curriculum. In seeking to maintain an environment in which pupils are encouraged to be courteous and considerate to others, the school aims to enable them to play an active part in the local community, and to involve the community, especially the parents, in the life of the school.
- 1.3 A younger Nursery class for boys and girls aged two and three is accommodated in a dedicated building that is open from 8.00 am to 6.00 pm daily, and before- and after-school care is also provided for other year groups. An older Nursery class for children aged three, known as the Pre-School, and two Reception classes are located in the Infant School, which also encompasses Years 1 and 2. At the time of the inspection, the school provided for 95 children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). There were 185 pupils in Years 3 to 6, accommodated in separate junior school buildings for boys and girls. In the Upper School, there were 537 girls aged 11 to 18, of whom 130 were in the sixth form.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the pupils is above average. Most pupils' parents have business or professional backgrounds. Approximately one in ten pupils is of an Asian background. None requires support with English as an additional language. In total, 57 pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND): 40 in the Upper School and 17 younger pupils. A very small number of pupils have a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 Pupils' achievement is good at all ages in the school, whatever their abilities and backgrounds, and they have well-developed subject knowledge and understanding for their ages. Their attainment in national tests and public examinations is usually high and well above the relevant maintained school averages. Pupils at all ages show enthusiastic and hard-working attitudes to their work, and display good learning habits. Their high standards are underpinned by a broad curriculum, and a wide range of extra-curricular clubs and activities. Pupils' achievement can be attributed clearly to the effective teaching, a significant proportion of which is excellent. The school is aware that in a few lessons, the pace slows and challenge is therefore reduced. Teachers' use of assessment and target setting is inconsistent, and pupils do not always know what they need to do to improve.
- 2.2 All aspects of pupils' personal development are excellent, and they show strong spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness. They grow and develop well throughout their time at the school, and they achieve pronounced maturity and integrity. The quality of pastoral care and arrangements to promote pupils' welfare, health and safety are also excellent. The pastoral structure, centred around the form teachers, works in harmony to support pupils. It makes a very strong contribution to pupils' personal development, fulfilling the school's pastoral aims very well. Pupils' relationships are excellent. Policies are devised and implemented thoroughly throughout the school, enhancing the pupils' sense of well-being.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are good. Governors are well informed about the work of the school, and financial and educational matters. They are aware that their monitoring of the work of the school has not been rigorous and are taking steps to improve this aspect. The school operates effectively as a single institution. Separate procedures within each section are well matched to the particular needs of each age group and ensure that all leaders and managers contribute to improving the school. The senior and middle management structure is strong and enables the aims of the school to be successfully fulfilled. Plans for future development are not fully linked to department plans and they lack clear allocated responsibilities. Checks on the progress of priorities are too informal. Systems to monitor and evaluate academic provision and to track pupils' progress are a little inconsistent and this leads to some uncertainty among staff and pupils at times. The school has dealt successfully with the recommendations made at the previous inspection. There continues to be a good partnership with parents at all stages in the school. The overwhelming majority responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of the education provided.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Improve development planning and the effectiveness of monitoring by governors, leaders and managers.
  2. Track pupils' progress more consistently across the school and achieve greater consistency in teachers' use of assessment.
  3. Raise the quality of all lessons to that of the best, by sharing best practice more widely and ensuring that pupils are consistently active and challenged.
  4. Monitor and evaluate the EYFS more robustly, and develop stronger links between indoor and outdoor learning.



### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

#### **3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning**

- 3.1 Pupils' achievement at all levels is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated and there are individual examples of excellent achievement. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve well because of improved provision, in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection. Pupils gain appropriate knowledge and good study habits in the lower years of the school to succeed well in the Upper School. Pupils have good understanding of their subjects. They use mental strategies well in mathematics from an early age. Typically, those in the Infant School can discuss solutions to mathematical problems, exploring various possible answers and reasoning logically. Junior pupils discussed the potential dangers of alcohol, showing a well-developed ability to argue cogently. Pupils' standards of literacy are particularly high in the Upper School, and they express themselves fluently both in their speaking and in their written work. In lessons they co-operate well in groups, for instance examining and appraising poetry competently and maturely, and show well-developed understanding of the technical aspects and the context of the topic. Pupils show their good understanding across a range of subjects, such as history, geography, science and technology. Creative work is of a high standard. Two- and three-dimensional art using various media provides aspirational examples for pupils in the school corridors. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well by the pupils to support their learning in a range of subjects. In their physical activities, the pupils are engaged and purposeful. Well-structured sports coaching has ensured high standards both individually and in teams. Achievement in extra-curricular activities is also good. The pupils are significantly successful in graded examinations and events: they achieve county representation in instrumental music, and national representation and achievement in swimming, hockey, golf, ice skating, mountain fell running and equestrian eventing.
- 3.3 The following analysis of test and examination attainment uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. Results in national tests at the age of 11 have been high in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. GCSE performance has been high in relation to the national average for maintained schools. In 2010, half the grades achieved at GCSE were at least A. At A level, results have been good in relation to the national average for maintained schools. Over 40 per cent of grades achieved at A level in 2010 were A\* or A. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. On leaving the school, most junior boys achieve places at selective senior schools, and most junior girls proceed to the Upper School. At the age of 18, most girls go on to universities, taking their first-choice courses.
- 3.4 The pupils' good progress is enhanced by their excellent attitudes to learning, their co-operative behaviour and their willingness to work hard. They are keen to succeed and be actively involved in lessons. In the Upper School, they ask perceptive and imaginative questions. When given the chance to do so, they enjoy working in pairs and small groups, learning extremely effectively from each other.

### **3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision**

- 3.5 The curriculum and extra-curriculum provision are good.
- 3.6 This provision makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and to their personal development, and the school's curricular aims are met well. From the beginning in the EYFS, the curriculum goes beyond the required areas of learning. Those in the Infant School and junior pupils have a strong focus on numeracy and literacy, while also catering for the humanities, technology and creative subjects. By the time pupils reach Year 10, a good range of optional subjects provides appropriate choice for them, with a notably wide availability of languages including Spanish, German, French, Mandarin and Latin. Most pupils are able to take separate sciences. The range of sports available includes ice skating. Over 20 subjects are available at GCSE. Choices for sixth formers respond to their requests. Subjects currently include photography and economics. The programme for ethics, philosophy and religion in the Upper School is a true strength and successfully encourages independent thinking and learning. The well-planned personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme is much improved, in response to a recommendation of the previous inspection. Topics observed included talks from the school nurse for Year 7 and a sixth-form discussion on the economic recession. External speakers provide additional variety and expertise throughout. Educational visits enhance provision throughout the school. For instance, pupils have taken part recently in a geography visit to Iceland, a school choir trip to Denmark and a visit to Rome.
- 3.7 The curriculum meets pupils' needs well. Provision for more able pupils is monitored by form teachers in the lower part of the school and by subject departments in the Upper School. Good extension activities and opportunities are provided for those whom the school has identified as gifted and talented, such as the regular Performing Arts Performance evening and professional coaching, for instance for ice skating. Pupils requiring learning support and any with statements of special educational needs are well catered for in the lower part of the school, where provision is well led by knowledgeable staff. In the Upper School, this provision is satisfactory in a developing department that is currently introducing appropriate improvements, such as regular screening. The libraries and ICT facilities are well managed and used effectively to support pupils' learning. Consultation among staff ensures continuity of learning on pupils' transfer between sections of the school. Careers and higher education advice and support in the Upper School are good.
- 3.8 The extra-curricular programme is excellent and leads to high attainment in a number of pursuits. Sporting and non-sporting activities, together with The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme in the Upper School, provide valuable breadth of experience. Through these, pupils develop their personal skills and links with the community very well. For example, some help with the local Brownie pack or assist with pupils' reading in a local primary school, and are involved in a local sports leadership programme. Provision for extra-curricular drama and music is strong, and there is keen participation in and support for events, particularly musicals and plays. Recent productions include *Oklahoma* and *The Brontës*.

### 3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.9 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.10 Teaching makes a good contribution to the achievement of pupils in all year groups. It supports the aims of the school to encourage a positive attitude to study and help all pupils realise to the full their own aptitudes, abilities and qualities. Teaching is well planned and engages pupils' interest, and teachers' good knowledge of their pupils enables them to monitor progress effectively. Pupils' work is usually marked regularly and thoroughly. The best provides a balance between recognition of strengths and clear, evaluative comments to identify how work could be improved. However, because each department and section of the school have too much scope for individual interpretation of the whole-school policy, there is inconsistency in marking and the use of assessment. Consequently, especially in the Upper School, pupils experience different methods of assessment for different subjects. This means that some pupils are not clear about how a piece of work can be improved.
- 3.11 In the best teaching, well-planned tasks provide good challenge for groups of different ability and involve pupils in evaluating each other's work. An example of this was an Upper School English lesson on *Romeo and Juliet*, where pupils discussed one another's work constructively and maturely, enabling rapid progress. Good questioning by teachers stimulates lively discussions to extend learning. For example, junior pupils responded well when asked to consider what makes a good story teller, in their work retelling myths and legends. Junior pupils were able to balance their arguments competently in an excellent lesson about links between alcohol and crime. Teachers have good subject knowledge, which helps to engage pupils and to stretch the most able with challenging questions. A prime example was an excellent ethics, philosophy and religion lesson, where sixth-form pupils were encouraged to argue cogently, drawing on and extending their understanding of symbolism to analyse images of Christ. In most cases, a good range of teaching methods helps pupils of all abilities, including the more able, to make good progress through interesting and challenging activities, using resources to good effect. In a few lessons, the pace of learning is slower because teachers' exposition is excessive. In these lessons, pupils are not provided with a sufficient range of learning tasks to challenge them to make the best progress possible and there are insufficient opportunities for independent learning.
- 3.12 Teachers know pupils well and relationships are excellent. Knowledge of pupils' capabilities allows staff to provide suitable tasks. This has enabled progress to be made in meeting the recommendation from the previous inspection, to improve support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Staff who specialise in this area now provide good guidance for class teachers in the Infant School and junior schools. Pupils with identified learning needs receive effective support in class, so that they make the same progress as their peers. This aspect is still underdeveloped in the Upper School because systematic checks to alert staff to pupils' possible difficulties have only recently been introduced. Individual education plans are provided and regularly reviewed for identified pupils but within some of these, the targets for pupils to achieve are too general for progress to be demonstrated.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils' personal development is a great strength in all sections of the school. Their well-developed spiritual awareness is characterised by the tolerant and harmonious school environment. Pupils reflect on a range of issues in assemblies, from historical to contemporary events and the circumstances of those less fortunate than themselves. The ethics, philosophy and religion department plays a prominent role. Through this, pupils become knowledgeable about world religions and develop mature thinking skills and cogent arguments on religious and contemporary issues. All pupils develop as individuals and respect the values and beliefs of others, in line with the school's aims to create an environment in which they are encouraged to be courteous and considerate. The pupils' moral development is excellent. Throughout the whole school, pupils show a clear understanding of the importance of good conduct, and behaviour observed throughout the inspection was exemplary. Pupils have a strong sense of fair play and equality. They have a natural sense of right and wrong. Their moral values are enhanced through the comprehensive PSHEE programme. Pupils develop clear understanding of the significance of making sensible decisions about their own lives, and maturity in their discussion of issues such as relationships and addiction.
- 4.3 The social and cultural development of the pupils of all ages is outstanding. Pupils readily co-operate with each other. They enjoy responsibility and fulfil their tasks with skill. In the junior schools, pupils act as prefects and house captains, and as school councillors. Initiative and leadership are fostered strongly through charity events, such as the recent film night that was organised by Year 10, for pupils in Year 7. The Justice, Awareness and Charity programme ensures that charity work embraces much more than fund raising. A group of pupils from Years 11, 12 and 13 recently visited Borneo for a month, living with local people and helping with projects to improve community life. They taught English and played sport with children, developing valuable social and cultural awareness. Links between year groups are maintained and encouraged by those sixth-form pupils who support and mentor groups of younger pupils. The various cultures represented within and around the school help pupils to appreciate diversity and develop empathy. The pupils show great respect for the beliefs and opinions of others. Their sensitivity towards contemporary world events is strongly evident. For example, a world map in the Boys' Junior School catalogues news events as they occur.
- 4.4 In their questionnaire responses and in discussions with inspectors, pupils showed pride in their school and strong support for all that it offers. Any concerns were not widespread and were of no particular pattern. Inspectors investigated the concerns but could find no other evidence to support them.

#### **4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care**

- 4.5 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.6 Support for pupils is excellent and the school's pastoral aims are met very well. At the heart of the pastoral provision is the highly effective form teacher system. Form teachers know their pupils very well, and give them excellent support and guidance in all areas of their school lives, both pastoral and academic. Excellent systems underpin the pastoral care, relying successfully on frequent information sharing between teachers and senior leaders. In the Upper School, this includes meetings between pupils and their heads of year to talk through any concerns. Pastoral care benefits from regular meetings and good communication among staff, and from efficient systems that ensure that pastoral concerns are identified quickly by teachers and tutors, and resolved effectively. In the sixth form, mixed-aged tutor groups help integration and tutors get to know their pupils very well. Before- and after-school provision provides additional high quality care for those who participate.
- 4.7 Pupils' relationships with each other and with their teachers are excellent, and a clear atmosphere of mutual respect and trust prevails. The pupils are supportive of one another. The responses to the pupils' questionnaire indicate that they feel there are many caring, qualified and responsible adults to whom they can turn in any time of difficulty. Pupils are fully encouraged to live healthy lifestyles. They enjoy a good choice of food at lunchtime, and are encouraged to eat healthily and be aware of nutritional matters. The pupils take up many of the opportunities for physical exercise in the curriculum, sports teams and extra-curricular activities.
- 4.8 Highly effective and compliant policies promote good behaviour and the prevention of bullying. Policies are very well implemented. Incidents of misbehaviour are rare and quickly dealt with. Pupils feel that the systems of sanctions and rewards are fair. In the infant and junior schools, much enjoyment is derived from celebration assemblies. At all ages, pupils respond well to the positive reinforcement techniques that encourage good behaviour. Pupils' views are regularly sought, through discussions and school council arrangements. In response to a recommendation of the previous inspection, the school now has an effective plan for improving educational access for pupils with SEND.

#### **4.(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety**

- 4.9 Arrangements for pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.10 Efficient safeguarding procedures are followed assiduously, minimising risks from fire and other hazards. These are well documented. Staff undertake well above the required amount of training to assure pupils' welfare, health and safety. Medical provision in the infant and junior schools has improved since the previous inspection, and provision in the Upper School is excellent. The full-time qualified nurse maintains meticulous records. High numbers of qualified first aiders keep their training up-to-date. A large number of staff are also trained in paediatric first aid.
- 4.11 Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and stored appropriately. Unexplained absence is very promptly followed up.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good.
- 5.2 Governance provides effective oversight and strong support for the school. Robust checks and training enable governors to provide a good level of support and guidance through the work of their committees, which draw on their extensive professional expertise and experience to sustain the school's success. Governors are informed about the work of the school through various reports from the principal and senior team. Their grasp of financial planning and building priorities is strong, and they ensure that human and material resources are carefully deployed to good effect. This underpins the pupils' good achievement and their excellent personal development.
- 5.3 The governing body is aware that its understanding of the educational work of the school is not fully developed and that this aspect is not well monitored. Formal monitoring activity is predominantly through reports from the principal, with occasional first-hand checks on pupils' experiences through informal visits.
- 5.4 A carefully considered development plan identifies priorities and targets to stimulate growth and improvement, and to move the school forward. However, checks on progress in achieving the plan's objectives lack the necessary challenge to ensure that the management is suitably held to account.
- 5.5 Governors are aware of their responsibilities to ensure the health and safety of the pupils and are fully committed to their other statutory obligations, including the safe and proper use of premises. As a result, child protection and other policies are robust and regularly reviewed.

### **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians**

- 5.6 Leadership and management, including effective links with parents, carers and guardians, are good.
- 5.7 Leaders and managers at all levels demonstrate a clear, common sense of purpose in the day-to-day running of the school. The school's aims are well met, and effective structures and procedures make a strong contribution in this respect. This has ensured improvements since the previous inspection in the proportion of excellent teaching, enrichment in the curriculum, and in policy implementation, including safeguarding. It has helped to maintain pupils' excellent personal development and has led to improved attainment at GCSE and A level.
- 5.8 The schools are run as one single organisation, therefore enabling good co-ordination and communication. The senior leadership has a clear view of the school's current strengths and areas for development, and promotes a clear vision for the future. Staff are committed to providing a high standard of education for the pupils and there is a common consensus as to how to achieve this, so that overall, development planning is good and has enabled the pupils to achieve high standards and demonstrate excellent personal development. Action has been effective in improving the school and in addressing the recommendations of the previous report.

The development plan is, however, limited to a list of actions to be taken, and the detail of how progress on these actions will be monitored is unclear. Heads of department undertake a comprehensive annual review of their academic and pastoral teams, enabling identification of targets and priorities for development. The resulting plans are of variable quality. Some are very thorough and contain all pertinent detail, with progress on the priorities carefully measured. However, few are related fully to the whole-school development plan.

- 5.9 High quality staff are employed throughout the school. The leadership of the EYFS contributes well to the drive for improvement. Staff across the school are suitably trained for their roles. As a result, they meet the needs of pupils, promote excellent standards of welfare, health and safety, and implement thorough safeguarding procedures. Staff have received appropriate training in safe working practices and child protection. Recruitment checks are thorough and suitably recorded on a central register. There are effective processes across the whole school to review the professional performance of staff, and to ascertain training needs.
- 5.10 There is some excellent leadership practice in the school, especially among the most senior leaders, but practice varies within departments and sections, because there is a lack of requirement to be consistent. For instance, the whole-school marking policy is good, but Upper School departments have freedom to devise their own variations, which means that different systems sometimes make it hard for pupils to understand how well they are doing. Comprehensive details are logged to track pupils' progress but different departments use these with varied proficiency. Checks on the quality of teaching and learning rely on teachers informally observing each other, lacking in management rigour except as a limited part of the appraisal process. In formal observations to evaluate the quality of lessons, excessive emphasis is placed on teaching attributes rather than pupils' achievement and learning.
- 5.11 The relationship with parents is good and the whole school maintains a warm commitment to effective links with home. The overwhelming majority of parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of the education provided by the school. They particularly approved of the range of subjects and activities offered, the high standard of behaviour, and the attitudes and values promoted by the school. Parents valued the ease with which they can communicate with the school, and the timely responses received.
- 5.12 A suitable complaints policy is readily available to parents. Records show that the school handles complaints and concerns of parents promptly and with care. Specific concerns are dealt with through an efficient system of parental communication forms, passed on to the principal if necessary.
- 5.13 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with good information about the school on the comprehensive website and in an excellent information booklet. Parents receive other useful communications through email and electronic alerts. Regular newsletters keep parents abreast of current changes and developments. All parents have a good range of opportunities to be involved in the life of the school, in accordance with its aim. Parents take up invitations to support matches, concerts, plays and other events. They attend social events organised by the very strong parents' association. Meetings concerning specific topics, such as a recent event in the Infant School to explain the teaching of mathematics and reading, assist parents in understanding and contributing to their children's education.

- 5.14 Informative reports are sent home twice a year, with an opportunity for parents to return a comment. Additionally, in the Upper School, a report card of grades is issued mid-year. Parents of infant, junior, Year 7, Year 10 and Year 12 pupils enjoy an induction evening at the start of each school year. For all pupils, parents' meetings are held to offer guidance at various stages of their children's development, such as moving to the next section of the school, or entry to university, and to seek parents' views.

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



## **6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good. Staff know the children well and meet their needs effectively within a nurturing environment. The school's aims are strongly embedded in everyday practice, ensuring that children thrive within a caring community. Effective arrangements ensure children's safety and well-being. Improvements in recent years have included enhancing the outdoor environment and implementing recommendations from the previous inspection, and this success confirms that the setting has good capacity for continuous improvement.

### **6.(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.2 Leadership and management are good. Policies and procedures, including risk assessments, are implemented efficiently to ensure that children are well safeguarded and that each child has an equal opportunity to succeed. Enthusiastic staff have a clear, ambitious vision for the setting. Good teamwork ensures discussion and reflection on their practice but systems to share best practice, monitor and self-evaluate lack rigour. Strong links exist with parents, who, in questionnaires and discussions, showed a high degree of support. Resources are used well to support indoor learning. The school has identified that the good outdoor environment is currently underused.

### **6.(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

6.3 The quality of the provision is good, both for those under the age of three and older children. Provision in the class for children aged three is outstanding. Throughout the EYFS, outstanding relationships underpin learning. Generally, staff are skilled at building on children's ideas and interests to support their learning and development. Stimulating, welcoming indoor learning environments and good planning ensure the provision of a breadth of experiences across all areas of learning. Planning for the linking of indoor and outdoor learning is not yet fully developed. The recently introduced tracking system ensures that effective monitoring of children's progress is facilitated, though this is not fully developed. Key people are highly skilled at creating nurturing environments so that children under three quickly settle and develop confidence. The outstanding welfare provided enables children to respond to challenges with great enthusiasm. The staff's knowledgeable, positive approach to behaviour and their high expectations help the youngest children to manage their feelings and older children to behave well. Regular checks of equipment and risk assessments of all areas ensure a safe environment.

### **6.(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage**

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are good. Children achieve well, working happily both individually and co-operatively. All children, including those under three, make good progress from their starting points. They achieve high standards in literacy and numeracy. Nursery children communicate meaningfully. They can make marks in the sand and competently 'paint' electronically on the interactive whiteboard. Older children are articulate, able to discuss the properties of two- and three-dimensional shapes. They can read at a level exceeding expectations in early reading. Children develop positive attitudes to learning, are self-motivated and thoroughly enjoy school life. In the class for older Nursery children, children showed excellent concentration and focus as they participated in their 'space station' role play. Children are extremely happy and well settled, and feel safe. Their personal development is outstanding. They show increasing independence, ably choosing their own resources to aid their learning. Children develop a strong sense of personal safety, as shown by the careful way they move around the school site. They show a good understanding of the need to wash hands, and take regular exercise.

#### **Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

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

**Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.**