



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**MANCHESTER HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Manchester High School for Girls

Full Name of School	<b>Manchester High School for Girls</b>		
DfE Number	<b>352/6030</b>		
Registered Charity Number	<b>532295</b>		
Address	<b>Manchester High School for Girls Grangethorpe Road Manchester M14 6HS</b>		
Telephone Number	<b>0161 224 0447</b>		
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Email Address	<b>administration@mhsg.manchester.sch.uk</b>		
Head Mistress	<b>Mrs Claire Hewitt</b>		
Chair of Governors	<b>Mrs Christine Walker</b>		
Age Range	<b>4 to 18</b>		
Total Number of Pupils	<b>923</b>		
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>		
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	<b>26</b>	5-11: <b>184</b>
	11-18:	<b>713</b>	
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	<b>923</b>	
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Rachel Edwards</b>		
EYFS Gender	<b>Girls</b>		
Inspection dates	<b>21 September 2010 to 22 September 2010</b> <b>18 October 2010 to 20 October 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 previous ISI inspection was in October 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 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 Manchester High School for Girls is a selective day school for girls, set in extensive grounds to the south of the city of Manchester. The school was founded in 1874 “to impart to the girls the very best education which can be given and to fit them for any future which may be before them.” Today, the school maintains these guiding principles by its aim to encourage each individual pupil to achieve educational excellence over a broad range of subjects and to develop an awareness of her own value and a sense of responsibility towards others.
- 1.2 The school is administered by a board of governors. The current headmistress was appointed in January 2009. Since the last inspection, which took place in October 2004, there has been a continuous programme of refurbishment and improvement to the school site and facilities, the most recent major project being the construction of a new sports complex in 2006.
- 1.3 The school caters for 923 girls aged four to eighteen. There are 210 girls in the preparatory department, of whom 26 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The senior school caters for 531 girls aged eleven to sixteen, and a further 182 girls in the sixth form. The school community is socially and culturally diverse, with over one-third of the girls experiencing a language other than English in their family lives, covering between them a range of 44 different languages in the senior school and 21 in the preparatory department. Each of the major world religions is represented in the school population. Girls travel to the school from a wide geographical area around and beyond Manchester. They enter the senior school from a large number of maintained and independent primary schools.
- 1.4 Standardised national assessment tests show that the average ability of pupils at all stages in the school is above the national average, with a large proportion of pupils showing levels of ability far above the national average. The majority of Year 13 pupils go on to their first choice of university. The school has identified 40 pupils in the senior school as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 23 receive learning support; in the preparatory department eighteen pupils have been identified, of whom eight receive support. There are four pupils for whom English is an additional language (EAL), and they all receive support as appropriate for their stage of acquiring the language.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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

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

- 2.1 From the Early Years Foundation Stage onwards, pupils of all abilities and needs are successful in their learning and personal development. An outstanding educational experience is provided and the school fully meets all of its aims. Pupils make excellent progress, and the high standards at the time of the previous inspection have been fully maintained. Teaching is outstanding and shows a wide range of teaching methods, careful planning and enthusiasm, allowing pupils to exercise independent thought and practice. Teachers are dedicated to the success of their pupils and have excellent working relationships with them. Pupils of all abilities are fully supported, especially those with LDD or EAL. The curriculum allows pupils to study an extensive range of subjects with excellent provision of life skills and personal, social and health education (PSHE). The extra-curricular provision is equally strong and fosters an interest in a wide range of sporting and creative activity. The excellent curriculum, teaching and behaviour of the pupils, combined with the high expectations they set for themselves, are major factors in their achievement.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent and a real strength of the school. All pupils are well-rounded individuals with an excellent sense of self-worth and an appreciation of the different faiths and cultures represented in the school. All members of the community are valued and there is an atmosphere of respect, honesty and loyalty. By careful and comprehensive arrangements for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, the school provides excellent support and guidance for all pupils. The school has appropriate and effective policies in place with regard to anti-bullying, welfare, health and safety. Pastoral care in the school is outstanding and contributes a great deal to pupils' personal development.
- 2.3 Governance and management are of outstanding quality, and are successful in providing a community where all share a vision for excellence in everything they do. All members of the school community are proud of their school and of their achievements. In all respects the governors discharge their responsibilities fully and, together with the strong leadership team, have a clear insight into the needs of the school and plan successfully for its future. The school has strong links with parents and excellent methods of communication. The school carries out all recruitment checks on staff rigorously. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires show that parents and pupils are very pleased with the education and support provided by the school. Almost all of the pupils like being at the school and believe they are making good progress. They feel strongly that they are encouraged to do things for themselves and that the work they do is interesting. A small number of pupils were concerned with the monitoring of their work load and whether teachers always treat pupils equally. However, inspection evidence did not support this. Parents are very pleased with all aspects of the school. The only issue raised by a small number of parents was regarding the length of time it takes to handle their concerns. Inspection evidence indicates that the school has worked hard to improve this aspect of communication and that parental concerns are dealt with appropriately and in good time.

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

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

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

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

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

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

1. In the EYFS setting, continue to monitor carefully children's performance in all subject areas in order to sustain the high standards achieved by the setting.

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

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

- 3.1 Throughout the school, including the EYFS, the quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills are outstanding. Pupils are exceptionally well educated and the school fully meets its aim to encourage the achievement of the highest academic standards and individual potential. Results at GCSE and A Level have been far above the national average for girls in maintained schools, and above the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. Pupils with EAL and those with LDD also have excellent levels of attainment. These levels of attainment indicate that pupils make exceptional progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability. Almost all pupils are successful in proceeding to their first choice of university. They demonstrate considerable success in national competitions and awards, notably the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) scheme, where significant numbers achieve gold and silver, Science Olympiads, music examinations, speech and drama examinations, the Junior Sports Leader Award and the Young Enterprise Scheme.
- 3.2 At all ages pupils display excellent levels of knowledge and understanding. In a Year 12 lesson the girls demonstrated a confidence in their knowledge of text, and could express clear and logical counter-arguments to stated opinions. Pupils are able to effectively demonstrate their understanding orally. In a Year 10 life skills lesson the pupils quickly worked out the difference between a reasoned argument and an emotional one, and were able to express their judgements clearly. Standards of literacy are high and written tasks are diligently completed to an excellent standard, showing well-developed skills of presentation. The volume of work produced is considerable, demonstrating a good pace of work and excellent progress. Pupils have competent skills in all areas of learning. In a Year 3 lesson, excellent numeracy skills were seen when discussing comparative measurements and in a senior school lesson the pupils were able to use complex equipment to determine peak voltages and frequency. Information and communication technology (ICT) skills are used confidently by the pupils, for example, to promote learning in a Year 10 language lesson when a programme enabled pupils to work at a fast pace and to consolidate their vocabulary and sentence structure. Achievement in areas of creativity and aesthetic learning can be seen through their success in local and national competitions. Outstanding results are seen in all extra-curricular activities, especially in the music and drama performances and examination results. Many pupils enjoy significant individual and team success in both county and national sports.
- 3.3 Throughout the school the pupils' attitudes to learning are excellent. They are purposeful and extremely enthusiastic, with high levels of concentration and self-motivation. Being highly articulate they are keen to express their opinions and debate arguments with feeling. They are focused in lessons and are very ambitious for themselves. Pupils have a strong respect for their teachers, listen well and are supportive of one another's views. Pupils are extremely comfortable working individually, as in a Year 5 study of rivers, and collectively, as observed in a senior school lesson on peer assessment. They express a desire to learn and achieve. They exhibit self-discipline and relish a challenge.



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

- 3.4 The curriculum makes an excellent contribution to the pupils' achievements and progress, and is well planned throughout the school to ensure continuity of education. It is stimulating and challenging, with an extensive and varied range of subjects covering the required areas of learning, and is very successful in fulfilling the school's aim to offer each pupil the opportunity to develop their talents to the full. The extra-curricular provision makes a strong contribution to this aim. In the senior school, the programme for PSHE is delivered effectively as a series of life skills lessons. In the preparatory department, PSHE is based around a programme which promotes a strong sense of community responsibility. An effective internet safety programme is also delivered to all ages. Creative and expressive subjects are well represented and are generously provided for in the timetable.
- 3.5 The curriculum is suited to all ages, abilities and needs and offers real challenge. An extensive range of foreign languages is on offer, including Mandarin taught from Year 3 to Year 6, and in addition Latin is offered to all girls from Year 7 upwards. Pupils choose from a wide range of subjects at GCSE, with the option of separate sciences being taken by a large number of pupils. All pupils study the short course GCSE in religious education. In the sixth form the curriculum offers real choice, with the addition of the International Baccalaureate operating alongside the current A-Level programme, which includes further mathematics for the most able mathematicians. The Extended Project Qualification is also available for pupils as an extra challenge in the sixth form. The provision for pupils with LDD is thorough and appropriate to their needs and good specialist support is available for pupils with EAL. Demanding extension work is provided in all subjects, as are activities for those pupils who have particular gifts or talents. Pupils fully appreciate the excellent careers provision in the school, which begins as early as Year 7, with effective and thorough preparation for the choices ahead of them.
- 3.6 The preparatory department has an excellent range of extra-curricular activities during lunchtimes and after school. These support the academic, musical, creative and sporting interests of the pupils, giving them the chance to continue to develop their skills and talents. Orchestra is a popular, well-supported activity with a challenging repertoire. Virtually all pupils in the senior school participate in at least one activity outside the timetable. A large number of pupils successfully take part in the D of E scheme, and pupils enjoy the wide variety of sports available, competing in a large number of fixtures. Water polo is a specialist sport for the school, while rock climbing is also offered as a challenge to pupils of all ages. Farther afield, pupils experience a rich array of cultural experiences with curricular and extra-curricular visits.
- 3.7 Links with the community are strong through charity work and an extensive community service programme exists in the sixth form. The Medlock scheme, now in its eleventh year, is an exceptional example of community cohesion, where sixth-form pupils provide weekly tutorial support to visiting Year 6 pupils from a local primary school.

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

- 3.8 Teaching is outstanding, and fulfils the school's aim to develop a love of excellence and encourage the achievement of the highest academic standards and individual potential. In the majority of the lessons observed during the inspection, across all subject areas and ages the teaching was excellent. Interesting and highly stimulating lessons enable the pupils to acquire new knowledge, make outstanding progress, increase their understanding and develop skills associated with independent learning and thinking. Pupils with LDD and EAL are supported effectively, enabling them to achieve as well as their peers in relation to their ability. There is also excellent provision for the most able, gifted and talented, with teaching strategies associated with this educational need cascading naturally into most academic lessons.
- 3.9 The outstanding quality of the teaching in the preparatory department is delivered by a highly dedicated and professional team of teachers and assistants. A stimulating and engaging variety of styles and methods contribute significantly to the excellent overall progress of the pupils. Planning is well organised, particularly through the introduction of a new common planning format, which is closely monitored by the head of the preparatory department and the subject co-ordinators. All lessons featured many examples of both challenge and appropriate support. In the senior school, teaching fosters in pupils the application of intellectual, physical and creative effort, an interest in their work and the ability to think for themselves. Teachers are highly knowledgeable and convey their own passion for their subject. Teaching cultivates in the pupils open-minded curiosity and intellectual challenge. In a Year 13 lesson, pupils focused on the synoptic links associated with *Dr Faustus* and *Frankenstein*. Such highly effective lessons demonstrate teachers' enthusiasm, and encourage the pupils to think independently and consider complex arguments to justify and synthesise ideas in writing. Lessons are very well planned, paying due regard to pace and individual pupils' learning needs.
- 3.10 Resources are excellent, and are well used by teachers throughout the school. The ICT facilities have proved most advantageous in supporting exciting approaches to learning, in particular the interactive whiteboard facility. Libraries in both the preparatory department and the senior school are good resources to aid both study and quiet reading. The music suite provides an excellent centre for teaching and learning for all ages. Senior musicians enjoy using effective software to create, stimulate and complete their compositional portfolios. The outstanding sports facilities aid the development of skills of all pupils, many to very high levels of achievement.
- 3.11 Marking and assessment in all departments is generally of high quality, with the best examples revealing detailed comments which allow the pupils to consolidate their work and make progress. On a very few occasions, there were examples of the marking being perfunctory and void of important feedback to pupils, but oral feedback in lessons was always very effective. The traffic light system in Years 3 to 6 and smiley faces in Years 1 and 2 give pupils of the preparatory department an excellent opportunity for self-assessment when handing in their work. National standards of assessment and internal checking are also very strong features of the school's assessment procedures, which are used effectively in monitoring the skills and abilities of all pupils.

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

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

- 4.1 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent and a real strength of the school. An ethos has developed within the school community which allows pupils to grow and flourish into self-assured young people who have a strong sense of who they are and what they believe in. All pupils are encouraged to develop their own personality or character and to tolerate the values and beliefs of others. The school embraces many faiths, and a harmony exists within the school as each pupil enjoys sharing in the different traditions and festivals of their friends. Time is built into the school day for reflection and to appreciate the beauty of life, whether in lessons, in assemblies or during out-of-school visits to places of interest. For those who wish to have moments of peace to reflect on their religious beliefs, opportunities and facilities are available. A prayer room is offered during Ramadan and Buddhists have the opportunity to use a meditation room if required. Even the younger pupils reflect through a variety of media; the preparatory department took part in a national competition 'Spiritualism in Art', and provided the national winner.
- 4.2 The school aims to foster high moral standards and honesty, and achieves this very well. The school's provision for moral education is excellent. Pupils throughout the whole school show a clear understanding of the positive values of good conduct. Through discussions with pupils it was clear that they had a natural sense of right and wrong and appreciated the sense of fairness. In a Year 6 form period, pupils were reflecting on the behaviour charter they had agreed at the beginning of the year. The Amnesty International group, Ethics Event and Utopia meeting groups in the senior school are well attended, and are used to discuss current moral and human rights issues. An excellent PSHE and life skills programme ensures a good understanding of how successful societies work. Concern was raised by a small number of pupils in the pre-inspection questionnaire about how fair teachers are in giving rewards and punishments. The inspection evidence does not suggest that pupils are treated in anything but a fair and equal way.
- 4.3 The social development of pupils of all ages, from the EYFS upwards, is outstanding. In the preparatory department, there is an excellent house system which promotes a wonderful community spirit and offers many opportunities to work and have fun together. There is a tremendous feeling of friendship throughout the school, and pupils are genuinely pleased by the success of others as well as themselves. All younger pupils have opportunities to take responsibility, as in Year 6, where they are playground friends, sport and house captains and prefects. The senior school is committed to encouraging maturity, independence and a sense of responsibility and it achieves this exceptionally well as demonstrated by the work of the school council. Links between year groups are maintained and encouraged by sixth-form students being chosen to be form prefects and subject mentors to younger pupils. They participate very actively in programmes that introduce them to the workings of democracy and the parliamentary system, as seen in a Year 11 meeting on voting in elections. The pupils' care for those less fortunate than themselves is evident in the outstanding charity work done throughout the school.
- 4.4 The multicultural environment influences the work and attitudes of the pupils, and their appreciation of cultural diversity is excellent. The pupils show an exceptional understanding and knowledge of different cultures in lessons, as in history, where

topics such as racism and segregation were linked to the Washington trip experienced in Year 9, and in life skills, where the role of women in Chinese culture was discussed. An extensive programme of visits and trips caters for all age groups to help increase their experiences; as in recent visits to Paris, Iceland and St Petersburg.

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

- 4.5 Comprehensive arrangements for welfare, health and safety within the school provide excellent support and guidance for all pupils and contribute much to their outstanding personal development.
- 4.6 Pastoral arrangements are understood and much valued by the pupils and parents. The pupils in the preparatory department are extremely well looked after by a very strong pastoral care system. The pupils are very happy and comfortable in their school environment and find all staff approachable and caring and dedicated to their needs. Teachers work extremely hard and know the pupils very well. Pupils described the school as “amazing” and the teachers as “really nice”. In the senior school each pupil is encouraged to talk to the person they feel most confident with, ranging from the form tutor to the head of year or the school nurse. The pupil questionnaire showed overwhelmingly that the students liked being in the school; however, a small number of pupils raised a concern that the teachers were not always monitoring the pupil’s work load. Most of these issues were centred on homework and extra-curricular commitments, but inspection evidence does not suggest that this was a significant problem. In interviews with pupils an appreciation was expressed for the extra help, advice and support given by all teachers. The mentoring of pupils happens at all levels within the school, and is a testimony to the supportive relationships amongst the pupils themselves and with their teachers. Pastoral care and welfare policies and procedures encourage excellent behaviour. Bullying is not tolerated and pupils recognise that the few instances that do occur are resolved swiftly and constructively.
- 4.7 The safety and welfare of the pupils are given the highest priority. Excellent policies and procedures safeguard and promote the welfare of the pupils, being clear and effective. All staff, including ancillary staff and governors, have participated in recent safeguarding training, including training in safer recruitment and internet safety. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are very effective. The health and safety committee includes representative members from all the appropriate areas of school and has two nominated governors. Detailed risk assessments are adhered to and these are regularly reviewed. All necessary measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards have been taken, and the required fire prevention procedures are well known. School fire drills are carried out regularly and the electrical safety of appliances is checked.
- 4.8 Pupils benefit from a comfortable medical centre run by a much-valued healthcare professional. Good health records are maintained, and medicines are stored and distributed safely. A generous number of staff are trained in first aid. The school has a three-year disability plan in operation, and access to buildings and toilets for disabled people is good. Pupils are encouraged to live healthily through a high quality PSHE and life skills programme and an excellent range of sporting activities. A good range of healthy food is available at lunch time. Admission and attendance registers are maintained and correctly stored.

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

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

- 5.1 The governing body provides excellent oversight of the school in line with its aims. Financial management is strong, and enables governors to oversee educational provision and wise investment in staff, material resources and accommodation. Governors offer an excellent breadth of experience, knowledge and interest, which contributes significantly to the strategic planning for the future development of the school. They display an impressive knowledge of current educational thinking and encourage the school in its aim to be at the forefront of both national and global education. Regular meetings of the whole board and its committees, with detailed strategic plans and well-kept minutes, ensure that good communication is maintained and that there is openness to new ideas.
- 5.2 The governing body has an excellent insight into the working of the school, and the chair of governors is frequently in school working closely with the head mistress. The governors have invited the school leadership team to be members of the many committees, so ensuring that they are fully involved in discussions about the future planning of the school. They participate fully in the life of the school providing support wherever possible, whether working with pupils over future career choices or enjoying the many social events with parents.
- 5.3 The governing body is most effective in discharging its responsibilities for child protection, welfare, and health and safety throughout the school. All of the required policies are regularly implemented and reviewed. The governing body shows a strong wish to go beyond what is legally required to produce policies relevant to the school and procedures which benefit the education and welfare of its pupils.

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

- 5.4 At all levels, the leadership and management of the school are excellent. The head mistress and senior leadership team are particularly successful in conveying to the staff and pupils the aim of the school to instil a love of excellence and culture and to encourage the achievement of the highest possible academic standards. In the preparatory department, the leadership by the new head, working closely with the head mistress, has made a significant impact on the happy working atmosphere within the department. Leadership at the highest level has successfully maintained the strong standards of education commented upon in the last inspection report and is also moving it forward into exciting new areas of development. A new openness to management is appreciated by parents, pupils and staff.
- 5.5 The senior management team provides leadership which is inspiring and dedicated in its support to staff. It is committed to the values of the school and works very hard to achieve them. This is reflected in the excellent quality of academic standards and pupils' personal development, and in the high standards of the school buildings, site and facilities. Roles of responsibility allow for effective overlap, and communication at all levels is very efficient, from the frequent staff meetings and briefings through to the daily email messages and updates. The roles of middle managers are clear and a high level of autonomy is given to them in decision-making regarding their own departments, which they manage in a very competent and impressive manner. Thorough self-evaluation takes place at every level, including a questionnaire to

parents of current and prospective pupils. Development planning is detailed and of the highest quality, and is frequently monitored for progress. Educational monitoring is a priority and, combined with the excellent personal knowledge that the teachers have of the pupils, leads to the outstanding results shown in academic and personal achievement.

- 5.6 The school has recruited and retained motivated and hard-working staff and carries out the correct arrangements for checking their suitability for working with children. The teachers are well qualified and know their subjects extremely well. An induction programme for new staff is thorough and the appraisal programme is closely linked to development planning. The school shows a true commitment to continuing professional development which is thorough and plentiful. All staff are fully up to date with their training and any changes in the areas of safeguarding and health and safety legislation, and implement all policies successfully. The administration and support staff of the school are highly efficient and friendly and are appreciated for their helpfulness to pupils and parents.

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

- 5.7 Links between the school and parents are excellent. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire show that parents are very pleased with the education and support provided for their children and with the quality of communication with the school. Only one issue was raised by a small number of parents, and this was regarding the school's response time to their concerns. Inspection evidence indicates that concerns are handled appropriately and in a sensitive way. The school has worked hard to improve its system of communication with parents, thus ensuring that parental concerns are handled speedily. General email contact also ensures that parental concerns regarding children's progress generate responses from heads of year or heads of department. The school has a complaints policy available to parents and in recent years no complaints have proceeded beyond the initial stage.
- 5.8 An excellent addition to the school's communication system is the introduction of the school's virtual learning environment, which has valuable day-to-day information for both parents and pupils. Through this the parent handbook is readily available, which is thorough in its detail about school life and procedures. News and dates of events help to keep parents informed of how they can be involved in the life of the school. The detail available about their children's courses and examination work also allows parents to be fully involved in their child's work and homework. Full and up-to-date relevant information and news is also available for parents on the school website including the safeguarding policy.
- 5.9 The school produces regular high quality publications. In the preparatory department, there is a weekly department newsletter, and a bulletin called 'Prep Talk' is published three times a year. In the senior school the head mistress sends a termly letter to parents, in addition to the three editions each year of the bulletin 'High Flyer'. All of these publications contain interesting news and events and celebrate the many achievements and successes of the pupils.
- 5.10 Annual parents' evenings are held for each year group in the senior school, and two meetings are arranged each year for the preparatory department. Other meetings, for example curriculum information meetings, are held as required. In the preparatory department, the parents receive written reports twice a year, and in the

senior school parents receive a full written report once a year and short reports showing grades and progress twice a year. Reports are informative, with sound advice on how to improve and a guide to recent levels of attainment.

- 5.11 An active parents' and teachers' association provides regular opportunities for all members of the school community to meet socially and to raise funds for the school. Opportunities are available to spend time in the school during the day; for example, in the preparatory department, parents are invited to come in to dine with their daughters.

## **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 Overall the setting is outstanding. The needs of the children are very well met and outcomes are excellent in all areas. Children make consistently good progress in their learning. All adults are committed to sustaining high standards in the many areas where these exist already, and to continuous improvement where this is necessary. The school has responded positively to recommendations in the last inspection report and very significant development has taken place as a result, including increased information about pupils' attainment, improved communication with parents and the introduction of a structured programme of phonics to teach literacy.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding in all areas. The management of the preparatory department has a clear and ambitious vision for the future which is shared by the teaching staff. They have high expectations and have established clear priorities for the maintenance of high standards. This is driven by effective systems for self-evaluation and by working in partnership with the senior school, with parents and with other bodies such as the local authority. The relationship between teachers and pupils is very strong and there is enthusiastic support from parents, who particularly value the way in which their children's confidence and moral values develop. The children are very well safeguarded: staff are appropriately qualified, checked and trained; risk assessments are completed thoroughly. Policies to promote equality and eliminate discrimination are implemented effectively. The setting is well equipped and effective use is made of all resources to promote excellent teaching and learning.

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

6.3 The provision is outstanding in all aspects. The highly efficient organisation of resources and the educational programmes meet the needs of the children exceptionally well. Pupils have direct access to the playground and garden, which are used for both recreation and learning. Children are able to choose from a variety of stimulating activities as part of their learning. Assessment through continual observation of the children and efficient recording by both teachers and teaching assistants are used to guide future planning. In some subject areas, especially numeracy, close monitoring of children's performance has been very effective in raising standards. Children's welfare lies at the heart of the school's objectives and is exceptionally well promoted across the setting. Good behaviour, enthusiastic attitudes and thoughtful relationships are encouraged by clear policies which are supported by adults within the school as well by parents and carers. Small classes and a very favourable staff:pupil ratio ensure that the setting's aims and objectives are fully met.



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

- 6.4 Children make outstanding progress towards the early learning goals in all areas of the curriculum. They enjoy their lessons and their experience of school life as a whole. They make excellent progress in developing the personal qualities which will take them forward through the rest of the school and beyond. Children have very secure relationships with adults. They are motivated and interested in a broad range of activities and take some responsibility for choosing what they do. They demonstrate a willingness to keep themselves and others safe through their exemplary behaviour. They are learning about healthy lifestyles, including the importance of diet and personal hygiene. They contribute positively in whole class activities, in small group exercises and during playtime.

## INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

### Inspectors

Mrs Maureen Bradley	Reporting Inspector
Mr Andy Falconer	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Valerie Fogarty	Head of Middle School, HMC school
Mrs Denise Hammersley	Vice Principal Pastoral, ISA school
Mrs Pamela Hutley	Head, GSA school
Mr Andrew Lewin	Head, IAPS school
Mr Adrian Meadows	Head, SHMIS school
Mr Mark Richards	Deputy Head, GSA school
Mr James Macpherson	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector