



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**ABERCORN SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	<b>Abercorn School</b>		
DfE Number	<b>213/6364</b>		
EYFS Number	<b>EY389621</b>		
Address	<b>Abercorn School 248 Marylebone Road London NW1 6JF</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>020 7723 8700</b>		
Fax Number	<b>020 7723 0608</b>		
Email Address	<b>togs@abercornschoo.com</b>		
Head	<b>Mr David Morse</b>		
Chair of Directors	<b>Mr Anthony Millard</b>		
Age Range	<b>2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> to 13</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>361</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (191 boys; 170 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 EYFS:	<b>167</b>	5-11: <b>186</b>
			11-18: <b>8</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Francesca Wrottesley</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>01 May 2012 to 04 May 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 January 2009.

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/or disabilities).
- (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 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 directors and the proprietor, 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 Diane Gardiner	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Annabelle Hancock	Assistant Reporting Inspector
Mr Andrew Edwards	Team Inspector (Head, ISA School)
Mrs Jenny Jones	Team Inspector (Former head, IAPS School)
Mr Paul Oldham	Team Inspector (Deputy head, IAPS School)
Mrs Catherine Lane	Co-ordinating Inspector for EYFS

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(a) Main findings</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(b) Action points</b>	<b>3</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	5
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>7</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	7
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	8
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	8
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>10</b>
(a) The quality of governance	10
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	10
<b>6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	<b>12</b>
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12

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

- 1.1 Abercorn School is a proprietorial day school for boys and girls from the age of two and a half to thirteen. The school is part of International British Schools (IBS) and is governed by a board of directors consisting of an independent chairman, three family members and three externally recruited members. These family members include the high mistress, who founded the school in 1987. The day-to-day management of the school lies in the hands of the senior leadership team (SLT). The school is situated on three separate sites catering for children from the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) through to Year 8. The grounds at the EYFS site and those for Years 1 to 3 consist of an enclosed play area at the back of each building. In common with many city-based schools, Abercorn uses nearby leisure facilities for games lessons and matches.
- 1.2 Within a strongly multi-cultural environment the school aims to give pupils the best start in education by providing a friendly, caring and inspiring academic atmosphere. It believes in traditional values and standards. Through this framework, it strives to enable pupils to develop their individual talents and skills.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 361 pupils in the school, of whom 167 were in the EYFS. Abercorn pupils are drawn from the area around St John's Wood, London, and come from a wide range of backgrounds and diverse cultures. Pupils are mainly from business and professional families. Pupils move on to other independent schools at appropriate points in their education. Girls and boys may leave at age eleven whilst the remainder leave at thirteen.
- 1.4 Pupils join Abercorn at various ages and from diverse pre-school and school settings. Children in the EYFS or Year 1 are not assessed on entry to the school. Pupils joining in Year 2 and above complete an assessment to ensure that they have the potential to flourish in the school's environment.
- 1.5 The school has 45 pupils for whom English is not their principal language. Of these, nine pupils require support for English as an additional language (EAL) within mainstream lessons, although all receive additional learning support as necessary. The school has identified twenty-one pupils as requiring some degree of learning support. None of these has a statement of special educational needs.
- 1.6 Standardised test information confirms that the average ability of pupils is above the national average, with a notable proportion of pupils well above and a few below.
- 1.7 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 The quality of pupils' academic achievement and progress throughout the school is excellent. Pupils are well educated and the school successfully fulfils its aim of giving pupils a strong awareness of living in a global community and preparing them for their next school. They leave as confident learners with an enthusiastic outlook on life. Individual needs of pupils across the ability and age range are clearly identified: there are many opportunities for stretching and challenging gifted and talented pupils and excellent provision for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The academic curriculum is broad and small class sizes across the school enable pupils to receive individual attention. Teaching staff willingly provide extra one-to-one support where they feel it will support progress. Marking is consistently excellent providing children with a clear path forward, and a wide variety of teaching styles ensures that progress is rapid. The extra-curricular programme provides opportunity and choice for every child and is much appreciated by pupils. Pupils' confident and enthusiastic attitude to their learning contributes significantly to their progress and achievement.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is outstanding. They take excellent advantage of opportunities on offer both within and outside the classroom. In line with the school's aim of providing a high level of pastoral care, pupils are confident, articulate, mutually supportive, respectful, caring and happy. They enjoy excellent relationships with peers and adults alike and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. A warm atmosphere of mutual respect is evident. The global nature of the school community and the pastoral care of pupils are outstanding. Pupils feel safe, well known and well supported; they have a wide choice of adults to turn to with any concerns.
- 2.3 Governance is excellent and the directors fully discharge their responsibilities. Leadership and management across the school are easily accessible and caring and a clear and comprehensive plan for school improvement has been developed. Communication between the three sites is good but some inconsistencies occasionally result in differences in resourcing and availability of key staff. The school maintains effective links with parents. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, parents were appreciative of the quality of care given to their children, the level to which they are encouraged to be involved with the school and the timely way in which they receive responses to their enquiries. Since the previous inspection in 2009 resources and opportunities for using information and communication technology (ICT) have been improved and school development planning covers a three year period.

## **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. Strengthen the management structure across the three sites to ensure consistency of communication and provision for all children
2. In the EYFS, explore opportunities for problem solving, critical thinking and independent learning to extend and challenge all children
3. Develop training for and use of ICT across the Early Years Curriculum



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

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent
- 3.2 Abercorn is very successful in ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to realise their full potential, are well prepared for each stage of their education and transfer smoothly between the different parts of the school and on to their next schools. The pupils thoroughly engage in and enjoy all aspects of their education and leave as confident learners with an enthusiastic outlook on life.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve high levels of knowledge, skills and understanding in all areas of the curriculum. They read confidently and expressively from an early age. As pupils move through the school, they read and write with increasing fluency and for a range of purposes. Much of this writing is of a very high standard, showing clear evidence of critical thought and creativity. Pupils are extremely articulate and express themselves with confidence, as seen when Year 1 debated the merits of a seven o'clock bedtime. Numeracy skills are of a high order and are applied well to investigation and problem-solving activities. Achievement is enhanced by independent learning and use of ICT which is now used most successfully across the curriculum, fulfilling a recommendation from the previous report. Pupils are able to work creatively, displaying imagination, in art, design technology and drama and achieve excellent standards in a wide range of sporting activities at local and national levels.
- 3.4 Pupils' attainment below Year 6 cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but on the evidence available it is judged to be above national age-related expectations. Results in national tests at age 11 overall have been above the national average for maintained primary schools, and in 2008 were well above the national average. Measurement is complicated by the fact that many pupils come from abroad and enter the school at different times in the year. The level of attainment seen in children's work and performance in class indicate that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Tracking data in nationally standardised tests indicates that the achievement of all pupils improves during the time they are in the school. During the inspection, achievement in all curriculum areas was judged to be outstanding in a significant number of lessons. Pupils leaving at both Years 6 and 8 achieve places at highly competitive, selective schools, and scholarships are regularly awarded to them. Those pupils with SEND are identified early and the high level of extra support and differentiation provided in lessons ensures that every pupil makes good progress. Individual education plans (IEPs) are provided for all pupils who have any extra need and staff work closely with them to ensure a good level of progress and achievement. Pupils with EAL are particularly well catered for by staff who speak a wide range of languages and who have broad experience of working in other countries. The most able pupils are extended effectively in lessons and through the high expectation of their teachers.
- 3.5 Pupils have an excellent work ethic and they are enthusiastic learners from an early age. They are well motivated and co-operative, keen to be involved, and work with a good level of concentration in lessons. The respect for one another amongst pupils, and between pupils and staff is a strength of the school. Each has high expectations of the other. As a result, pupils' behaviour in class is excellent. Pupils work very well together, and effectively use opportunities for collaborative work in lessons. Pupils have wide-ranging opportunities to develop independent thinking skills, both

during and outside of lessons, and they respond by exhibiting high levels of self-motivation and initiative.

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

- 3.6 Curricular and extra-curricular provision are excellent.
- 3.7 Curricular documentation is thorough and helps to ensure consistency of approach. Monitoring of the curriculum is carefully managed. This helps to ensure high standards of teaching and appropriate levels of challenge for all pupils. Since the previous inspection the school has considerably developed the provision and use of ICT, although this is less well developed in the EYFS. Throughout the school, classrooms are now equipped with interactive whiteboards which are used effectively. In ICT lessons pupils cover a wide range of skills, many of which support their work in other subjects, notably music and mathematics. Online resources in mathematics are enthusiastically used by pupils to consolidate and further their learning and also extend the most able through various challenges.
- 3.8 The academic curriculum is significantly enhanced by a wide ranging programme of extra-curricular activities and school trips which include residential outings abroad and to places of interest in the UK such as Stratford. In addition, the school makes the most of a host of enrichment opportunities available in London to broaden pupils' horizons. For example, pupils in Years 6 to 8 visit the Houses of Parliament and learn about such processes as the passing of a bill through Parliament. Parents and other members of the local community are regularly invited to share with pupils their special skills and expertise in assemblies or in lessons.
- 3.9 Sport, art, drama and music are strengths of the school. A large number of pupils attend the wide range of clubs which support these areas. For example, pupils can be creative in art or sculpture clubs and extend their artistic skills. The after school sports programme includes swimming, hockey, Taekwondo and dance with success being realised in local and national competitions in athletics, swimming and cross country. Extremely good use is made of local sports and recreational facilities. Pupils in Year 5 and above have the experience of performing plays in the local theatre. All pupils in Years 6 to 8 increase their musical awareness and knowledge through being taught the clarinet. There are many opportunities to experience ensemble playing, notably in ensemble soiree evenings, and every child in each year group participates in a musical theatre performance. Junior and senior choir members enjoy performing in school concerts and elsewhere in the local community, in such venues as the local church.
- 3.10 An excellent personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme encourages pupils to gain understanding about themselves and other people in the wider world. The school celebrates being a globally diverse community and it responds well to the needs of pupils with EAL and those who have previously lived in a different cultural environment.

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

- 3.11 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.12 Teaching enables pupils to develop a very secure understanding in all subjects and to make rapid progress. Teaching is well planned with a high degree of awareness of the differing needs of all of the pupils. The quality of teaching has improved since the previous inspection. Small class sizes enable teachers to give pupils a high

level of personal attention, helping them to fulfil their potential and gain in confidence.

- 3.13 The marking of work has improved since the previous inspection and is now consistently of a very high standard. Pupils are given a clear understanding of their strengths and respond very positively to the encouraging feedback that they receive. They are given good guidance as to what they have done well and areas for development. Self-assessment and peer assessment are effectively used to increase pupils' understanding of their achievement and progress. During the inspection, pupils were seen to be receiving additional help during break time.
- 3.14 Work is regularly assessed against national norms and individual children's results are stored centrally. These results are analysed and communicated to all teachers, helping them to identify and address weaknesses and strengths, and to plan for future progress. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and their infectious enthusiasm and commitment foster high levels of interest and enjoyment amongst the pupils.
- 3.15 Lessons include an excellent range of teaching strategies which stimulate the pupils. Interactive whiteboards, the ICT suite and laptops for pupils frequently provide a variety of engaging activities which support pupils' progress. The best lessons have good pace with children being inspired and challenged to make the most of the time available to maximise their progress. Relationships between the teachers and the pupils are outstanding and assist the pupils in achieving high standards. High levels of mutual respect and excellent standards of behaviour characterise the teaching and pupils speak highly of the help which they are given by their teachers.
- 3.16 Pupils with SEND and EAL are well supported in the classroom by both teachers and teaching assistants. Detailed IEPs are produced for these pupils and contain very useful information, including short-term targets and strategies to be employed to support progress. IEPs are reviewed termly. All pupils are continually challenged by the high expectations of their teachers and the most able are given extension activities which stretch them.

## **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 pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 This is a strength of the school: the pupils' personal development is excellent and the school's provision for it is outstanding. Through the supportive PSHCE programme the pupils develop their knowledge of a wide range of relevant topics and understand how each one may affect them personally. The pupils often reflect upon their own achievements and can offer mature, self-critical observations of their behaviour and work. They recognise their own strengths and those of their peers, they understand that they can improve their work and are confident that teachers will always support them.
- 4.3 Pupils develop spiritually in self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence within a safe, principled and global environment. Knowledge of world faiths is extensive based upon first-hand experience within their friendship groups. Pupils share each others' important festivals and events during school time and outside school hours, for example when a whole year group shared in a friend's Bar Mitzvah celebration. Pupils produce creative and imaginative work in a variety of subjects, including history, art and English, making a valuable contribution to their spiritual development.
- 4.4 The moral development of the pupils is excellent and a strong sense of integrity pervades the work and actions of the school. Pupils have a firm appreciation of right and wrong and a respect for rules and the law. They express their own views convincingly on moral and ethical questions in subjects such as history and religious instruction. Pupils are encouraged to take on responsibilities such as prefects, house captains and Buddy Readers and they carry out their duties with integrity and a strong sense of justice and fairness.
- 4.5 The pupils are outstandingly well developed socially and they exhibit a mature sense of responsibility. Throughout the school the pupils are alive to the needs of others and they raise significant sums of money for charity in a wide-ranging programme. During the inspection two young pupils organised a highly successful sale of cakes that they had made in aid of a national charity. Pupils gain a well-founded knowledge of public institutions and services in England. They demonstrate empathy and compassion and have a personal commitment to making a positive difference to others and the environment. During the inspection the pupils took part in a mock-election for the London Mayor, giving confident speeches and running electronic voting systems. In addition, they discussed the French Presidential election.
- 4.6 The pupils are excellent role models for the promotion of tolerance and harmony between different cultural traditions. They explore concepts, ideas and issues that have local and global significance. In doing so they acquire an in-depth knowledge and understanding of many customs and cultures. This was apparent during lessons, within interviews with pupils, and in observing them in the course of their daily routine.

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

- 4.7 The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.8 Pastoral care is a strength of the school. The extremely hardworking and dedicated staff know the individual children very well, providing effective support and guidance that fulfils the aims of the school in developing an holistic and family orientated environment. The pupils' awareness of the need for healthy eating is reinforced through displays and the healthy schools initiative. The colour-coded food system encourages pupils to make good choices and children commented positively about the quality of food provided. Pupils enjoy regular exercise through physical education (PE) lessons, games fixtures and extra-curricular activities.
- 4.9 The school is extremely effective in promoting good behaviour and guarding against bullying. Excellent arrangements reward good work, positive behaviour and promote compassion for each other. The traffic light system and new house point arrangements are effective and understood by the pupils. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy and, during discussions, pupils commented that any incidents of unkind behaviour were dealt with swiftly. They are confident that they can approach any member of staff if they have a problem and that bullying rarely happens. Worry boxes are used to express concerns anonymously and these help inform the regularly evolving PSHCE programme.
- 4.10 The pupils' views are listened to and taken into account. The school council meets regularly and pupils express pride in their representatives and are extremely positive about the contributions that the school council makes on their behalf.
- 4.11 The school has a suitable three-year plan to improve the educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- 4.12 The arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.13 The child protection policy is implemented well. Throughout the school arrangements for safeguarding pupils are thorough and promoted effectively. All staff, including those with specific responsibilities, receive training according to official guidance at the required intervals, so that they have comprehensive knowledge of procedures, should an issue or concern occur. The designated child protection officers ensure that correct procedures are followed. Since the previous inspection, improvements have been made to ensure that safe recruitment procedures are followed consistently and the centralised register for the appointment of all staff is correctly maintained. Child protection is discussed at every meeting of the board of directors.
- 4.14 Procedures and policies for health and safety are reviewed regularly, and weekly meetings take place with staff from across the three sites. Suitable precautions and excellent arrangements are in place to identify and reduce risk from fire and other hazards. General risk assessments ensure that the safety of pupils, and the whole school community, is a priority and any necessary actions identified are dealt with efficiently and swiftly. Detailed risk assessments ensuring the safety of pupils while on educational trips are undertaken. Arrangements for supervision of pupils whilst on site are extremely strong and meticulous safety procedures are observed as pupils move from one site to another.

- 4.15 Since the previous inspection, improvements have been made to ensure that appropriate arrangements for medical provision are in place to support all pupils who become ill or are injured. Appropriate numbers of staff are trained in first aid and records are well maintained.
- 4.16 Admissions and attendance registers are correctly kept and appropriately stored. The school meets all regulatory requirements.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The board of directors are highly committed to the success of the school and fully supportive of its aims. The board has an excellent range of professional expertise and an extensive range of sub-committees effectively address all areas of school life. Regular reports from these, and weekly reports from the headmaster, enable directors to have a secure understanding of performance and standards throughout the school. Regular strategy days and a good structure of formal and informal communication enable directors to review the three-year school improvement plan and the long-term vision for the school as suggested at the previous inspection. The chair of the board visits the school on a frequent basis and is in weekly contact with the headmaster providing strong support in all appropriate matters. Through regular attendance at the school, directors know staff very well and there is strong mutual respect between the two groups.
- 5.3 Close liaison by the directors with the bursar, administrative team and the senior leadership team ensures that high levels and quality of staffing, accommodation and resourcing are maintained and regularly reviewed. Directors undertake a wide range of induction and training including in safer recruitment, welfare, health and safety and awareness of child abuse. In addition, directors attend association meetings and conferences and take regular advice from external specialists in order to keep up to date with their various responsibilities. Directors take their responsibilities seriously and a very clear procedure for reviewing all key policies ensures that safeguarding and child protection arrangements are secure throughout the school.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management including links with parents is excellent.
- 5.5 The senior leadership team, which comprises the high mistress, the headmaster, the head of Early Years and the two deputy heads, has established and continues to improve the caring and global nature of the school in line with the school's aims.
- 5.6 Good progress has been made since the previous inspection. The role of coordinators has been clarified and time given to allow them to carry out their responsibilities effectively with particular reference to the monitoring of their subjects and the consistent implementation of policies. The senior leadership team are approachable and accessible and their passion and commitment to the school are apparent in the strong pastoral care and personal development of pupils across the school. Staff are encouraged to undertake a wide variety of training and have a clear understanding of what is required of them.
- 5.7 School self-evaluation is accurate and realistic. In the period since the appointment of the new headmaster, the senior leadership team has undertaken a thorough review, identifying the school's key strengths and those areas in need of improvement. This has resulted in a clear vision for school improvement and educational priorities for the future. The current school development plan is thorough, well-formulated, and takes into account the views of all staff.

Communication between the three sites has improved but there are still some minor inconsistencies across the three sites resulting in small differences in resourcing and availability of staff such as the ICT manager. The management of the movement of the pupils around the sites is exemplary.

- 5.8 The recruitment and deployment of staff are well managed, and the procedures for checking staff are robust. The school has been effective in securing and supporting well-qualified staff who are highly committed and hardworking and who make a significant contribution to pupils' achievements and welfare. Learning assistants are of high quality and provide invaluable support, working closely and effectively with form teachers and in the wider school community.
- 5.9 Links with the parents are excellent. They are very supportive of the school and appreciate the wide range of excellent information that goes home to them through email, the website, well-used home/school books and a comprehensive weekly newsletter from both the headmaster and the head of pre-prep. All required information is provided to parents of pupils and to those of prospective pupils. The welcome pack and parent's handbook are thorough and useful.
- 5.10 The school promotes a strong and effective partnership with parents. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate positive parental approval of most aspects of provision. Most parents are highly satisfied with the progress their children make and the support provided for their children. They especially commented favourably on how well their children were looked after and the high standards of behaviour that were achieved. A few parents raised concerns about the provision for special educational needs and gifted and talented children. The inspection team did not support this concern as they found that pupils with SEND and those who are more able are identified early and their progress and achievement are monitored highly effectively.
- 5.11 Parents' considerable contributions to activities and school events are welcomed by staff. Parents are actively encouraged to be involved in the life of the school and are keen to share their skills, for example, by reading to groups in their own languages or sharing aspects of their faith or culture. The highly active Friends of Abercorn committee significantly enriches home-school relationships. They organise both fund-raising and social events which are well supported. Parents keen to improve their ICT skills are invited to attend twilight sessions taught by the children.
- 5.12 Parents with a concern or query regarding their child are able to contact the school at any time, as well as attending termly formal meetings at which they discuss their child's progress with staff. High quality, written reports contain detailed information on pupils' knowledge and progress with a summary of work covered and details of how the pupil could improve further. The school has clear and appropriate procedures for the reporting of parents' concerns and parents are secure in the knowledge that they will receive timely responses to their questions. Many parents attend school concerts and drama performances and support sporting events.
- 5.13 Parents are particularly well supported in their choice of senior schools. Open meetings and individual appointments are arranged with the headmaster who ensures that parents have all the information they need to make an informed choice.

**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 setting is good, successfully achieving its aim to make every child feel welcome. It provides a good quality of education and care that is founded on close attention to the needs of each child, well met through a broad range of activities. The setting has very good capacity for improvement demonstrated by the highly effective partnership with parents, the developing use of the outdoor space and the informative child portfolios. Relationships are excellent and health, safety and welfare are given high priority.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are excellent. The dedicated management team have high aspirations for quality through on-going improvement and strong commitment to equality and diversity fostering an inclusive attitude to other cultures and beliefs. Policies and procedures to ensure the safety and well-being of the children are set out clearly and implemented consistently. The setting is highly effective in working in partnership with parents to support and celebrate the learning and progress of each child. Communication is outstanding with information made available through a wide range of documentation. Staff are encouraged to develop their skills through appraisal and training. Planning identifies learning objectives and excellent assessment procedures are used to identify the next steps in learning. However, this is not used consistently to develop the skills of all the children further, especially high achievers. They use ICT in the classroom, but it is not yet sufficiently embedded throughout the Early Years' practice to improve skills and add value to the curriculum.

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

6.3 The quality of provision in the EYFS is good. Access to the outdoor environment is limited but very good use is made of the facilities on-site and frequent visits to the park and nearby amenities enrich the children's experience. Staff carefully observe and record children's learning; they know what the children can achieve. They are less successful in using this information to provide opportunities for child-initiated, purposeful play. Children's welfare is paramount and their emotional and social needs are well supported by adults providing safe and clear routines with a good range of learning experiences. The setting encourages good eating habits with healthy meals and snacks. The children practise high standards of hygiene and are aware of others' needs.

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

6.4 Achievement and progress are good. Children enjoy their learning and develop personal qualities which enable them to make excellent relationships. They behave well, can talk confidently to one another and adults and play harmoniously. Most children achieve very well, reaching and, in some cases, exceeding the early learning goals by the end of Reception. They are good listeners and can focus on a

task and respond with delight and enthusiasm when teaching closely matches their needs. Their social and communication skills are outstanding and they are keen to use their knowledge to write. Children express a growing knowledge of the world and are able to count and use numbers for different purposes. They gain an excellent understanding of the wider world by enjoying a wide range of visits and visitors. They investigate, problem solve and develop their own theories less frequently. They are energetic and enjoy being active.

### **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.