



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BRONTE SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Bronte School

Full Name of School	Bronte School
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Email Address	enquiry@bronteschool.co.uk
Headmaster	Mr Richard Dyson
Proprietors	Mr Peers Carter and Mrs Susan Carter
Age Range	4 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	116
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (73 boys; 43 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 16 5-11: 100
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 116
Co-ordinator of EYFS Setting	Mrs Sharon Kybert
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	22 May 2012 to 25 May 2012

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 May 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. 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 proprietors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and an assembly. 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

Dr Stephen Grounds

Mrs Belinda Canham

Mrs Marjorie Harris

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Head, IAPS & ISA School)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Bronte School is a co-educational school in central Gravesend for pupils aged from four to eleven years, which was originally established in 1905. The original proprietors passed it on to their daughters. Upon the demise of the surviving daughter in 1978, a parents' committee was formed and one of the current proprietors was elected as chairman. To avoid closure of the school, it was subsequently purchased by him. In 1999 it moved from its original premises in Bronte villas to its present location in a larger, listed building in the centre of Gravesend. The school is governed by its two proprietors.
- 1.2 The school seeks to foster every pupil's intellectual, physical, aesthetic, spiritual, emotional, moral and social development. It aims to create a happy, secure and stimulating environment and to assist all pupils to reach their potential. It seeks to show pupils how to learn, and to develop their ability to reason and think independently. It aspires to provide a broad and enriched curriculum and to help pupils to support each other by having consideration for different points of view.
- 1.3 Since the previous inspection in 2009, the school has incrementally improved its accommodation and provision, closed its kindergarten, increased its range of activity clubs, and established links with other schools. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) now consists of a single Reception class.
- 1.4 One hundred and sixteen pupils attend the school. The EYFS caters for 16 full-time children. Forty-one pupils are in Years 1 and 2, and 59 are in Years 3 to 6. The school operates an extended day from 8.00 am with activities continuing until 5.45 pm.
- 1.5 The school does not enter pupils for National Curriculum tests. Ability is measured using cognitive ability tests (CATs). The ability profile of the school is above the national average. From Year 5 upwards, the ability profile is narrower and higher than in Year 4, with few pupils having below average ability and around a fifth of pupils having ability that is well above average. Thirty pupils identified by the school receive support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), but none has a statement of educational need. There is one pupil with English as an additional language (EAL), who receives additional support.
- 1.6 The school draws pupils from a range of urban and rural backgrounds; about two-fifths of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, and no single group predominates. Most pupils continue their education in selective maintained or independent senior schools.
- 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 All pupils, including those with SEND and those in the EYFS, achieve well and make good progress in their learning. Their levels of knowledge, skills and understanding are well developed. Pupils have notable strengths in speaking, listening and reading. Good creativity is evident in art and history. Two-thirds of pupils have gained entrance to local selective schools over the last five years. Over eighty percent have success in the current cohort and this success is an outstanding achievement. The curriculum that pupils follow is wide-ranging and is more challenging than the National Curriculum. There are strengths in the breadth of languages that are taught. The curriculum is supplemented by a useful range of visits and sporting opportunities and a number of clubs. Teaching is a major strength of the school; pupils are taught with a range of up-to-date teaching styles. There is good individual support and this is particularly the case for those with SEND. Marking and assessment is good and since the previous inspection the monitoring of pupils' performance against national norms has been adopted. Good use is generally made of teaching assistants, although they are sometimes underused.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent and a major strength of the school. Pupils are very confident and articulate. Their moral development is very good. Pupils are supported by excellent pastoral care and good welfare arrangements and effective procedures for safeguarding, health and safety. Pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds and this diversity contributes to their very good cultural awareness. Pupils are very well developed socially and well prepared for life on leaving Bronte. Those in the EYFS have good behaviour and are sociable and co-operative. The pupils' questionnaires showed a very high level of satisfaction with the provision of the school.
- 2.3 The proprietors and the headmaster take good care of the school. The governance of the school is good; the proprietors are well-informed on school matters. The headmaster and the senior leadership team demonstrate a strong and collaborative leadership and management style, which has taken the school forward from the previous inspection with improvements in monitoring, appraising and improving staff performance. Over time the leadership and management has steadily and incrementally improved the quality of the teaching and the facilities of the school. The school has responded to all the recommendations of the previous inspection. There is a strong sense of sharing good practice in teaching, learning and assessment. The EYFS is well led and managed. Some EYFS features are underdeveloped: these include the outdoor facilities and the use of assessment data. The training of staff is ongoing and effective: teachers' skills in information and communication technology (ICT) have been one of the consequent improvements since the previous inspection. All the regulatory requirements are met. The school promotes good links with parents, whose replies to the pre-inspection questionnaires were exceptionally positive.

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. Widen the range of “club” or afternoon activities.
2. Further share the best practice within the school in teaching, including the use of teaching assistants.
3. Develop the facilities for children in place in the EYFS outdoor area.
4. Improve the use made of assessment data at the end of the Foundation Stage.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils' overall achievement is good.
- 3.2 Pupils achieve excellent academic standards and their non-academic achievements are good. They are well educated in line with the school's aims to foster every pupil's intellectual, physical, aesthetic, spiritual, emotional, moral and social development, to assist all pupils to reach their potential and to develop their ability to reason and think independently.
- 3.3 Throughout the school, pupils display secure knowledge, skills, and understanding in the topics covered in their lessons. Pupils with SEND make as much progress as other pupils as measured by the improvement they make over time in National Curriculum levels. In the core subjects of English, mathematics and science pupils' levels of knowledge, skills and understanding are well developed, with notable strengths in speaking, listening and reading. Pupils demonstrate creativity in art and in preparing presentation software in history. A small number of pupils have been successful in national competitions: for example pupils have been successful in design technology in the Primary Engineer Challenge. Two achieved distinction in the ISA national art competition, and pupils have achieved distinctions in the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) competitions in 2011 and 2012.
- 3.4 Pupils in the last year of the school reach sufficiently high standards to give the majority entrance into local selective schools. Two-thirds of pupils in the last five years' cohorts have gained such places. The results for the current cohort are particularly outstanding, with over eighty percent of pupils enjoying this success. Pupils of this age have excellent writing skills and the quality of their handwriting is good. The best are capable of logical and independent thought. They produce a range of good compositional work in English and use ICT freely in its preparation. Their knowledge of mathematics is employed in science, as for example in graphical and investigative work. In science they are prepared to try things out for themselves and to test hypotheses. Pupils in the digital animation club showed imagination and persistence in a challenging medium.
- 3.5 Outcomes for children in the EYFS are good. Children make good, and in some instances, outstanding progress in relation to their starting points. Most children achieve the Early Learning Goals by the end of Reception in all areas of learning. In numeracy, children can use coins to buy ice creams and understand the concept of subtraction. In literacy they are able to make legible marks on the page. Children visibly enjoy their time in school: they enjoy the freedom of the outside area and share resources appropriately.
- 3.6 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. The curriculum that the pupils follow in some subjects, notably mathematics and English, is considerably more challenging than the National Curriculum. This level of attainment, as judged by inspectors, indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. There are no significant differences between boys and girls. Pupils identified as having SEND or EAL make good progress given their starting points and their attainment in at least one of the core subjects is in line with that of other pupils. Those identified as gifted or talented also make good progress given their starting points.

- 3.7 The pupils' overall achievement is supported by their good attitudes to learning, their positive behaviour, and the very good relationships enjoyed between themselves and their teachers. Pupils are enthusiastic, approach lessons positively, are loyal to teachers and the school, and both enjoy and persevere with their work, showing dedication to their studies. They relish unusual opportunities such as participation in the animation club. All this is in line with the school's aims to foster a love of work.
- 3.8 In the EYFS children show good levels of independence, imagination and concentration in the classroom. They play well together creatively, using the resources around them, and think critically about issues raised in discussion.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good.
- 3.10 The school offers a curriculum which is broadly balanced and which has a strength in its emphasis on modern foreign languages. There is a suitable range of other subjects supported by specialist subject teaching in art, music and swimming. Pupils study French in timetabled classes from Reception and German from Year 4, and Spanish is offered as a lunchtime club. The time for religious education (RE) and design technology (DT) is limited in the upper years, a feature which reduces the curriculum balance in those years. The curriculum meets the needs of the range of abilities and in the core subjects of mathematics and English this is achieved by timetabling these subjects concurrently allowing the more able to work a year ahead of their chronological age and the less able a year below. In some years in mathematics there are three groups with questions with different levels of challenge in each group. Pupils needing support often have a teaching assistant working alongside them (in case of swimming actually in the pool) as well as individual lessons being available. Pupils spoke highly of "Booster" mathematics.
- 3.11 The curriculum in the EYFS is eminently suitable, enabling the children to develop skills for the future and meeting their individual needs well. A good range of activities is offered including Spanish, gymnastics and ballet. Children make termly visits to an outdoor centre to experience a different learning environment. The provision for technology is good. The classroom has an interactive whiteboard and children have access to computers, programmable toys, a digital camera, and their voice or music can be recorded.
- 3.12 The main school curriculum is enriched by the way subjects are sometimes further enlivened by classes and workshops run by visitors. During the inspection a half-day music workshop took place and in the previous week there had been a whole day spent on forensic science. The curriculum is also enriched by a good range of extra-curricular activities. Many pupils participate in ballet, sport and gymnastics. Those with a sporting talent compete against other schools. Although across the year there is a breadth of clubs on offer, for those not inclined towards sport the range on offer at any particular time is somewhat limited. A particularly popular feature of school life, frequently mentioned in the pupil questionnaires, is the range of educational trips such as visits to France, the Houses of Parliament and an outdoor centre.
- 3.13 The school rightly takes pride in its standing in the local community. Money is raised for a children's charity through a weekly collection. Links with the local church for Harvest Festival and Remembrance Sunday reinforce this position. At the Harvest Festival, food is distributed to a charity for those who need it.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.14 Teaching is excellent.
- 3.15 Teaching is effective in promoting pupils' progress and supports the aims of the school.
- 3.16 Throughout the school the quality of teaching is good and almost half is excellent. This represents an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Teaching is the principal factor in the promotion of the learning, achievements and well-being of pupils. Teachers have high but not unrealistic expectations and a very secure knowledge of their subject areas. Their lessons are consistently well planned, and at their best exhibit fun, pace and challenge. Lessons invariably begin with a sharing of lesson objectives with pupils although this is never done slavishly or in a way that undermines the excitement of what is to come. As a result pupils know exactly what the focus of a lesson is. A wide array of teaching methodologies, techniques and activities is employed to engage and to enthuse pupils in a strongly oral style, which is thoroughly enjoyed and suited to the entire ability spectrum. Teaching promotes independence, notably in the practical elements of art, practical science and music. Teachers in the core subjects are up to date in the way they teach. In science very good use is made of a range of equipment appropriate to primary schools. Lessons very frequently and usefully end with a review of what has been achieved. Homework is appropriate to the range of abilities.
- 3.17 Teachers know their pupils' pastoral and academic needs extremely well. Relationships between pupils and teachers are an outstanding strength of the school and are seminal in creating the strong sense of a mutually supportive and trusting community. Almost no off-task behaviour was seen. Good use was generally made of teaching assistants, although in small number of lessons they were underused.
- 3.18 The integration of ICT into teaching strategies is reflected in effective use of interactive whiteboards, in music of recording facilities, electronic keyboards, and in other lessons the use of photography. ICT is very popular with pupils. These features are responses to recommendations of the previous report.
- 3.19 Pupils with SEND are very well catered for with small class sizes which allow for informal and formal attention to be widely given. There were many examples seen of more able pupils being given more challenging work in English and the different groups in mathematics have already been mentioned but significantly different useful extension work was less evident in other subjects.
- 3.20 Much teaching is clearly informed by assessment. The school has responded to the recommendations of the previous report and its current testing regime makes teachers fully aware of where pupils stand with respect to national norms. There is much informal oral feedback and in consequence pupils are aware of the progressions they need to make in order to improve. In many lessons current good assessment practice was clearly and usefully apparent, such as self- and peer-assessment. This practice strongly supplements the support given to pupils. Written feedback is always good and often excellent and is done consistently across subjects. Teachers incorporate supportive comments and advice for improvement at the end of assignment tasks. Some good examples of a productive 'written dialogue' in books between learner and teacher were seen.
- 3.21 The centralised record of assessments on the school information management system is a helpful tool in tracking attainment.

- 3.22 Teaching in the EYFS is excellent. Thorough, detailed planning ensures that there is a good balance between activity carried out by children on their own, and activity directed by adults. Staff make a wide range of rigorous observations with the consequence that each child makes good progress in the work planned. Thorough and informative records of children's progress are kept, but their use at the next stage of children's education is underdeveloped. The recent acquisition of additional resources has extended the learning opportunities at the Foundation Stage. A lesson was observed where children were part of an orchestra, and in which their performance, led by two conductors was recorded. An illustrated text and the interactive white board were used to teach about the Great Fire of London in a way which captured the imagination of the children.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent.
- 4.2 Pupils have a clear understanding of other cultures as demonstrated by their easy-going relationships with each other in the multi-cultural setting of the school. They clearly benefit from a day visit they receive from French pupils, their own return visit and a residential visit to a French chateau. Talks from parents about life in India as well as visits to a church and a temple all reinforce their excellent cultural awareness.
- 4.3 Pupils are both confident and articulate. They are well able to comprehend spiritual matters and respond to ideas of beauty. They are learning to empathise with others, appreciating the problems that make life difficult for some. Pupils understand very well the difference between right and wrong. Behaviour is good in almost all lessons and pupils remind each other if a line is overstepped. The general conduct around the school at lunchtimes, during break and in lessons is excellent. Broader issues of morality are reinforced in assemblies to which pupils are very responsive. An example was a story especially written about modesty to make pupils aware of the way boastfulness can lead to friendship problems.
- 4.4 Pupils have excellent social skills. When talking to inspectors they were very confident and spoke with great enthusiasm about their work and the school. The warmth and courtesy shown to visitors was a strong feature of the inspection. Year 6 pupils are particularly well socialised and value their friends and teachers. In lessons they support each other readily, as seen in DT where a pupil helped another in a tie dying activity. Movement around the school is courteous and orderly, pupils offering direction or guidance without hesitation.
- 4.5 Pupils' responses in the questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive with no issues raised.
- 4.6 The pupils' personal development by the time they leave the school is excellent. Year 6 pupils feel well prepared for the first year in their respective schools, and are confident, both academically and socially.
- 4.7 Children in the EYFS feel safe and are able to talk confidently to adults. They moved independently from one activity to another and are motivated by the tasks set and the themes for learning. They have appropriate levels of independence. Like the older pupils they have excellent behaviour. They are social and co-operative. They enjoy making decisions and choices in a variety of circumstances.

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

- 4.8 The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.9 This provision reflects the school aims to provide a warm friendly happy atmosphere that encourages responsibility, friendliness and care.
- 4.10 Members of staff work together as excellent role models and give pupils extremely effective support and guidance. Time is taken to resolve difficult issues. The relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst the pupils themselves, are

excellent. The house system motivates the pupils to behave well and do their best at all times. Playground behaviour is closely supervised.

- 4.11 In the EYFS the quality of pastoral care is good with some outstanding features. The setting provides a warm, friendly, family environment in accordance with the school's aims. Children feel confident sharing their feelings with staff and key workers. They are well supervised at all times, take care of each other, listen to one another's ideas and share well. Relationships amongst children, and between children and staff, are excellent. Staff know the children well. They address children in a polite and caring manner.
- 4.12 The school readily seeks the views of pupils. This is done both informally and formally. The established formal mechanism is the school council. However, staff involved with the council consider that it would work better if meetings were more frequent.
- 4.13 Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy lifestyles. Opportunities are provided for them to enjoy exercise, both in physical education and in some extra-curricular activities. Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits: the meals served are nutritious and closely monitored for their quality. Individual dietary needs are provided for.
- 4.14 Highly effective policies and procedures promote an ethos of positive behaviour and work well to guard against bullying and harassment. Bullying is rare and, should it happen, pupils are confident that it would be dealt with. For younger pupils effective use is made of circle time to reinforce positive behaviour and talk about any concerns.
- 4.15 Parents and pupils are given advice by the headmaster on the best choice of future school.
- 4.16 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND and those identified as gifted and talented. The provision for learning support in the school is excellent in most cases. Pupils with SEND have additional support and individual programmes are shared with class teachers. The progress of such pupils is closely monitored and systems are devised to make the best and most appropriate provision at all ages and stages. Pupils receiving such support rate it very highly.

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

- 4.17 The school's arrangements for welfare, health and safety are good.
- 4.18 In the EYFS, children's welfare is promoted effectively and the safeguarding of children carefully ensured.
- 4.19 In both the main school and the EYFS regular reviews of policies and procedures have ensured that all necessary aspects of welfare, health and safety are in good order.
- 4.20 Appropriate arrangements secure the health and safety of pupils and thorough attention is paid to child protection. Both the headmaster and other staff have had recent training in the safeguarding of pupils. The school has strong links with the local authority, which ensures that it is able to give very high priority to the protection of children.

- 4.21 Fire drills take place regularly and suitable audits have been undertaken. Effective measures are taken regarding pupils' safety in organising the evacuation of the school in case of fire or other hazards. Risk assessments are prepared for the school premises and activities on tours, visits and trips. The school has reviewed its risk assessment of the outside play area. It is in the process of reviewing and improving its risk assessment procedures for the rooms in the school in order to make the checking process more specific to each room.
- 4.22 Admission and attendance records are properly maintained and stored.
- 4.23 Since the previous inspection, the school has improved its provision of the facilities that are available for any pupil who is sick or injured. There is no sick room as such but instead a suitable adaptation of a room which otherwise serves as an office. Thorough, systematic records of accidents and the dispensing of medicines are kept. The revised first-aid policy is comprehensive and the school has an appropriate number of staff with first-aid qualifications. The school is currently seeking planning permission to construct a lift and a disabled toilet in order to greatly improve the site access to adults and pupils who need wheelchairs.

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 The proprietors have a very clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve and what are the constraints upon it. The long-standing principle on which they work is that they take responsibility for the financial aspects of the school so that the staff are unfettered with these matters, and can concentrate on the school's educational provision. There is an appropriate demarcation between the proprietors' roles and those of the headmaster.
- 5.3 Regular minuted meetings and telephone calls give the proprietors the information necessary to be conversant with the activities, needs and opportunities facing the school. An evident feature of the structure is the ability to respond rapidly to issues. The proprietors visit the main school and the EYFS at its major events and this assists their understanding of the educational side of the school. They leave the appointment of staff to the headmaster but conduct his appraisal.
- 5.4 The proprietors liaise with the headmaster to ensure compliance with regulatory and legal requirements. The monitoring of the EYFS is a responsibility which they delegate to the staff, an arrangement which is effective. They carefully scrutinise and sign off reviews of policies of child protection and health and safety. As a result there is a satisfactory level of oversight over these policies too. External advice is drawn upon in finance, health, safety or in legal matters where necessary. Quality assurance is provided by inspection. The proprietors are well informed about independent schools and attend training organised by one of the school associations.
- 5.5 The proprietors pay particular attention to the maintenance and nurturing of the school's built environment. The good state of the school buildings and the equipment in the school is the most striking example of the proprietors' financial commitment to the continuous improvement of educational opportunities for pupils.

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

- 5.6 The leadership and management of the school are good.
- 5.7 Staff at Bronte School, are well led and managed. Staff talk about the way school leadership promotes the strong team work and happy working environment. The senior leadership team (SLT) meets regularly. Its meetings are effective, and transparency across the staff is assured by the fact that an agenda is set and the meetings are minuted. All staff can contribute to debate through their line managers. All staff are aware of safeguarding and its importance at Bronte School. This is well embedded in all aspects of school life and especially in the EYFS. The equal opportunities policy, through which the different cultures in the school are valued, is implemented both in the main school and in the EYFS.
- 5.8 The headmaster and SLT are clear about their aims that the pupils should be confident and happy as well as challenged. Their 11+ results this year reflect their success in the drive for high academic success. There is a suitable whole school

development plan, which incorporates plans for the EYFS. The lack of space inhibits both extra facilities and expansion, and the school lacks a proper long-term strategic plan, a feature which acts as some impediment to its further improvement.

- 5.9 The leadership team was in its infancy at the time of the previous inspection and is now well consolidated in its work. It has established good systems for monitoring, appraising and improving staff performance, an improvement which was recommended in the previous inspection. As a result teaching is now more consistent. There is a thorough formal system of appraisal, as well as some peer review. Through the SLT, subject leaders and co-ordinators, support, advice, targets and praise are shared. The 'open door' atmosphere is effective and manageable in this compact school.
- 5.10 The leadership and management of the EYFS are good. Staff in the EYFS setting know what they need to do to improve so that the setting has a good capacity for further improvement. The EYFS liaises with the neighbouring nursery school but this link is not fully exploited.
- 5.11 Staff are recruited under systems which ensure safe recruitment. This includes arrangements for checking clearance with the Criminal Records Bureau. Staff have good opportunities for training, including training on child protection matters, and effective use is made of external courses. The needs of teachers are noted and in-service provision is planned to match them. Confident and competent use of the interactive whiteboards reflects past effective training.
- 5.12 In the EYFS good use is made of space to provide messy, quiet and imaginative areas where there is a wide range of resources to support all areas of the Foundation Stage curriculum. The outside area meets the requirements of the Early Learning Goals but as yet it is underdeveloped.
- 5.13 Channels of communication with parents and carers are excellent. The weekly newsletter for parents, frequent use of parent e-mail, and the homework record provide daily communication between home and school. Parents, staff and pupils become involved in special events such as the recent jubilee celebration when a grandparent brought his vintage double decker London bus to the school playground. Every parent is entitled to be a 'Bronte friend'. This group is currently much involved with social activities such as quiz nights, talent shows and jubilee lunches.
- 5.14 The overwhelming majority of responses to the questionnaire sent to parents before the inspection were highly positive and the number of critical responses was very small. Parents were particularly positive about the degree of care and individual support provided, a view which concurs with inspection evidence. There were many comments describing the approachability of teachers and the family atmosphere of the school. Some parents of children moved at a later time into the school remark on the success of this decision and indeed wish it had been done earlier.
- 5.15 Parents have access to all the information required under regulations. There is an effective complaints policy. The school takes issues raised by parents very seriously and handles them diligently.
- 5.16 The school has a parent council, which meets termly and enables parents to contribute to issues of school management and be involved in consultation. Inspectors considered this was an effective way to open up the school to critical feedback.

- 5.17 In the EYFS there are excellent links with parents, who are provided with a handbook of information. Learning journals are an excellent record of pupils' development and a valuable link at this level between home and school.
- 5.18 Parents periodically receive well-written reports on their children which they strongly appreciate. However the style that they employ is a holistic one, which, except in the case of the end of year reports in English and mathematics does not include grades or useful suggestions for pupils' "next steps". There are no reports written by peripatetic teachers, an absence which some parents have noted. The reports in the EYFS are similar to some of those in the main school in having no overt indications of what should be done next.

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