



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL GDST

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Northampton High School GDST

Full Name of School	Northampton High School GDST			
DfE Number	928/6057			
Registered Charity Number	309929			
Address	Northampton High School GDST Newport Pagnell Road Hardingstone Northampton Northamptonshire NN4 6UU			
Telephone Number	01604 765 765			
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Email Address	admin@northamptonhigh.co.uk			
Head	Mrs Sarah Dixon			
Chair of Governors	Professor Simon Gregory			
Age Range	3 to 18			
Total Number of Pupils	718			
Gender of Pupils	Girls			
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS):	40	5-11:	193
	11-18:	485		
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	718		
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs J Purvey-Tyrer			
EYFS Gender	Girls			
Inspection dates	12 Jan 2011 to 13 Jan 2011			
	07 Feb 2011 to 09 Feb 2011			

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 February 2005.

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 31st 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 Northampton High School is a selective girls' school which was founded in 1878 by a committee of local church people. In 2007 it joined the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST), a family of 26 schools which educate girls in the independent sector.
- 1.2 The school aims to create a stimulating and caring environment in which pupils realise their academic, creative and athletic potential. It seeks to develop curiosity, imagination, enthusiasm, confidence, independence and self-discipline. It aims to nurture the personal, moral and spiritual development of its pupils.
- 1.3 Girls can join the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) of the school after their third birthday, before progressing to the junior and senior sections, all of which share the same site. Most girls transfer from the junior to the senior school, though some will leave after Year 11. Almost all girls leaving in Year 13 go on to their first choice of university, studying a diverse range of courses. Admission into the Nursery is on a 'first come, first served' basis, but to enter the junior or senior schools girls sit tests to determine ability. The ability profile in the junior school is slightly above the national average, with a fairly wide range of abilities represented. The ability of girls in Years 7 to 11 is above the national average, with some girls far above and very few below the national average. In the absence of ability tests it is not possible to determine the ability profile of girls in the sixth form. The school has 64 girls whom it has identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), but no girl has a statement of special educational needs. Although almost all girls are native English speakers; two girls in the Nursery and one in the senior school have English as an additional language (EAL).
- 1.4 Most girls live locally, but some travel to the school from neighbouring towns such as Milton Keynes, Wellingborough and Brackley.
- 1.5 Since the last inspection, the school has joined the GDST and it appointed a new headmistress in September 2007, with a new head of the junior school joining in the following year. A new sixth-form centre was opened in 2008 and junior school facilities have been developed.
- 1.6 At the time of the inspection there were 718 girls in the school: 40 in the EYFS, 193 in the junior school, 367 in Years 7 to 11 and 118 in the sixth form.

- 1.7 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Nursery	Nursery
Reception	Reception

Junior School

School	NC name
Year 1	Year 1
Year 2	Year 2
Year 3	Year 3
Year 4	Year 4
Year 5	Year 5
Year 6	Year 6

Senior School

School	NC name
Upper 3	Year 7
Lower IV	Year 8
Upper IV	Year 9
Lower V	Year 10
Upper V	Year 11
Lower VI	Year 12
Upper VI	Year 13

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills is excellent. The school is successful in meeting its aim to enable girls to achieve their academic, creative and athletic potential. Pupils show high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills; they are able to develop their talents and to achieve success both as individuals and in teams. Children in the EYFS develop excellent skills in language, communication, co-ordination and co-operation. In the junior and senior schools they achieve well in standardised tests and win awards in sporting and creative activities. They are supported in this by teaching which is very well planned and monitored, and in the clear majority of lessons is either excellent or good. In their questionnaire responses, almost all pupils said that they thought they were making good progress in their academic work and the inspectors agreed that they are.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent. Pastoral care is outstanding, with effective measures in place to ensure that girls are well supported, securely safeguarded and encouraged to embrace opportunities. In their questionnaire responses, almost all parents applauded the good behaviour in the school and felt that it promoted worthwhile attitudes and views. Relationships are excellent throughout the school and girls of all ages show concern for others, with older pupils responding quickly to problems in the wider community, for example raising money for victims of earthquakes. Girls are confident, articulate and enthusiastic. They enjoy being at this school and, although some indicated in their questionnaires that they felt that teachers failed to monitor their workload, in conversation girls said that they felt well supported, which inspectors agreed was the case.
- 2.3 The combined governance of the Trust and the School Governing Body (SGB) provides excellent support for the school and ensures full compliance with the regulatory requirements. Members of the SGB regularly visit the school and take an active interest in its daily life, whilst members of the Trust provide an overview and run training courses for members of staff. Development planning involves all those with management responsibilities, leading to a sense of shared ownership of initiatives. In their questionnaire responses, some parents said that they were not encouraged to be involved with the life of the school, but inspection evidence shows that the school provides many opportunities for this. The school has addressed all of the points raised in the previous inspection.

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) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Develop further the sharing of the best practice in teaching so that all pupils are routinely inspired and challenged.
 2. Establish a more systematic model for monitoring and evaluating the EYFS setting, which includes the views of more stakeholders, in order to identify priorities for development.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills is excellent and they are well educated according to the school's aims. Girls achieve well in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. They are articulate, listen and focus well, read fluently and write cogently. Their work is organised and well presented, and pupils of all ages take pride in what they produce. Many pieces of work are displayed in classrooms and around the school, some of the most striking of which come from art and textiles. These create an atmosphere of achievement and ambition. Girls are able to research topics independently, assess their own and their peers' work, set their own targets for improvement in consultation with their form tutors, and analyse effectively. Girls of all abilities achieve well, including those with LDD, with many winning awards in a range of disciplines. A few of the recent successes include the junior school guitar ensemble winning their category in the local music festival, business studies pupils winning scholarships to become interns in the City in 2008, 2009 and 2010, and girls winning places at the Royal Ballet School and the National Youth Theatre. Excellent achievement is also evident in lessons, where inspectors observed a complex hornpipe mastered by Year 4 girls and Year 12 girls delivering an expert presentation in biology.
- 3.2 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2007 to 2009. These are the most recent years for which comparative statistics are available. Results in national tests at the age of eleven in 2009 were far above the national average for maintained primary schools. Performance at GCSE level has been above the national average for girls in maintained schools, and similar to the national average for girls in maintained selective schools. In 2009 results were far above the national average. In 2010, 59% of all grades awarded at GCSE level were A* or A grade.
- 3.3 Results at A level have been above the national averages for girls in both all maintained schools and maintained selective schools. In 2010, 62% of all grades awarded were at A* or A grade; 89% were at A*, A or B grade, which enabled almost all girls to proceed to their first choice of university. Results in national tests are high in relation to pupils' abilities, indicating that their progress is exceptional when compared with the average for pupils of similar ability.
- 3.4 Results at GCSE level are good, indicating that the girls' progress in Years 7 to 11 is above the average for pupils of similar ability, as supported by nationally standardised measures of progress. It is not possible to determine progress at A level as the school does not carry out ability tests.
- 3.5 Girls of all ages have excellent attitudes to learning. They come to lessons expecting to work hard and they carry out homework tasks diligently. In discussions, they were keen to describe their work, to explain the process behind its composition and to discuss its content. They focus quickly in lessons and concentrate even when not actively engaged in tasks. When asked questions, they willingly volunteer answers and enjoy responding to opportunities to research and evaluate independently. They work effectively as individuals, in pairs and in groups, supporting and developing one another's ideas as required. They are able to use ICT, but in many subjects they are not routinely required to do this. Girls at this school work hard, lead full lives and are keen to do well.

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

- 3.6 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent. It contributes highly to the pupils' achievements and fulfils the school's aim to help girls to realise their academic, creative and athletic potential and to develop curiosity, imagination and enthusiasm for learning, along with independent and logical thought. The curriculum is broad and balanced, providing opportunities to experience linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical, aesthetic and creative education. Provision within the academic curriculum is reviewed regularly. As recommended in the previous inspection report, the junior school curriculum has undergone an extensive review, producing an appropriately balanced curriculum for girls of all ages. Senior school heads of departments now meet with junior school subject co-ordinators to ensure strong links and a smooth transition for pupils between the two schools. Some staff teach in both schools and some facilities are used by pupils of all ages. A well-planned personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme supports the development of the girls well.
- 3.7 Recent changes in the curriculum for Years 7 to 9 have allowed girls access to a wider range of modern foreign languages, at least one of which is compulsory at GCSE level. Options blocks are constructed around pupils' choices. Most girls study for nine subjects. An accelerated course in GCSE statistics makes effective provision for able mathematicians, whilst talented linguists can study a new language to GCSE level in the sixth form. An extensive choice of 26 subjects is available in the sixth form to study for AS and A2 examinations. Enrichment activities include lectures from outside speakers and educational trips off-site.
- 3.8 The school has excellent systems for supporting those with LDD. The youngest girls are observed and older ones screened by the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO) on admission into the school to identify any difficulties. Individual education plans then clarify the support required. Regular meetings between teachers and the SENCO ensure that good progress is maintained and parents are kept fully informed. A formal programme exists to challenge those identified as gifted and talented and extension work was evident in some lessons.
- 3.9 Careers guidance is comprehensive, well received and supported by an extremely well resourced careers library. The two school libraries enable girls to enjoy studying and carry out research effectively.
- 3.10 An excellent extra-curricular programme enriches the curriculum. Participation is monitored to ensure that all girls have opportunities to take part and in their questionnaires they expressed their appreciation of what was on offer. Activities are numerous and varied, including cultural, artistic, sporting and intellectual opportunities. Older girls, enjoy the additional challenge off-site provided by the Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E) scheme and World Challenge. Such schemes provide opportunities for community service and initiate events to raise money, which the girls themselves organise. The Charity Committee, run by the pupils in the senior school, is extremely active in supporting local and national charities with every form nominating and supporting its own cause. Pupils in the junior school also regularly raise money for charity, sometimes responding quickly to an emergency, as when they raised funds for disaster relief in Haiti.
- 3.11 Many partnerships exist between the school and the wider community. The Year 5 and 6 choir has sung in a local church, local junior schools are invited to science

workshop days and sixth-form girls share life drawing classes with a local boys' school.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.12 The quality of teaching is excellent overall, with the vast majority of lessons observed excellent or good and the remaining lessons almost always satisfactory. Teaching makes a central contribution to the pupils' progress and attainment, helping each to fulfil her potential in line with the school's aims. The most successful teaching benefited from thorough planning, good pace and probing questions, provided by teachers with high levels of subject knowledge and expertise. In these lessons, opportunities were provided for girls to explore topics independently and intellectual curiosity was stimulated. However, in some lessons observed, such opportunities did not exist and the more able students were not always challenged. In the junior school the mixture of form and subject specialist teaching is effective and suitable for the various age groups. In both the junior and the senior schools, the teachers' rapport with pupils is excellent. Teachers know their pupils well and pay close attention to individual needs, including those with LDD. Additional time is often offered outside lessons to support learning. In their questionnaire responses, the vast majority of pupils expressed appreciation of the help given to them by their teachers.
- 3.13 Throughout the school, lessons were very well planned, with good use of baseline data and resources. Lesson objectives were clear and frequently reviewed at the end of lessons. The use of group and paired work seen in many lessons enhanced learning and a sense of enthusiasm was often engendered, as in a Year 2 science lesson in which girls investigated the effect of linoleum and grass surfaces on the speed of objects, or in a Year 13 physics lesson when girls worked out for themselves how the piezoelectric effect enables ultra-sound scanners to function. The pace of most lessons was good, with suitably varied approaches, and teachers often used ICT, although there was only occasional evidence of its use by pupils in the lessons observed or in the work books examined.
- 3.14 The junior school has a common marking policy with some variations within subject areas, whilst the senior school departments are free to select a policy that they believe suits the needs of their subject. Many departments provide useful feedback to pupils through the marking of work and some good practice in formative assessment was seen, for example in science, geography and design. The school has gone some way to address the recommendation of the last inspection report, but the best marking practice is still not universally apparent.

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 pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural education is excellent. The girls' development in these areas accords with the school's aim to nurture the personal, moral and spiritual development of each pupil.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual development is supported by a well-planned programme of religious education lessons and assemblies in which they learn about different faiths and beliefs. Assemblies inform pupils about world religions and are used to celebrate individual successes, but there are limited opportunities in the senior school for the whole school community to participate in an uplifting event. On occasion, however, the community shares an aesthetic experience, for example by listening to a performance by a talented musician. Religious festivals are observed, different faiths explained and time provided for quiet reflection. Girls of all ages are invited to lead part of the assembly, providing valuable opportunities for their personal development.
- 4.3 Pupils of all ages display a sense of responsibility and respect for others. They are courteous and polite. Pupils said that there was very little bullying in the school and, indeed, excellent behaviour and relationships were observed. The Big Sister-Little Sister scheme has proved popular, with both age groups benefiting. Sixth-form girls have received safeguarding training to prepare them for any issues which might arise. Pupils take responsibility for their behaviour. Their self-esteem is enhanced through the caring ethos of the school. Year 1 pupils learn about being special in PSHCE and, throughout the school, individual successes are celebrated by the whole community. Older girls look after the younger and there are many opportunities to have roles of responsibility, for example as school officers, library helpers or team captains.
- 4.4 The development of pupils benefits from the excellent relationships. The school councils provide pupils with the opportunity to voice concerns or share ideas and the comprehensive PSHCE programme includes team building and developing self-esteem and confidence. Relationships across year groups flourish through the house system, which runs light-hearted competitions and provides opportunities for socialising. Junior school pupils develop their social skills in activities week.
- 4.5 Girls are aware of public institutions and ran a successful mock election. Pupils' awareness of the wider world is enhanced by the work experience programme which allows older girls to sample potential careers. The community service element of the D of E scheme provides the opportunity for girls to understand better the lives others lead, building on knowledge already gained through the curriculum, as when Year 6 pupils wrote speeches about saving the planet.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural development is enhanced by a wide range of cultural activities, including concerts, music festivals and dramatic performances. Many girls have individual lessons in music and in speech and drama. They have the chance to eat the foods of different nations and the curriculum introduces them to different countries and their cultures. Pupils are taken to the theatre and the modern language department runs many trips, hoping to take every girl to Europe before she leaves the school. Girls are aware of social and global problems, empathise with those who suffer from natural disasters and try to help by raising money and awareness.

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

- 4.7 The quality of arrangements for pupils' welfare, health and safety is excellent. The staff provide effective support and guidance, according to the school's aims, and do all in their power to ensure that the pupils are safe, happy and fully supported. Pupils reported in their interviews that they were not aware of any bullying in the school and felt that there were many people they could turn to for advice or support. The role of the school nurse contributes significantly to the well-being of the girls and is particularly valued by them. She is a counsellor, nurse, child protection officer and a contributor to the PSHCE programme, working in both the junior and the senior schools. This forms a highly effective part of the pupils' pastoral support and helps to ensure a smooth transition between different stages of the school.
- 4.8 The younger girls exude enjoyment and warmth and the seniors are confident and relaxed in an environment they feel is their own. Although most take part in extra-curricular activities during lunchtime, those who do not can find a quiet space in the library, or a comfortable sofa on which to enjoy a conversation with a friend. The high quality relationships which exist within the school enable pupils to succeed. Parents were very positive about the high standards of behaviour in the school and girls were found to be courteous, helpful and proud to show off their school. The new behaviour code, shaped by the pupils, is consistently observed by them.
- 4.9 The safeguarding arrangements are robust and fully conform with the regulatory requirements. The safeguarding policy is implemented fully; procedures to appoint staff are thorough and effective. All staff receive regular training in child protection and are fully aware of health and safety arrangements. Appropriate measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards, with exemplary risk assessments existing in departments. The school has suitable plans to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs or disabilities. The school was fully compliant with regulations at the time of the initial inspection visit.
- 4.10 The school has a healthy eating policy and the food provided at break and lunchtime is of high quality. Although in their questionnaire responses a significant number of pupils said that their views were not listened to, the inspectors found that there were many opportunities for pupils to express opinions and, in discussions with inspectors, the girls interviewed expressed satisfaction with current arrangements.
- 4.11 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through taking regular exercise and by eating sensibly. They are fully informed about what makes a diet healthy, a topic reinforced in physical education and home economics lessons.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent. The GDST provides the overall governance, as it does for all 26 of its schools. In addition, the school is supported by a board of local school governors, the SGB, several of whom were governors of the school prior to its joining the GDST. Together, these two bodies provide excellent governance and support for the school.
- 5.2 Like all Trust schools, Northampton benefits from expert guidance on key issues such as finance, safeguarding and health and safety, with regular visits by members of the Trust to ensure compliance on these matters. Systems are in place to ensure the proper monitoring of both policies and practices in the school, with expert advice always available to the headmistress should this be required. The Trust also provides training of key members of staff and regular support for both the headmistress and the chair of the SGB.
- 5.3 The SGB is closely involved with the day-to-day activities of the school, with members attending school events, listening to the views and plans of teachers and providing additional scrutiny of key practices such as safeguarding and health and safety arrangements. They meet and listen to parents and are therefore aware of their opinions. Their local knowledge enables them to advise the headmistress on matters peculiar to this school, such as marketing, and they provide a useful sounding board for ideas feeding into the school's development plan. The latter thus benefits from an input from quite disparate, but well-informed groups: the Trust, the SGB and the school. This range of knowledge and expertise is a strength, and greatly assists the educational standards, development and continuous improvement of the school. Appraisal of performance and development planning are well established, with systems in place for annual review. The school is well placed to maintain the momentum of its improvement.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Leadership and management are excellent. Collaborative and visionary leadership is driving the school forwards and has underpinned the school's recent improvements. Very good communication between the junior and senior schools has dealt effectively with the recommendation in the previous inspection that links should be developed. All other recommendations have also been addressed, with the development of peer observation, the sharing of good practice, and the tracking of pupils' progress now established systems and becoming embedded. There are good opportunities for staff training, a significant amount of which is provided by the Trust and examination boards.
- 5.5 Those with management responsibilities in the school are very much involved in development planning. Senior school heads of department adapt some whole-school policies to maximise their effectiveness in their own departments. This leads to different systems co-existing, for example, in the way pupils' progress is tracked and their work assessed. Some of these are more effective than others and in their interviews some pupils said that they found this variety of systems confusing. In the junior school, subject co-ordinators are developing their roles. They meet with their senior counterparts to share information and to ensure that the transition process from junior school to senior is as smooth as possible.

- 5.6 Communication within the school is excellent and staff appreciate being consulted and involved in decision-making processes. They feel a great sense of ownership of policies and share an enthusiasm for developing the school even further.
- 5.7 Excellent documentation exists, with regular self-evaluation. There is a shared desire to move forwards and a willingness to evaluate current practice.

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

- 5.8 The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians is excellent. The school has a strong commitment to communicating with parents and does so effectively through a variety of methods, which include a comprehensive website, newsletters, letters, meetings, the headmistress's tea parties, the head of juniors' Saturday surgeries and school events. Parents' emails receive prompt responses and meetings are arranged at the request of parents should they wish to discuss something in person.
- 5.9 Parents' responses in their questionnaires were very supportive of the school and the information they receive from it. They also valued the attitudes and views it promotes, the range of subjects offered and the way the school is managed.
- 5.10 Although some parents in their questionnaire responses said that they did not feel encouraged to join in the life and work of the school, the inspection found many opportunities for them to do this if they wished. The Friends of Northampton High School organises a wide range of events, including picnics, fairs and social nights. Parents are invited to become members of committees and to offer mock interviews or work experience placements to older girls. Parents are also invited to junior school assemblies, can enjoy breakfast with their children and take advantage of the open door policy operated by both the headmistress and the head of juniors. The Read Together scheme in Year 4 further supports parents' involvement in school life. In the junior school information evenings are held for each year group at the beginning of the academic year in addition to the parents' evenings to discuss academic progress, which exist for all pupils. An induction meeting is held for the parents of girls joining Year 7 and meetings are also held to discuss certain curriculum topics, such as some taught through PSHCE. Girls at other transitional stages are also supported, through evenings to discuss GCSE level or A-level choices and university application. Parents regularly support their daughters' sporting and creative endeavours and refreshments are provided on Saturdays for their benefit.
- 5.11 In their questionnaire responses, some parents expressed dissatisfaction with the way their concerns had been handled by the school, but inspection evidence shows that there are good systems in place for dealing with concerns and that the school follows its published policy appropriately.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

- 6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS setting is outstanding. Effective planning and the creative use of resources by experienced and well-qualified staff in a safe, caring environment ensure that every child is appropriately challenged. As a result, children achieve very well and make excellent progress. Management has addressed issues from the previous inspection; although its plan to improve the provision is not yet defined by systematic monitoring and evaluation, it has a very good capacity to improve further.

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

- 6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Children's safeguarding, health and well-being are enhanced by the consistent implementation of suitable policies and procedures, ensuring equality and inclusion. Staff are well trained and effectively deployed. Parents are actively involved and contribute well to their children's learning journeys and profiles. Links with other agents, including the local authority and the junior school, are good. Monitoring of teaching and learning has led to significant improvement in teaching. However, priorities in the development plan are not sufficiently informed by the views of all stakeholders or through systematic monitoring and evaluation.

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

- 6.3 The provision is outstanding. Staff provide interesting and varied learning opportunities, based on the children's individual needs and interests. Pre-admission home visits provide an excellent starting point for assessment. Thereafter, assessment and observation are used very well to monitor children's progress and set individual next steps in learning. Planning is excellent, with an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-chosen activities. Good use is made of the outdoor facilities, including a vegetable plot and a sensory garden which effectively promote children's spiritual, social and physical development and their skills of observation, enquiry and investigation. The accommodation is outstanding, enabling children to work and play indoors and outdoors, even in inclement weather. Children use some junior school facilities, including the hall and library, and benefit from specialist teaching in lessons such as gymnastics and dance. Adults are vigilant in their care of the children and help them to develop safe and healthy habits and good behaviour. Children's educational experiences are enhanced by visits off-site and visiting specialists.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for children are outstanding. They are very happy and greatly enjoy the setting. They develop excellent language and communication skills and interact with the older children at specified times during the day. Children develop very good skills of co-ordination and enquiry by working with different objects and materials, and by exploring materials in both the sensory garden and the wildlife area.

Children demonstrate very good levels of independence by managing their own belongings, dressing themselves, washing their hands, making healthy choices at mealtimes and taking regular exercise. They feel safe and secure. They raise funds for charity and recycle waste material. The older children demonstrate proficiency in early writing, number and ICT skills and by the end of the Reception year most exceed the goals expected for that age in all areas of learning.

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 chair of governors and a governor, 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 Patricia Taylor	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Ann Aughwane	Head, GSA school
Mr James Barnes	Former Head, IAPS school
Mrs Jane Coles	Senior Manager, IAPS school
Mrs Claire Hamilton	Headmistress, GSA school
Mr David Ibbotson	Director of Studies, HMC school
Mrs Dorothy MacGinty	Headmistress, GSA school
Ms Sheila Boyle	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector