



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**PALMERS GREEN HIGH SCHOOL**

**STANDARD INSPECTION**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Palmers Green High School

Full Name of School	<b>Palmers Green High School</b>
DfE Number	<b>308/6001</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>312629</b>
Address	<b>Palmers Green High School 104 Hoppers Road Palmers Green London N21 3LJ</b>
Telephone Number	<b>020 8886 1135</b>
Fax Number	<b>020 8882 9473</b>
Email Address	<b>office@palmersgreen.enfield.sch.uk</b>
Headmistress	<b>Mrs Christine Edmundson</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Dermot Lewis</b>
Age Range	<b>3 to 16</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>288</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Girls</b>
Numbers by Age	<b>3-5 (EYFS): 35    5-11: 115 11-16: 138</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Girls</b>
Inspection dates	<b>11 Oct 2011 to 12 Oct 2011 09 Nov 2011 to 11 Nov 2011</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 September 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 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.

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(a) Main findings</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(b) Action points</b>	<b>3</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>7</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	7
(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	8
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
(a) The quality of governance	9
(b) The quality of leadership and management	9
(c) The quality of links with parents, carers and guardians	10
<b>6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	<b>12</b>
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	13
<b>INSPECTION EVIDENCE</b>	<b>14</b>

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

- 1.1 Palmers Green High School is a selective school for girls aged from three to sixteen years, situated on a compact site in north London. Founded in 1905 by Alice Hum, a Quaker, it is now a registered charity with a board of governors called the School Council. The provision for three to four year olds, known as the Alice Nursery, is in a separate building about a mile away from the main site. The school is organised into two main sections: the Lower School, for pupils up to Year 6, and the Senior School, for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
- 1.2 The overall motto of the school is 'By Love Serve One Another'. More specific aims include: fostering, appreciating and celebrating individual talent, so that pupils reach their potential and take pride in their achievements; helping pupils develop into capable, confident and self-assured young women; and developing in pupils an understanding of the importance of their contribution to the wider community.
- 1.3 The pupils live in north London and the surrounding counties. They come from families with diverse ethnic and occupational backgrounds.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection there were 288 pupils on roll, including 35 in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). At the end of Year 6, about a third of pupils leave to go to local selective maintained schools or larger 11 to 18 independent schools. Twenty-six pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom eight receive extra specialist learning support. One pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Seventy-eight pupils speak English as an additional language (EAL), of whom one requires extra specialist support. Results of standardised tests show that the ability profile of the school is above the national average.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection, the Nursery provision has moved from a church hall into a purpose-designed building. Interactive whiteboards have been introduced throughout the school. More subject specialist teaching has been introduced in the Lower School. Senior management functions and structure have been altered significantly. The school kitchen and toilet facilities have been upgraded.
- 1.6 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 Palmers Green High School provides a high quality education for its pupils and is very successful in meeting its aims. Pupils make exceptional progress and their academic achievement is excellent in relation to their ability. Achievement in non-academic areas is also high. The curriculum and extra-curricular provision ensure a rich and varied educational experience for pupils, particularly enhanced by the many curriculum-based trips and visits. Teaching is excellent and makes a key contribution to the success of the pupils. Teachers understand the learning needs of their pupils extremely well and curriculum surgeries help to ensure that all pupils make rapid progress in their learning. Accommodation and resources support teaching well. Assessment data is used extremely well to track pupils' progress and quickly identify and address any shortcomings. Oral feedback to help pupils improve their learning is generally excellent, but marking does not always indicate clearly how pupils can improve their learning.
- 2.2 The personal development of pupils is excellent and by the time they leave the school, they have developed moral and social values to guide them well in adult life. Pastoral care is extremely good; pupils feel very secure and happy in the school and their relationships with each other and with staff are excellent. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and the school vigorously promotes healthy lifestyles.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are excellent. Governors provide close oversight of the day-to-day running of the school and work closely with the headmistress in particular, and other senior managers, in this area and in strategic planning. Leadership and management provide clear educational direction to the school and strategic planning is strong. Appraisal is in place for teachers, but is in an early stage of development for teaching assistants and non-teaching staff. Subject co-ordinator roles in the Lower School are under developed. The school has been very successful in recruiting high quality staff and ensuring that they are quickly integrated into a close-knit community of teachers, who are strongly focused on the achievement of academic excellence. The school has implemented effective measures to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils and their safeguarding, including the suitability of staff recruited. Parents express great satisfaction with the progress and achievement of their children and the attitudes and values that the school espouses. Very few parents expressed any dissatisfaction. The school has addressed satisfactorily the small number of issues raised at the time of the previous inspection and has since improved pupils' achievement, the educational experience and teaching.

## **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. Establish formal appraisal arrangements for teaching assistants and non-teaching staff.
2. Develop further the roles of subject co-ordinators in the Lower School.
3. Ensure that marking consistently supports pupils' progress in learning, a key school improvement target for this year.
4. Increase the consistency in recording assessment and using target setting in the EYFS.

### **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 school is highly successful in achieving its aim of ensuring that pupils achieve their academic potential. Pupils also gain entry to prominent selective independent and maintained schools on leaving the school. Achievement is excellent, with high standards of work across subjects and throughout the age and ability range. Pupils demonstrate excellent subject knowledge and skills, such as in Year 4 design and technology (DT), where they were able to work skilfully with different types of wood, recognising their varied qualities, and use vices and saws confidently and competently, and in science, where Year 8 pupils could explain the role of theory. Pupils develop high quality literacy and numeracy skills that they can apply well in a variety of contexts; for instance by Year 10, they can speak fluently and confidently in at least one modern foreign language. They demonstrate excellent reasoning skills, such as debating the impact of the British Empire on the modern world. Their technological skills are highly developed in the Lower School and the younger year groups of the Senior School, leading to some excellent work in DT and high levels of competence in information and communication technology (ICT); by Year 9 they understand the principles of web design. More limited opportunities slow further progress in Years 10 and 11. Pupils' creative skills are also highly developed through art, dance, DT and music in particular, illustrated by excellent pottery, sketching and paintings, including self-portraits, produced by older pupils, and equally strong instrumental work and singing in music.
- 3.2 Achievement in extra-curricular activities is high. The great majority of pupils achieve The Duke of Edinburgh's Award at bronze level and many pupils are successful in music and drama examinations, often to a high standard, as they are in the UK Maths Challenge. Pupils are regularly selected for the borough youth orchestra and a local children's choir. Others have auditioned successfully for parts in professional theatrical productions and the Royal Ballet junior department. Many pupils also take part in well-reviewed school drama and musical productions. In sport the school has achieved considerable local success in gymnastics, netball and cross-country competitions.
- 3.3 Pupils' attainment is far above the national average, as measured by national tests at the ages of seven and eleven, and GCSE results, indicating excellent achievement. This is confirmed by standards of work in lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books. Pupils make consistently rapid progress across year groups and throughout the ability range. High quality learning support ensures that the learning needs of pupils with SEND or EAL, and any with statements of special educational needs, are clearly identified and addressed, whilst the careful attention teachers pay to individual needs ensure that these groups of pupils and the most able are generally well challenged by the work that they do.
- 3.4 Pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They organise their work well, and show initiative and the capacity to work very diligently on their own or in groups. Pupils often gain much enjoyment and satisfaction from their learning and achievement, particularly in younger year groups, and work is nearly always well presented.



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

- 3.5 The school's curricular and extra-curricular provision ensures a rich and varied educational experience of excellent quality. The curriculum provides coverage of all areas of learning across the age range and fully supports the aims of the school. It benefits from careful diagnosis of the specific learning needs of pupils with SEND or EAL, any with statements of special educational needs and the most able pupils, and the considered adaptation of curricular materials to ensure that pupils of all abilities have a challenging and fruitful learning experience.
- 3.6 The curriculum in Years 1 and 2 builds well on the excellent educational foundation in the EYFS. The development of literacy and numeracy figures strongly throughout the younger year groups in particular, as does technology through ICT and DT. In the Senior School, all pupils study two modern foreign languages and drama in Years 8 and 9, enhancing their linguistic and creative development. Recent changes in curriculum allocation now provide opportunities for pupils to access the triple science certification, and the school's flexible response to pupils' choices for GCSE courses, like other initiatives introduced since the previous inspection, broadens the educational experience, while providing for individual choice. An extensive range of curriculum-based residential trips and visits, for example to a local wildlife space, outdoor centres, museums and art galleries, to places such as Flatford Mill and Lulworth Cove, and to France, Spain, Germany and Poland, enriches significantly the educational experience of pupils across the school. Recent visitors such as authors and a poet, and an environmental project in French, displayed in the local public library, also enhance their experience.
- 3.7 In the Lower School, the use of specialist teaching and facilities in a wide range of subjects enhances the curricular experience. Particularly noteworthy is the early introduction of DT from Year 1, which provides a curricular experience of high quality.
- 3.8 The range of extra-curricular activities in the Lower School has been extended since the previous inspection to include more opportunities for sport, including competitive teams in netball and cross-country. The Senior School's extra-curricular activities are particularly strong in the additional support and challenge that are provided for pupils through curriculum clubs and surgeries. These make a significant contribution to the success of pupils, which they acknowledged in pre-inspection questionnaires. A very large proportion of pupils in Years 10 and 11 extend their curricular experience through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award. A wide range of musical activities, drama and art all help to broaden and develop pupils' creative abilities, as does creative writing, including poetry, for local and national competitions. The UK Maths Challenge extends the curricular experience of able mathematicians.
- 3.9 Very helpful and detailed information about careers and options for post-16 study is provided within the careers programme, and personal, social and health education (PSHE) provides good opportunities for pupils to learn about and discuss issues related to health, drugs and sex education. Pupils feel well informed and supported, thus enabling them to make choices for the future.

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

- 3.10 Teaching is excellent and enables pupils to make rapid progress in their learning. Teachers have a deep understanding of and enthusiasm for their subjects, together with a very clear understanding of examination board requirements; GCSE lessons observed routinely included brief and cogent explanations about what is necessary to gain high marks. Lesson planning is of a high quality and makes skilled use of a variety of teaching methods, including exposition, small group discussion, group presentations and discussion in plenaries. The quality of explanations and questioning are particularly notable features, at individual, group and class level. This was well illustrated in Year 10 lessons in geography, where incisive questioning and knowledgeable amplification of pupils' answers consolidated and extended understanding about the effects of global warming. Time is normally used very efficiently and transition from one activity to another is managed very well, which helps to sustain a brisk pace of learning. Classes are well managed, and teaching and learning benefit greatly from the excellent relationships between pupils and teachers and amongst pupils themselves. Well-focused learning tasks ensure that purposeful and effective learning takes place, but they less often provide opportunities for open-ended independent investigation.
- 3.11 Teachers know their pupils' learning needs very well. This is facilitated by detailed and helpful briefings about pupils with SEND and any with statements of special educational needs, as well as the generally careful identification of the needs of the most able pupils. In many lessons learning tasks are unobtrusively varied to meet the particular learning needs of individual pupils in such a way that all pupils are clearly challenged. In a Lower School English lesson, pupils were determining the structural features and layout of a newspaper article, with three activities identified according to the ability of pupils, including one involving the learning support teacher working with those with SEND. Often pupils work on the same activity and teachers meet varied learning needs through the skilful targeting of questions, individual support and guidance, and the use of flexible tasks, which allow pupils to respond at different levels of difficulty. Occasionally, the pace of the lesson is slow and learning tasks do not address the learning needs of all pupils well. Subject surgeries, held twice weekly in the Senior School and attended by invitation or choice, enable staff to provide invaluable guidance and support to further address pupils' individual learning needs.
- 3.12 Resources are generally used well to support teaching and learning, and several examples of very effective use of technology were observed. Nevertheless, interactive whiteboards are not fully exploited overall. Classrooms have extensive displays that are informative and celebrate pupils' work, creating visually vibrant learning environments.
- 3.13 In lessons and subject surgeries, examples were observed of excellent feedback to pupils about their work, including how they could improve it. The marking of pupils' work is regular and constructive, but the quality of diagnostic comments and the use of helpful targets to aid pupils' progress in learning are uneven; some practice is excellent, while other examples acknowledge that work has been completed but only include a very brief general comment. Pupils' performance is tracked very closely throughout the school, and very effective use is made of standardised tests of ability and examination results to monitor achievement.

## **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 excellent. They are confident and develop a strong sense of self-awareness, becoming more reflective as they mature. The praise and encouragement of staff help to boost their self-esteem and develop their strengths, whilst addressing areas for improvement. The playing of musical instruments and singing, in which nearly all pupils are involved, give pupils much satisfaction and joy. In the Lower School, visits to local places of worship and work in religious education (RE) help pupils to develop an understanding of the significance of religion as an aspect of spiritual development. This is further enhanced by the sharing of the diverse cultural and religious experiences of pupils. The high quality of work in art and DT, the writing and reading of poetry in English, the diverse cultural activities in modern foreign languages and visits to arts attractions are all examples of how the school ensures that pupils have a rich and varied spiritual experience.
- 4.2 The development of strong moral values has been at the heart of the aims of the school from its very beginnings and, as a result, the pupils develop a set of clear moral principles to guide them through adult life and a firm grasp of good conduct. Staff are excellent role models and from an early age pupils understand the differences between right and wrong, and increasingly can articulate clearly explanations to support their views.
- 4.3 From an early age, pupils learn the significance of social responsibility and caring for others, so that they naturally turn to their peers or to older pupils for support and guidance. Many pupils' social awareness is developed through taking on responsibilities, such as those of form captain or deputy, or becoming a member of the student council. Pupils' active involvement in fund raising for selected local, national and international charities helps to reinforce their understanding of a responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves. Pupils also develop a good understanding of public services in England and its political institutions through PSHE, and, for example, through meeting representatives of the fire and police services. In the Senior School, pupils gain good economic and political understanding through topics that they discuss in current affairs and PSHE. They take part in local events, such as a civic celebration of a well-known figure who was a former pupil of the school. They are also involved in local businesses, and community and charitable work through the volunteering aspect of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and work experience.
- 4.4 Pupils develop an excellent understanding of their own faiths and cultures, and those of others, through assemblies and through themes in RE and other subjects such as art, DT, geography, history, modern foreign languages and PSHE. The school celebrates its diverse community and this encourages pupils to develop an empathetic understanding of different traditions through events like the annual International Day. The school provides an excellent example of a harmonious multi-cultural community. Foreign trips and visits to art galleries and museums all aid the development of cultural understanding.

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

- 4.5 Well-organised and comprehensive arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils ensure that they are very well cared for, feel safe and secure, and enjoy being at the school.
- 4.6 Pastoral care is excellent. Staff know pupils very well and are extremely attentive to their intellectual and emotional needs. The key figures in pastoral care are tutors in the Senior School and class teachers in the Lower School, who work very closely with pastoral managers. Frequent meetings are held between these staff, during which discussion takes place about each pupil on a rolling programme, so that pupils' progress and welfare are considered collectively on an individual basis. Issues related to pupils' work are also discussed at regular cross-curricular staff meetings. By these means, staff develop a detailed understanding of pupils' progress and needs.
- 4.7 In questionnaires and interviews, pupils showed great appreciation for the support and guidance of their teachers, reflecting the excellent relationships they share. Pupils have no difficulty in identifying staff they would approach with a personal concern.
- 4.8 The school has effective procedures for promoting good behaviour and dealing with inappropriate behaviour. The school is very successful in its emphasis on good behaviour, as witnessed by the exemplary conduct of pupils in lessons and around the school. Where sanctions are used they are graduated appropriately and pupils regard them as just. Procedures for handling bullying are clear and efficient, but in questionnaires and interviews pupils stated that bullying is highly unusual, and any minor disagreements are resolved amicably. They were very confident that, should it arise, any bullying would be dealt with speedily and effectively.
- 4.9 Through PSHE, physical education (PE), science and assemblies, the school educates pupils well in the principles and importance of healthy living, such as the value of a healthy diet and regular exercise. The food served at lunchtime is nutritious and appetising.
- 4.10 Appropriate measures are taken to ensure that pupils are looked after well when in the school, including break and lunchtimes. Detailed risk assessments are carried out for relevant activities on site and out of school, checks for fire hazards are in order and fire drills are conducted regularly and efficiently, including the maintenance of appropriate records. The school ensures that all staff have had suitable training and updating in safeguarding and child protection, and designated staff have had higher level training, including inter-agency liaison. Designated staff and governors have also had relevant safer recruitment training. Arrangements for the care of ill or injured pupils are well organised and the treatment area is adequate, although significant improvements are included as part of the new building programme. Staff have appropriate, up-to-date first-aid training. The school has a suitable accessibility plan. Admission and attendance registers are maintained and stored correctly, whilst any unexplained absences are pursued speedily.

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

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

- 5.1 Governance is excellent. Governors exercise very effective oversight of the school through the work that they undertake in formal and ad hoc committees, and in the main School Council. The broad range of specialist expertise on which the governors can draw, including education, finance, construction, law and health, enhances this work and has been used to good effect in securing planning permission for, and the design and financing of, the proposed new building. Expertise to support financial planning is particularly strong and the education committee monitors educational standards very closely. Designated governors have specific responsibility for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, and safer recruitment, as well as for liaison with particular age groups. These governors, as with all the others, have had appropriate training and often bring related skills from their own professions, enabling the School Council to discharge its duties very efficiently.
- 5.2 Detailed termly reports from the headmistress, regular presentations about the work of subject departments, and the work of the committees keep the governing body well informed. Policies are scrutinised and updated regularly and reviews undertaken on various parts of the school's provision, including welfare and child protection, which are always reviewed at least annually.
- 5.3 Strategic planning is strong, and the process of planning, review and target setting is firmly established, with specific time set aside for this in the summer term. Senior managers are closely involved with governors through strategic planning, the updating and development of policies, and particular issues that might require consultation. Governors meet staff in various contexts on a regular basis: they are invited to informal social gatherings before School Council meetings, attend a range of social events, provide support on some trips and spend time in school visiting classes.

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

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the school are excellent. Leadership is vigorous, purposeful and supportive, giving clear educational direction to the school, whilst making sure that it remains true to its aims. The strategic development plan identifies appropriate and clearly defined objectives, resources required, success criteria and realistic timeframes. The school has recently introduced significant changes to the management structure; the role of headmistress is the only unchanged senior management post that was in existence at the time of the previous inspection, and other senior managers are very new in post.
- 5.5 Senior managers, and in particular the leadership, monitor very closely pupils' progress and achievement. The new management teams for the Senior School and the Lower School have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, and are developing effective working practices, with the support and guidance of the leadership.
- 5.6 Middle managers in the Senior School generally provide very effective professional leadership and manage their responsibilities well, often including academic and pastoral roles. They monitor the work in their departments well, including appraisal,

support and guidance for colleagues, but do not always ensure consistency of good practice in the marking of pupils' work. Heads of department produce development plans that take account of priorities in strategic planning. The roles of subject co-ordinators in the Lower School are less well developed, and they are only just beginning to monitor teaching and learning.

- 5.7 The school is very successful in recruiting and retaining good quality staff, who sustain and improve the high standard of teaching and learning, introducing new ideas and approaches. Senior managers and governors have undertaken appropriate training on safer recruitment of staff, and all the necessary checks to ensure the suitability of staff are carried out with due diligence. The induction provided for new staff is very supportive and the strong collaborative teaching community in the school is greatly valued by staff. The school also makes effective use of external consultants to assist in monitoring and improving teaching, learning and achievement, and supporting its work in particular areas, including subject departments. Staff development supports teaching, welfare, health and safety well through training in school and external courses. Resources are of a good quality, and optimum use is made of the compact accommodation and off-site facilities for PE, so that they both support teaching and learning well. Appraisal is in place for teaching staff, and self-evaluations by staff provide a valuable and valued opportunity for self-reflection. The school is in the very early stages of introducing formal appraisal for teaching assistants and non-teaching staff.
- 5.8 Administration is efficient and effective, and ensures that the school runs smoothly. The accommodation is well maintained and in good decorative order.

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

- 5.9 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. Responses in the pre-inspection questionnaires completed by parents were very positive about all aspects of the school, although a few parents of younger pupils expressed concern about the amount of homework their children have to do. This view was not generally supported in the interviews conducted with pupils, and inspectors judged that homework tasks are at times challenging, but not onerous. The recent independent survey of parental opinions, commissioned by the school, also indicated high levels of satisfaction.
- 5.10 The Parents and Friends Association is firmly established, and is effective both in promoting social interaction with parents and friends of the school and in raising additional money to support the school's activities. Recent events include a theatre visit and the very successful Summer Fayre. Parents also accompanying trips, support events for pupils, and assist within the careers programme and with clubs.
- 5.11 Parents are kept well informed about pupils' academic progress and personal well-being through written reports, sent in the Lower School at least twice a year and at least once a year in the Senior School. Parents evenings, to which Senior School pupils are also invited, help further in developing an effective home-school partnership. The school encourages parents to voice any queries or concerns that they have and any such matters are dealt with speedily and effectively. Staff, too, are quick to alert parents where they have concerns, or wish to acknowledge a particular success, or act of courtesy or responsibility by a pupil.
- 5.12 Weekly newsletters, regular updates of the website, and the colourful and attractive school magazine keep parents well informed about activities, successes and current

issues. Email and text messages, and information evenings further enhance communication between parents and the school. Many parents attend the various concerts, plays and sports events.

- 5.13 The school has appropriate and well-structured procedures for dealing with any parental complaints. These are little used, as complaints are resolved satisfactorily at an early stage.

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

## **6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding and it is highly successful in meeting the needs of children. The move since the previous inspection into purpose-designed nursery accommodation for three to four year olds has improved the quality of the learning environment for these children significantly.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Comprehensive arrangements for risk assessment and safeguarding are in place. Great care is taken to ensure that children are very well safeguarded by highly trained and effectively deployed staff, who have had all the recruitment checks to ensure that they are suitable to work with children. Rigorous risk assessments are conducted for activities on and off site. Communication with parents is good; they are very happy with the care, education and support their children receive and they are well informed about the progress that their children make. Effective links with outside agencies ensure that children with additional needs are well supported, whilst policies promote equality and the elimination of discrimination.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. Excellent classroom practice ensures that all children, whatever their individual needs, learn rapidly, thrive and succeed. Clear learning objectives enable them to engage in carefully considered and well-balanced teacher-led and child-initiated activities. These are specifically aimed at focusing on their interests and needs, encouraging them to learn and develop skills through first-hand experiences and leading them to explore and play imaginatively. Children confidently make suggestions and offer ideas. Careful observations are made of children's learning and these are used well to give an overview of progress that guides future teaching. However, some inconsistencies exist in recording assessment and the use of target setting in the Nursery and Reception classes. Children's welfare has a high profile and their emotional and social needs are well supported by key adults who help them to learn good behaviour and healthy lifestyle habits.



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

- 6.4 The outcomes for children are outstanding and many Reception children attain the Early Learning Goals in all areas before the end of their time in the EYFS. Children make excellent progress in relation to their individual starting points. They are enthusiastic learners whose confidence to try new things assists the acquisition of skills. They become absorbed in play, as demonstrated in making collages with tissue paper and dressing up in the 'home corner'. Children listen well, have confidence in one another and relate well to their teachers, and so develop many skills in an active and enjoyable learning environment. They greatly enjoy books and express themselves confidently. They demonstrate a positive attitude to learning and are able to focus on their work and play for sustained periods of time. Children enjoy their time in school and are enthusiastic and active learners. They show high levels of independence, imagination and concentration. Behaviour is exemplary and reflects the school culture of mutual respect and co-operation. Children understand the importance of keeping safe and avoiding hazards, and the significance of hygiene and a healthy lifestyle.

**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 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
Mr George Fisher	Former Head, HMC school
Mrs Penny Forsyth	Former Head, IAPS school
Mrs Sue Hilton	Deputy Head, IAPS school
Mrs Susan Mitchell	Former Head, GSA school
Mrs Catherine Lane	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector