



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**OLDHAM HULME GRAMMAR SCHOOLS**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools

Full Name of School	<b>Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools</b>		
DfE Number	<b>353/6012</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>526636</b>		
Address	<b>Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools Chamber Road Oldham Lancashire OL8 4BX</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>0161 624 4497</b>		
Fax Number	<b>0161 652 4107</b>		
Email Address	<b>admin@ohgs.co.uk</b>		
Principal	<b>Dr P G Neeson</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr D J Illingworth</b>		
Age Range	<b>3 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>1043</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (532 boys; 511 girls)</b>		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	<b>0</b>	5-11: <b>218</b>
	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>58</b>	11-18: <b>767</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>1043</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs J Wood</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>09 Nov 2010 to 10 Nov 2010</b>		
	<b>06 Dec 2010 to 08 Dec 2010</b>		

## PREFACE

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

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010\*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

\*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

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

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

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, though inspectors will 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.

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The school is situated in Oldham, north-east of Manchester, on a pleasant site overlooking Oldham and Manchester. It was originally founded in the early 17th century, but the current school began as separate girls' and boys' direct grant schools for those aged 7 to 18, in the late 19th century. They became independent selective schools in 1976, when the direct grant scheme was abolished. In the late 1990s the Oldham Hulme Grammar School Foundation, the common governing body for the two schools, acquired a local school for pupils aged 3 to 7, which was named the Hulme Kindergarten and run as a separate school, creating a third school in the foundation.
- 1.2 The two schools for those aged 7 to 18 established a mixed sixth form in 2004 and a major restructuring of the three schools began in 2006. A new post of principal was created, with overall responsibility for the three schools, with deputy principals responsible for the 11 to 16 girls' and boys' sections of the school respectively and another deputy principal responsible for the sixth form. In July 2010 a new deputy principal post was created as head of the preparatory (prep) schools, including the kindergarten, as the beginning of a major restructuring of the provision for those between the ages of 3 and 11. Recently, the kindergarten moved to a separate building, with new purpose-built Nursery provision for 40 children and extensive refurbishment of other accommodation for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and pupils in Year 1 and 2. The senior school also opened a new art studio in 2008.
- 1.3 Significant changes have taken place to the governance of what were three schools five years ago. The structure of governance has been simplified and the formal status of those schools has also been altered, so that in April 2010 a new single school, called the Oldham Hulme Grammar Schools, was established. This is the first inspection of the school under its new structure.
- 1.4 The majority of pupils come from families living in Oldham, the north Manchester conurbation and nearby Pennine villages and towns. Most pupils come from economically advantaged families. The school population is ethnically diverse, with about a quarter of pupils coming from families who originated in other countries, of which the largest group is from the Indian sub-continent.
- 1.5 Currently, the total number of pupils in the school is 1043 (532 boys and 511 girls). The ability profile is above the average for maintained schools nationally, but the school admits pupils with a considerable spread of academic ability. Sixty pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including one with a statement of special educational needs, have been identified as requiring learning support, and one with English as an additional language. Entry to the kindergarten is by interview and kindergarten pupils are offered a place in the prep schools. Otherwise, pupils gain entry to the school through entrance tests or, in the sixth form, through achieving particular GCSE grades.
- 1.6 The school's key aims are: to foster pupils' intellectual, social, physical, cultural, emotional, moral and spiritual development and well-being, encouraging enjoyment of learning, a spirit of enquiry and the pursuit of excellence within a disciplined and stimulating learning environment; and to enhance pupils' self-awareness and self-confidence, enabling them to value their own and others' efforts and achievements, and to develop a sense of care and responsibility for the school community and wider society.

- 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 Pupils receive a broad education of a good quality, in line with the aims of the school. Achievement and academic progress are good in relation to ability and pupils in the kindergarten, in particular, achieve high standards. Achievement outside the classroom is excellent. Individuals and teams achieve major successes at regional and national level in a variety of sports, and pupils also do well in performing arts examinations and in national academic competitions.
- 2.2 The curriculum across all age groups ensures that pupils receive a broad educational experience, which is enhanced greatly by a wide variety of extra-curricular activities and an extensive range of school trips and visits. The teaching is good overall, with some that is outstanding, but some that is satisfactory. Good subject knowledge, class management and relationships with pupils are common features of the teaching across the school. These factors enable pupils to make good progress in acquiring knowledge and developing skills, so making a significant contribution to their achievement and personal development.
- 2.3 Pupils' personal development is good overall, with some outstanding features. From an early stage, pupils are confident and articulate, and have high levels of self-esteem. They develop a clear sense of right and wrong, and recognition of a responsibility to support those less fortunate than themselves. In the senior schools, pupils gain much from the wide range of responsibilities that they take on, especially in the sixth form. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils helps to provide them with a set of moral and social values that give them a secure base for adult life.
- 2.4 Pastoral care is good. Pastoral systems are well developed, and pastoral teams work very well together to ensure that pupils are well cared for and are provided with good support and guidance. Pastoral care also makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal development through this process. Responses to the pupil pre-inspection questionnaire indicated some discontent with relationships between teachers and pupils in the senior schools. Inspectors found little evidence to support these comments. The behaviour of pupils in lessons and around the school is good. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire from parents were generally very positive about the school. The welfare, health and safety of pupils are well catered for, including the promotion of healthy living.
- 2.5 The governing body provides good oversight of the school, in its daily operation, strategic planning and the welfare, health and safety of pupils. Leadership and management are good and provide effective educational direction for the school and management of day-to-day matters, as demonstrated by the successful management of the radical restructuring of the senior school. A similar process is at a very early stage in the prep schools, and developing roles and responsibilities for senior and middle managers are not yet sufficiently clear. Middle managers provide good professional leadership, but their management of teaching in the areas for which they are responsible is more variable, which accounts partly for the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Senior managers also have paid too little attention to this issue.

- 2.6 Given the length of time since the last inspections in 2002 and 2004, and the significant changes to the structure and organisation of the school, no comparisons have been made with the findings of previous inspections.

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

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

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

- 2.7 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

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

- 2.8 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Establish more clearly the roles and responsibilities of managers, resulting from the restructuring of the prep schools.
  2. Ensure that all middle managers are effective in improving teaching and learning in the areas for which they are responsible.
  3. Ensure that the assessment of pupils' work consistently supports progress in learning and is used effectively in planning future work.
  4. In the EYFS, ensure that the potential of the outside environment is exploited fully.



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

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

- 3.1 Pupils are well educated throughout, in accordance with the aims of the school. Academic achievement is good, whilst achievement in other areas is outstanding.
- 3.2 In the kindergarten and prep schools, pupils generally achieve well academically and this is particularly so in the areas of literacy and numeracy, where reading, writing and number work are consistently good across the ability range. Levels of achievement are good across the curriculum in Years 1 and 2. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to achieve well in English, mathematics and science in particular, and make good progress in these subjects. Achievement and progress are more variable in other subjects of the curriculum and depend upon the extent to which the work challenges pupils, particularly the most able.
- 3.3 Achievement in the senior schools continues to be good, with all pupils generally developing their knowledge, understanding and skills well. Examples of excellent achievement, such as the sophisticated understanding of literary devices and the author's intention shown by pupils in English, are quite common, but there are also a few instances where achievement and progress are more limited. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve consistently well. Occasionally, the most able do not achieve their best. As in earlier years, most pupils develop good understanding and skills in information and communication technology (ICT), but lack opportunities to practise and apply these in other subjects.
- 3.4 Results at GCSE and A level were above the national average for maintained schools for the years 2006 to 2009, the most recent for which comparative statistics exist, and were in line with those of maintained selective schools. These results have been achieved by year groups that have a considerably greater spread of ability than maintained selective schools, as measured by national standardised tests, and are good in relation to the ability of the pupils.
- 3.5 Achievement in areas other than the academic curriculum is excellent. Pupils achieve individual and team success across a wide range of activities. In the prep schools, this includes success in regional competitions in cross-country, football, netball and table tennis. In the senior schools, individuals and teams have been successful at regional and national level in football, table tennis and swimming, whilst those in the Under 14 girls' netball team are the current All England champions. Similarly, pupils have achieved great success in chess at prep and senior school levels. Many pupils gain high level awards in music, and speech and drama examinations, and the school regularly stages plays and concerts that are well reviewed. Many pupils achieve the highest level in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Pupils also do well in national competitions in areas such as mathematics and physics.
- 3.6 Pupils have positive attitudes to learning across the school. They are diligent, often enjoying learning, particularly younger pupils, are articulate and listen carefully. They work well individually and collaboratively on tasks set by teachers. Their skills in pursuing independent investigations are less well developed, reflecting limited opportunities provided by most teaching.

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

- 3.7 The curriculum provides good coverage of all areas of learning, so that pupils develop the skills, knowledge and understanding that they need to make progress. Together with the excellent extra-curricular programme, it helps to ensure that the school meets its curricular aims well and the curriculum makes an effective contribution to pupils' achievement and progress. Curriculum planning provides helpful detail about the knowledge to be covered and the skills to be developed, but seldom records the teaching methods to be deployed or the way in which assessment monitors and supports pupils' progress in learning. The school already has measures to address these shortcomings. Current timetabling arrangements mean that pupils spend considerable time moving about the school, reducing the time available for teaching.
- 3.8 In Years 1 and 2, the curriculum builds effectively on the excellent range of educational experiences of children in the EYFS. The development of literacy and numeracy skills is a strong feature of the curriculum between Years 1 and 6. Time is also allowed for a wide range of subjects, which ensures that pupils receive an appropriately broad experience in learning, including the introduction of French in Years 5 and 6. The curriculum meets the learning needs of all pupils, and arrangements to meet the particular needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in the curriculum are effective; good provision is made for those with statements of special educational needs. The most able pupils are not always so well catered for, but provision is at least satisfactory for them.
- 3.9 The curriculum in the senior schools consists of a broad range of subjects in Years 7 to 9 and allows for a suitable course of study, with appropriate option choices at GCSE, including a requirement that all pupils study a foreign language from this year. The school provides an extensive range of subjects at both AS and A level, which caters well for pupils' preferences. The needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities continue to be catered for well. Provision to support gifted and talented pupils remains not so well developed, but the school is in the process of planning how to meet their needs more closely. In the sixth form, the school has already successfully introduced Open University modules to extend and challenge these pupils and it responds flexibly to the needs of pupils with a particular talent, for example by providing extra coaching or training.
- 3.10 A well-organised, comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme is central to the curriculum in all year groups across the school and makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Form periods in the senior schools, however, are not always used productively by tutors to support PSHE or the guidance of individual pupils, and sometimes get the school day off to a leisurely start. Careers education is excellent and enables the pupils to make informed decisions about GCSE and A-level choices, and higher education courses. At every stage, the curriculum is very well supported and enhanced by a full programme of visits, expeditions, visiting speakers and work experience. For instance, in addition to local visits and theatre trips, there have been expeditions to Iceland and America and visits to Spain and France.
- 3.11 Pupils' educational experience is greatly enhanced by an excellent and diverse range of extra-curricular activities. Clubs and activities flourish around drama, music, sport and numerous recreational interests, as well as revision classes to supplement in-class provision. Activities include the Combined Cadet Force, The

Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme and business enterprise activities. In addition, there are many subject based clubs and societies.

- 3.12 Links with the community are a strong feature of the school and include voluntary work with local junior schools and the elderly. Of particular note is the anti-bullying work undertaken in the local area which has received national recognition. Links with schools in Uganda and Ghana, participation in a project that provides textbooks for the developing world and involvement in a major local community project extend and develop pupils' educational experience in powerful ways.

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

- 3.13 Teaching is good overall across the school, with examples of excellent practice, more commonly found in the senior schools than in Years 1 to 6, but in a significant minority of lessons the teaching is satisfactory. Conscientious lesson planning, good subject knowledge, effective class management and close relationships with pupils are common features of the teaching across the school. These enable pupils to make good progress in acquiring knowledge and in developing skills, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those with statements of special educational needs.
- 3.14 The best teaching is marked by high quality explanation and questioning, and by high expectations of all pupils. Teachers have a lively manner and excellent relationships with pupils, and create a driving pace to the learning. Pupils are intensely involved in the learning, greatly enjoy it and make rapid progress, as a result of learning tasks that cater well for a range of learning needs. A minority of the teaching is mundane, lacks variety and does not always provide enough challenge for the most able pupils, often as a result of the slow pace of the lesson and the lack of stimulating learning tasks. Most of the teaching does not provide sufficient opportunities for pupils to carry out open-ended investigations to develop their independent learning and research skills.
- 3.15 Teachers' marking is conscientious and positive, but seldom analyses difficulties or sets effective targets to improve pupils' learning in the prep schools. In the senior schools, the marking more often identifies difficulties and includes some good practice in setting helpful learning targets for pupils, but remains inconsistent. Examples of helpful and effective oral guidance and assessment were observed in a number of lessons across the school and pupils regard these as important in helping them to make progress.
- 3.16 The teaching in Years 1 to 6 is well organised and purposeful, and makes appropriate use of resources, including interactive whiteboards, so that most pupils make consistently good progress in their learning and achievement, particularly in English, mathematics and science. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and benefit particularly from the close guidance provided by teaching assistants, but expectations are not always sufficiently high for the most able pupils. A considerable amount of the teaching in Years 5 and 6 is undertaken by specialist teachers from the senior schools. Some of this teaching is excellent, but some is slow paced and lacks challenge.
- 3.17 In the senior schools, many teachers provide clear and helpful explanations in lessons, and questioning is often used skilfully to test and consolidate understanding and to explore issues. A variety of teaching methods is used effectively in many lessons, which helps to engage pupils' interest. Generally, teachers have high

expectations of pupils, particularly those of average ability and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, where the assessment information provided by the learning support department helps with planning. The teaching does not always cater so well for pupils who are gifted and talented when the pace of learning is slow and tasks set do not challenge them fully.

- 3.18 Paper and book resources are generally used well to support teaching and learning. The well-stocked and attractive library is a welcoming environment for pupils and a good learning resource. Information and communication technology resources are more limited and are relatively little used to support teaching.
- 3.19 Systems to assess pupils' performance draw effectively on a wide range of standardised data and professional judgements in order to monitor progress and achievement. With the recent enhanced support of ICT, the senior schools are developing increasingly sophisticated means of tracking pupils' progress, which allows a rapid response to any change in performance and makes it much easier for tutors to monitor the progress of pupils in their tutor groups.

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

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

- 4.1 Pupils' personal development is good, with a number of outstanding features, and it meets well a key aim of the school. From an early age, pupils are confident and articulate, thriving on a culture of praise and encouragement which engenders high levels of self-esteem. As they mature, pupils become more self-aware and reflective, developing an understanding of the importance of the non-material world, through religious belief, aesthetic awareness and the emotions. This understanding is fostered through religious studies, PSHE and many other areas of the curriculum, such as English, drama, art and music. Many pupils engage in music making and dramatic productions, which further enhance spiritual development.
- 4.2 By Year 7, pupils have a very clear appreciation of right and wrong, and a growing understanding of the ethical issues surrounding the concepts of justice and fairness. This is further developed in the senior schools through PSHE and various subjects, notably religious studies, but also others such as English, history, geography and science, as illustrated in discussions about Sharia law or slavery. By the time that they leave the school, pupils have developed a clear set of moral values.
- 4.3 Pupils' social development is a major theme of school life and they soon demonstrate courtesy and respect for each other, reinforced by the excellent role models, encouragement and praise provided by staff. During their time in the prep schools, pupils continue to develop and, through sporting, music and other extra-curricular activities, learn the importance of co-operation, teamwork and personal responsibility. However, this is not developed to the same extent through roles of responsibility in the school or through regular small group activities in lessons. Pupils develop a keen empathy for those less fortunate than themselves and show an enthusiastic commitment to raising funds for a wide range of local and national charities.
- 4.4 In the senior schools, pupils continue to make good progress in their social development. They enhance their awareness of the importance of acting responsibly and of their future social responsibilities as citizens, particularly through religious studies and PSHE, which includes developing an understanding of public institutions and services. Pupils, particularly higher up the school and in the sixth form, take on a wide variety of responsibilities, for example as form helpers, academic and peer mentors, and prefects. They assist as volunteers at school events such as open days, the Christmas Fair, drama productions and concerts. Through the sports leadership course and in other roles, they help with coaching football, netball, hockey and swimming, and are also heavily involved in raising funds for charities through a variety of activities, some of them self-initiated. Pupils also develop their teamwork and personal responsibility through the great range of sporting and creative arts activities in which they take part.
- 4.5 Pupils develop a respect and tolerance of different views and the capacity to live in harmony in a multi-cultural community, whilst celebrating the richness of cultural diversity. They gain a good understanding of a variety of religions and cultural traditions through assemblies, religious studies and PSHE, as well as various subjects, such as art, English, geography, history and music. This is complemented effectively by the learning that takes place as a result of the effective manner in which the school uses the diverse religious and cultural experiences of pupils as a learning resource.

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

- 4.6 The school has comprehensive, well-organised arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of its pupils, in accordance with its aims.
- 4.7 In the kindergarten and prep schools, staff know the pupils well, relationships are always good and often excellent, and pupils are well cared for. Policies and practices encourage good behaviour, but appropriate sanctions are available for inappropriate behaviour, which take account of the particular circumstances. These are well understood by pupils and parents. Similarly, the school has clear and effective procedures to deal with bullying, but pupils report that bullying is rare and isolated. In PSHE and science, pupils begin to learn about the importance of healthy lifestyles and eating.
- 4.8 In the senior schools, the situation is similar. Pastoral staff and subject teachers know their pupils well. Relationships are good, and policies and practices encourage good behaviour. The school also has a carefully staged set of sanctions to deal with inappropriate behaviour, which pupils acknowledge to be fair. In responses to the pupils' questionnaire, a considerable minority of pupils suggested that sanctions are not applied consistently, but interviews with pupils conducted during the inspection indicated that this is not a major concern. The senior schools also have clear and effective procedures for dealing with bullying. Pupils and parents reported that this is not a significant issue, and where it has occurred it was dealt with quickly and appropriately. In PSHE, physical education and science, pupils learn about healthy living, including a healthy diet, through topics that are appropriate to their age. The school also supports healthy eating for all pupils through the range and type of food and drinks it provides.
- 4.9 Across all of its sites, the school has appropriate measures to keep pupils safe, including supervision of pupils as they move around the school, and at break and lunchtimes. All the necessary risk assessments have been carried out, including those related to fire safety and activities inside the school and off site. The estates management ensures that accommodation is kept in good order and any health and safety issues are attended to promptly, as was immediately apparent during the inclement weather encountered during the second stage of this inspection. Similarly, all the necessary checks have been carried out in relation to the suitability of staff and volunteers to work with children and these have been recorded meticulously. Training in child protection is appropriate and includes necessary updates and the training of new staff. Arrangements for first aid and the care of ill or injured pupils are effective. The school has a plentiful number of staff with relevant up-to-date first aid qualifications, and the school nurse is well qualified. The medical centre also provides valuable support for pupils in an informal counselling role. The school has appropriate plans to improve educational access for pupils with statements of special educational needs or with disabilities. Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored.

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

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

- 5.1 The governance of the school is good. The governing body is able to draw on a broad range of expertise amongst its governors, in areas as diverse as business, construction, medicine, finance, education and law. It provides effective oversight of the day-to-day management of the school, is closely involved in strategic planning, and fulfils its responsibilities for educational planning, financial management, accommodation and resources to support teaching and learning well.
- 5.2 The structure of governance has been significantly simplified in the last five years and is well placed to allow the governing body to carry out its duties effectively. The main governing body is well supported in its work by its sub-committees, particularly the education, and finance and general purposes committees. The governing body pays close attention to the welfare, health and safety of pupils. A governor chairs the school's health and safety committee, health and safety matters are a regular item for meetings of the governing body and governors are closely involved in the appointment of staff. Several governors have key roles, particularly the chair of governors, the chair of the education committee, and the governor who has responsibility for child protection, health and safety, and links with the kindergarten and prep schools. These governors in particular work closely with the senior management team and are in regular contact about day-to-day issues and future planning.
- 5.3 Governors are directly involved in policy development through the annual strategic planning day in collaboration with the senior management team, and follow-up to this. Strategic planning and financial management are particular strengths of the governing body and contribute very effectively to providing support, challenge and stimulus for growth and development. This is well illustrated by the recently produced business plan for 2010 to 2015, jointly produced by senior managers and governors. It is an example of high quality strategic planning, exploring various options for the future direction of the school and providing realistic costings for them.
- 5.4 Governors keep in touch with parents through attendance at various social functions. Contact with middle managers and staff is less frequent and governors generally are not well known by staff outside the senior management team, which reduces the effectiveness of their monitoring role.

## **5.(b) The quality of leadership and management**

- 5.5 The leadership and management of the school are good. The senior management team has a clear shared view of the educational direction for the school, which is very much in pursuit of the school's aims. Members of the team also have a clear understanding of their own roles and responsibilities, and carry them out effectively and with humanity. Financial management and administration are of a high quality and strongly support the smooth day-to-day running of the school and strategic planning. Careful attention has also been paid to developing policies, procedures and practices which safeguard pupils and have regard to their welfare, health and safety, including the regular updating of child protection training. Similarly, the arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, supply staff, governors and volunteers combine thorough and appropriate procedures with meticulous practice.
- 5.6 Since the arrival of the current principal in 2006, in a newly created post, the senior school has undergone major institutional change, which has improved the effectiveness of management considerably. Lines of communication have improved, clearer roles and responsibilities have been established, and staff appraisal and departmental review systems have been introduced. Policies and procedures have been rationalised and improved to encourage strong consistency of practice across what were, in effect, separate schools. Single academic departments have been established, with heads of department, and pastoral teams work closely together. These major changes have been managed skilfully and empathetically, so that staff remain strongly committed to the educational success and personal well-being of the pupils that they teach and care for. This is reflected in the good quality of education, the teaching and learning, and the close relationships amongst staff and between staff and pupils, which are a defining feature of the school.
- 5.7 The school is successful in recruiting good quality staff, who enhance the quality of teaching and learning. However, the monitoring of teaching across the school in order to ensure consistency in good practice is not yet fully successful and contributes to the inconsistencies observed in lessons.
- 5.8 Middle managers provide good professional leadership, and support and guidance to colleagues, but their monitoring of teaching and learning, and implementation of school policies are less consistent. In the best practice, where heads of department manage their departments effectively, teaching is more uniformly good. A good example of this is the helpful school marking and assessment policy, which has informed good practice where it has been implemented fully but, where it has not, inconsistencies in marking practice are evident.
- 5.9 The institutional structure of the prep schools is in the early stages of major change, similar to that in the senior school. It is bringing together into one school what essentially were separately run schools, with separate management structures, policies and procedures.
- 5.10 Senior managers have established a clear educational direction for the prep schools and the strategic planning for the future is sound, reflecting the overall aims of the school well. Rapid progress is being made in developing common practices and procedures, and the recently appointed subject co-ordinators are beginning to take on the monitoring of teaching and learning. Induction, appraisal and staff development have been brought together in a systematic manner that mirrors practice in the senior schools. Much has been achieved in a short time, but the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle managers have not yet been clarified



sufficiently, and the monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning by middle managers are still at an embryonic stage.

- 5.11 The management of Years 1 and 2, as part of the kindergarten provision, is excellent. Staff work very closely together, curricular planning and the monitoring of teaching and learning establish consistently good practice, and pupils make good to excellent progress.

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

- 5.12 The school has good links with the parents, carers and guardians of its pupils, reflecting the success of one of its aspirations. Parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed generally high levels of satisfaction with the school. The most common concern was limited opportunities to become involved in school life. Inspectors' discussions with parents during the inspection, and the evidence provided by the school, indicated a variety of ways in which parents can become more involved in school life and the progress of their children. School planners are a valuable means by which parents and teachers can communicate with each other about pupils' work and progress on a frequent basis. Half-termly subject grades, with brief comments by tutors, combined with annual parents' meetings and full written reports, keep parents in close touch with their children's achievement and progress. Parents have access to a regular flow of information through the school website and each term a lively newsletter is produced, packed with information about pupils' activities and achievements. The school also arranges meetings and discussions with parents at transitional times, such as moving from one part of the school to the next, and making option choices for GCSE and A level, and applications for higher education.
- 5.13 A few parents expressed dissatisfaction in the parental questionnaire about the way in which their concerns had been handled, but many more were highly complimentary about the manner in which the school responds to these and to queries. Concerns raised by parents are dealt with speedily and the vast majority are quickly resolved, to the satisfaction of all. Where this is not the case, the school is careful to follow its clear and suitable published procedures in dealing with the complaint.
- 5.14 The school website contains much helpful information, including all the requisite policies, for parents of current and prospective pupils to scrutinise. These policies and other information are also available on request from the school. Parents commented warmly on the way in which they had been received when their children applied to the school.

## **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 This is an outstanding setting, which successfully achieves its aims and meets the needs of its children very well. Those in charge have an excellent understanding of the provision's strengths and areas for development, and regularly review procedures and policies to maintain effective improvement.

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

6.2 Outstanding leadership and management ensure that staff are sharply focused on helping all children to make progress in their learning and development, and promoting their welfare. The EYFS action plan contains excellent evaluation of the existing provision, clear aims for the future and specific areas for improvement. Children are very well safeguarded, as highly trained and dedicated staff work with an excellent understanding of all procedures. All activities, equipment and surroundings are regularly and rigorously assessed to eliminate risks. Parents expressed great appreciation for the warm and friendly atmosphere and the rapid progress the children make in their learning. Strong links between school and home are swiftly established and parents' views are elicited, considered and, where appropriate, acted upon. This inclusivity extends to advisory agencies, community members and visitors, all of whom enrich the provision and improve outcomes for children. A proactive approach to early intervention is pursued, so that all children are fully supported and integrated. The consistent way in which policies are implemented promotes equality well.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. Children learn and develop exceptionally well. There is a carefully judged balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, giving the children many opportunities to develop their critical thinking and independence. Planning is extremely detailed across all areas of learning, with children's own suggestions and interests effectively incorporated into short-term plans. All children gain excellent first-hand experiences of the natural world through exploration of a woodland area in the school grounds which is also used as a 'forest school' environment. The Nursery's imaginatively designed building includes an outdoor classroom that allows paths of personal curiosity to be pursued uninterrupted by rain. The immediate outside area for Reception children is recognised by the school as yet to fulfil its potential as a learning resource. Children are extremely well supported by their 'key person', who promotes their welfare at all times and guides them towards self-sufficiency.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for children are outstanding; most attaining the Early Learning Goals in all six areas of learning and many exceeding them, reflecting achievement that is clearly above age-related expectations and high for their ability. Progress in learning is rapid, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Children learn to communicate fluently, enjoy books, and express their thoughts and feelings with developing confidence. They clearly enjoy learning and derive great satisfaction from their achievements. Children are inquisitive, enthusiastic and self-motivated, relating extremely well to one another and to adults. Behaviour is exemplary. Children develop a particularly good awareness of personal safety through an effective PSHE programme and have a strong understanding of the importance of healthy eating and exercise, reinforced by daily fruit snacks and weekly swimming lessons.

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

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mr Ted Cohn	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Valerie Clark	Assistant Reporting Inspector (Former Senior Manager, junior section of HMC school)
Mrs Elaine Brook	Former Head, ISA prep school
Mrs Carole Evans	Head, GSA school
Mrs Pauline Edgar	Head, GSA school
Mr Bill Lomas	Deputy Principal, HMC school
Mr Ian Lovat	Director of Studies, HMC school
Mr Ian Parker	Deputy Head, ISA prep school
Mrs Sharon Pratt	Deputy Head (Pastoral)/Head of Primary, ISA school
Mr Martin Watson	Head, ISA school
Mr Peter Willerton	Former Houseparent, IAPS school
Mrs Jill Wood	Senior Teacher, ISA school
Miss Louise Savage	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Jane Willis	Early Years Team Inspector (Head of Pre-Prep, ISA school)