



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

QUEEN'S COLLEGE

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Queen's College

Full Name of School	Queen's College
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Registered Charity Number	310208
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Headmaster	Mr Christopher J Alcock
Head of Junior School	Mrs Tracey Khodabandehloo
Chair of Governors	Mr Nigel Birkett
Age Range	3 to 19
Total Number of Pupils	789
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (404 boys; 385 girls;)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 160 3-5 (EYFS): 46 11-19: 583
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 615 Capacity for flexi-boarding: 0
Number of Boarders	Total: 174 Full: 174 Weekly: 0
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Jan Williams
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	08 Nov 2011 to 09 Nov 2011 05 Dec 2011 to 07 Dec 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 2011.

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.

- Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- Quality of education provided (teaching)
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- Premises and accommodation
- Provision of information
- 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 boarding was not carried out in conjunction with the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills, and the report does not contain specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education and development in general. The full Ofsted report refers to an inspection in March 2011 and can be found at www.ofsted.gov.uk under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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 Queen's College is situated about a mile from the town centre, in south-west Taunton. Originally founded in 1843, it is one of nine schools owned by the Methodist Church and administered by the Methodist Independent Schools' Trust. The aim of these schools is to extend the Methodist ethos and character and contribute to diversity in education. Responsibility for the governance of the school is delegated to a local governing body. The school comprises Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), pre-prep, junior and senior, each of which operates independently, but in a collegiate fashion.
- 1.2 There is an international mix of pupils in the school and boarding is available for those aged eight to eighteen. About a third of boarders are from overseas and a third are the children of members of the armed forces. Day pupils travel from a range of neighbouring towns, such as Minehead, Exeter and Weston-super-Mare.
- 1.3 Children aged three to five are admitted to the EYFS and are educated in the same building as the pre-prep. The EYFS is located within easy walking distance of other sections of the school, which helps the school to develop its collegiate atmosphere.
- 1.4 The ability profile in both the junior and the senior schools is above the national average. There is a fairly wide spread of abilities in the junior school; in the senior school most pupils have an ability that is at least above average, with a significant number of pupils having far above average ability. In the sixth form, although the ability profile is still above average, there is a wider spread of abilities than elsewhere in the senior school. No pupil in the school has a statement of special education need, though the school has identified 180 pupils in the senior school and 81 in the junior school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). There are two children in EYFS, thirteen pupils in the junior school and 110 in the senior school for whom English is an additional language (EAL), of whom 71 receive additional support.
- 1.5 Since the previous inspection there has been an expansion of the provision for the sixth form, refurbishment of senior boarding houses and development of both teaching rooms and changing room facilities. In addition, a new chair of governors, head of junior school, a development manager, an operations director and a director of finance have all been appointed.
- 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 The quality of pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills is good overall. Children in the EYFS develop excellent skills in language, communication, co-ordination and co-operation. In the pre-prep, junior and senior schools, the pupils' excellent attitudes to learning enable them to progress well in lessons, developing basic skills. They are confident learners, expressing ideas articulately, using information and communication technology (ICT) effectively and achieving well in public examinations. In sport, individuals compete successfully at national, and teams at local and county levels. Achievement in expressive and creative subjects is outstanding. Pupils are supported by good teaching which identifies and meets pupils' needs effectively. However, not all marking contains clear advice about how to improve and data are not always used effectively to set targets and track progress. In their questionnaires almost all pupils said they thought they were making good progress and that their teachers helped them to learn; inspectors agreed.
- 2.2 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent. Outstanding pastoral care, based on Methodist principles, helps to create an atmosphere of care, respect and concern for others, leading to excellent relationships. Effective measures are in place to ensure that pupils are well supported and securely safeguarded. Pupils are confident, courteous, kind and helpful, responding quickly to others' needs. In their questionnaires pupils said they liked being at the school, although some felt it did not listen to their point of view or treat pupils equally. In conversation with inspectors, most pupils expressed satisfaction with these issues; inspectors felt that pupils were treated equally and had good opportunities to express their views and that these did lead to action.
- 2.3 The effectiveness of governance is excellent and leadership and management are good overall. The Methodist trust and the school's governing body work together to provide excellent governance for the school, ensuring full compliance with regulatory requirements and supporting the school's development well. Strong leadership and development planning involving all with management responsibility are helping the school to progress. However, the monitoring of the implementation of some policies is inconsistent. In their questionnaires, parents expressed enthusiasm for the range of extra-curricular opportunities provided, which inspectors agreed were excellent. A few had concerns about behaviour, but that observed by inspectors was consistently excellent. The school has successfully addressed almost all of the previous inspection's recommendations, although the implementation of the marking policy requires further development.

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. Improve the quality of marking across the junior and senior schools.
2. In the senior school, continue to develop the use of data to track the academic progress of individuals, and to set targets for them.
3. As identified in the EYFS development plan, further develop learning opportunities within the Nursery outdoor area.

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 the pupils' overall achievements is good. The pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aim of maintaining high educational standards in all academic, cultural and sporting activities. The pupils' speaking and listening skills are excellent. Pupils speak articulately, using specialist vocabulary where necessary; for example in a Year 8 English lesson in which pupils discussed poetic devices. They write fluently and structure work well. Highly creative work is displayed around all areas of the school, with particularly impressive examples in textiles, photography and art. Pupils transfer skills expertly, for example applying mathematical skills effectively in science and geography. Pupils of all ages are competent and confident users of ICT and, when opportunities arise, use ICT effectively across the curriculum.
- 3.2 Pupils consistently reach excellent levels of achievement in the school's very wide range of extra-curricular activities, including in the senior school, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme, which many take up to silver and gold level, UK Mathematics Challenge and the National Youth Orchestra and Choir. Excellent achievement is evident in a wide range of sports, with teams and individuals competing successfully at local, county and national level. Pupils have recently competed successfully in cross country running, the triathlon, cricket and equestrian events.
- 3.3 Older pupils have been commended for excellent achievement in examinations, including three sixth-form pupils who received the Royal Society of Chemistry Gold Award for top achievement at A level, one who was invited to the Spanish Embassy following full marks at A level, and others who came in the top five students nationally in art and French at GCSE and A level. When they leave the school, pupils go on to study a range of subjects at conservatoires, art schools and universities of their choice.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE and A level have been above the national average for maintained schools and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. These results are good in relation to pupils' abilities, indicating that their progress in Years 7 to 11 and through the sixth form is above the average for pupils of similar ability, as confirmed by standardised measures of progress. Pupils' attainment in the junior school cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be high in relation to age-related expectations. On the basis of evidence seen in the inspection and discussions with the pupils, they are making good progress. The achievement of those with SEND and EAL is in line with that of other members of the school because of the support that they receive. Pupils who are identified as gifted and talented receive additional challenge and achieve well.
- 3.5 Pupils of all ages display positive attitudes to learning which help them to make good progress in lessons; they arrive at lessons keen to work hard, contribute ideas and do well. They work well collaboratively and independently, demonstrating enjoyment and engagement. They approach tasks confidently and, over time, develop research skills which prepare them well for the next stage of their studies.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent and helps pupils of all ages and abilities to develop their full potential and achieve high standards, in line with the school's aims.
- 3.7 The curriculum is well planned; it is broad, balanced and meets the differing needs and abilities of the pupils at all ages. The requisite areas of learning are covered very effectively. In the pre-prep and junior schools, a range of imaginative tasks and experiences contributes very effectively to all areas of pupils' development. In Years 7 to 9, pupils study a broad range of subjects, enabling them to choose from a wide range of GCSE options in Years 10 and 11, with most selecting between eight and eleven, including three separate sciences, or two modern foreign languages if they wish. The sixth form also offers a wide range of subjects and the school goes to considerable lengths to ensure that GCSE and A-level options are designed around the pupils' needs.
- 3.8 The curriculum provides a good level of challenge for able students. In Year 11, expert mathematicians take an extension paper at GCSE, whilst in the sixth form, there are opportunities to study Open University modules or additional subjects by self-study and distance learning. Pupils with SEND or EAL receive appropriate support.
- 3.9 The extra-curricular programme encompasses a very broad and varied range of activities and successfully encourages a high level of pupil participation. In their questionnaires, both the pupils and parents rated it highly and it is a strength of the school. Sport, outdoor pursuits, drama, music, debating and creative subjects all feature prominently. New activities are introduced in response to suggestions by staff or pupils, such as 'Boxercise'. Drama productions of a very high standard take place in the pre-prep, junior and senior parts of the school. Sixth-form students are encouraged to develop a wide range of skills by the Queen's College Recognition of Achievement award.
- 3.10 In line with recommendations from the previous inspection, a new programme for personal, social, health and moral education (PSHME) has been introduced. This includes sections on study skills in the senior school and philosophy lessons for junior school pupils. The curriculum as a whole is kept under review from year to year and adjustments made where appropriate.
- 3.11 Links with the wider community provide pupils of all ages with additional enrichment to the curriculum. Older pupils undertake work experience in local businesses and services. A volunteers' group meets regularly and undertakes useful community projects, for example tidying playgrounds or clearing paths. Pupils attend careers events, both in school and at universities to help them make informed choices about possible future pathways.
- 3.12 Throughout the school a full programme of activities, visits, trips and fieldwork extends and enriches the curriculum. These include language exchanges to Brittany in the senior school, music concerts for local nursing homes in the junior school and visits to the fire and police stations in the pre-prep.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The quality of teaching in all parts of the school is good overall. A significant number of lessons seen were excellent. Good teaching contributes well to the achievement of pupils in all year groups and supports the aims of the school. Teachers know their pupils well and are aware of their individual learning needs. Pupils who responded to the questionnaire said that their teachers helped them to learn.
- 3.14 In the most dynamic lessons a variety of teaching methods enthuse the pupils. These lessons are well planned, cater for a range of learning styles, have a brisk pace and challenge pupils to think for themselves. For example, in a religious studies lesson Year 9 pupils were asked to consider a range of thought provoking facts about their bodies in considering who they were. In the junior school a Year 5 English lesson used role play to demonstrate the difference between direct and indirect speech. Provision for those with SEND is good. The Learning Development department informs teachers about specific learning needs and good practice was observed in some lessons, with work broken down into manageable sections in Year 8 PSHME, or helpful pairings of pupils in English lessons. However, such practices were not evident in all lessons. Additional lessons are provided for those with EAL and teachers are aware of their particular needs, often giving them extra time to explain topics personally, though additional support in lessons varied. Teaching frequently challenges more able pupils, and much of the teaching encourages the free discussion of ideas, as in a Year 12 ethics lesson in which pupils' challenged and explained ideas, clarifying their understanding through debate. On the whole, ICT is not used well enough to promote learning; its use tends to be confined to the teachers.
- 3.15 Marking overall is positive and encouraging. Pupils of all ages receive good oral feedback but they do not routinely benefit from written feedback about how to improve. Excellent examples were observed in some examination classes where marking was clearly linked to assessment criteria and how to achieve higher grades, but this was not consistently done across or even within subjects.
- 3.16 Suitable systems exist in each part of the school to track the progress of pupils. Regular assessment meetings take place to discuss progress and staff react quickly to underperformance. A recently introduced system of tracking and target setting in the sixth form uses baseline data to set targets and track attainment. However, baseline data is not yet used in this way in other parts of the school to create academic targets. As a result, pupils and teachers lack a clear idea of what outcomes should be possible for individuals.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent. The distinctive Methodist ethos of the school contributes to this through its commitment to the development of the full potential of each individual. A feeling of respect permeates the school; pupils of all ages are confident, aware of the needs of others and behave well.
- 4.2 The pupils' strong spiritual development is supported by regular worship led by the chaplain and other senior staff. The Methodist faith underpins the pupils' interest in and concern for those less fortunate than themselves, whom they readily support through charitable activities or in acts of kindness around the school. Children of all faiths and of none are happy to speak, play instruments or sing in assemblies, sometimes sharing insights of their own faiths. Senior school pupils discuss spiritual matters in a weekly discussion group, known as 'A bit of cake, a bit of God', and some attend confirmation classes. Their awareness of a spiritual dimension is demonstrated by their response to, and production of high-quality music and artwork which is shared with the whole school community.
- 4.3 The moral development of pupils is excellent. They have a clear sense of right and wrong and are keen to support others. They raise money for charities through a wide range of activities, often taking the initiative for this themselves, and also offer practical support to others, for example organising a rota to visit a sick pupil in hospital. Moral issues are addressed in assemblies and PSHME lessons throughout the age range. In the pre-prep moral development is encouraged through the use of clear rules, and in the junior school through weekly philosophy lessons. During the inspection pupils of all ages behaved impeccably and were quick to accept responsibility for their own behaviour.
- 4.4 Cultural awareness is successfully developed through the international backgrounds of pupils and the school's music, drama and art. It is further strengthened by visiting speakers and visits in this country and abroad. Major festivals from different religions and countries are celebrated, with parents talking to junior pupils about other cultures and senior pupils readily sharing their beliefs and interests with the wider community. The school's links with The Gambia enabled senior pupils and staff to see for themselves the stark contrast in lifestyles. Senior pupils then sold palm crosses made in The Gambia and sent the proceeds back to the people who made them.
- 4.5 Social skills are very well-developed and the pupils enjoy taking responsibility for school events or initiatives. School councils in both the junior and senior schools discuss pupils' ideas and the school acts on their suggestions. Senior school pupils are particularly conscious of their place in the wider society; two pupils recently attended the Model United Nations in Paris and others are now setting up a similar conference here and will train younger pupils.

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

- 4.6 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent. The school provides excellent pastoral care, support and guidance for its pupils, and is highly effective in ensuring their welfare, health and safety, thereby fully meeting its aims.
- 4.7 Houseparents and tutors are responsible for pastoral care and they are held in high regard by the pupils, who were in no doubt about who to turn to with a problem. Tutors give freely of their time and each pupil has regular contact with a member of staff to discuss academic and pastoral issues. Pastoral care is further enhanced by a mentoring system in which older pupils help younger ones.
- 4.8 Relationships between staff and pupils and among pupils themselves are excellent. The Methodist ethos promotes good, caring behaviour and this is evident throughout the school. Pupils behave in an exemplary manner and have a sensitive consideration and courtesy for their community.
- 4.9 In their pre-inspection questionnaires pupils said they were happy to be at Queen's College. A significant number, however, felt that the school does not listen to them. Interviews with groups of pupils and informal conversations showed little evidence to support these concerns. Inspectors felt that the school council, and tutor meetings with the headmaster, both provide opportunities to air concerns and changes do occur in the light of these meetings. Pupils also indicated that teachers do not treat them equally and fairly. No inspection evidence indicated that inequalities exist, but pupils did not always understand why decisions have been made. The school is aware of this and has recently changed communication procedures to provide greater clarity for pupils. Pupils believe bullying is rare and say that incidents are dealt with promptly, fairly and constructively should it occur.
- 4.10 The safeguarding of pupils is secure and policies and procedures reflect official guidance; staff at all levels receive regular child protection training and procedures to appoint staff are thorough. Medical care and procedures are excellent and appropriate facilities for the care of sick pupils give them a high standard of care.
- 4.11 Health and safety arrangements are given a high priority. The school has made rigorous and effective checks for health and safety, and has due regard for statutory regulations. Written policies and appropriate risk assessments are in place. Fire practices are held regularly, records are kept and highlighted problems acted upon.
- 4.12 The school places great emphasis on healthy living. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily; meals are nutritious and allow a good choice. Although in questionnaires some boarders criticised the meals, the school had already taken action to deal with this and boarders interviewed stated this was no longer a concern. Regular exercise is strongly encouraged through a wide range of sporting activities, including at weekends.
- 4.13 An accessibility plan has been established, which fulfils the requirements of the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, and work has been done to improve both physical access to buildings and access to the curriculum. Admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained and kept.

4.(c) The quality of boarding education

- 4.14 The quality of boarding is excellent and fully supports the school's aims of helping all pupils to reach their full potential. The boarding experience contributes very positively to personal development; it encourages pupils to take part in a wide range of activities and provides excellent opportunities, formal and informal, for them to develop leadership skills.
- 4.15 Relationships within boarding are excellent and greatly contribute to the positive attitudes to boarding expressed during the inspection. Pupils feel that concerns can be aired freely and are dealt with effectively. Induction programmes exist to welcome new boarders, and those who have arrived from abroad are helped to integrate and settle in easily. Pupils are very happy and say they find boarding a friendly, relaxed environment; they feel well cared for and enjoy the sense of community. They are confident that they can approach a variety of staff with any concerns or queries that they may have and their experience is that these will be dealt with effectively.
- 4.16 Most accommodation for boarders is good. The houses are clean, well decorated and well furnished, and they help the staff to create an atmosphere which contributes greatly to the pupils' well being and happiness. The houses are within close proximity to the main school buildings, enabling boarders to make use of facilities there during evenings and weekends. Following the recommendations of the previous inspection, an ongoing programme of refurbishment is in place, with the final, junior, boarding house due to be refurbished in the summer of 2012.
- 4.17 The school provides a good range of activities for boarders in the evenings and at weekends. In addition to the daily extra-curricular programme for the whole school, a weekend programme of sporting, creative and other activities is offered. Regular weekend trips involving activities such as paintballing, skating or shopping are organised each term and boarders can make recommendations about future events.
- 4.18 Boarders appreciate the ICT facilities available to them including the use of internet. They make good use of these both in their studies and in maintaining a high level of communication with parents.
- 4.19 Boarders report a recent improvement in the quality and quantity of food, which they appreciate. Food provided is plentiful and nutritious.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 The school's governing body, working in conjunction with the Methodist trust, provides excellent governance. Governors have regular training, are aware of their responsibilities and are committed to promoting both the Methodist ethos and the development of the school. They bring valuable expertise to bear on the work of the full governing body and its committees.

5.2 Between them, governors monitor the school's activities closely, attending functions, where they can easily listen to the informal comments of both staff and parents, and analysing academic results. Individual governors oversee key areas of the school, such as boarding and EYFS, enabling them to respond quickly to perceived needs. They receive regular reports from the heads and review key policies and practices, including those for child protection annually. They are kept aware of the needs of teachers and create a strategic plan to maintain the school's development in line with these. In recent years they have supported the development of facilities such as the Queen's Conference Centre and changes in the curriculum, for example, to include philosophy in the junior school. The governors' effective financial planning fully supports the school's development objectives.

5.3 The governing body ensures that its responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety are discharged thoroughly, enabling the pupils at the school to learn in a safe and secure environment.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

5.4 The quality of leadership and management is good. Strong leadership in both the junior and the senior schools underpins the success of the college and provides clear direction for the educational and personal development of the pupils.

5.5 Whole school development planning involves all members of staff, who are therefore fully informed about, and committed to development objectives. The plan is rooted firmly in self-evaluation of the school's work. Those with management responsibilities monitor pupils' progress and evaluate outcomes. These are then discussed with senior leaders to identify strategies for improving performance even further in the future. In response to the recommendations in the previous inspection, best practice is shared within and across departments, both formally and informally, and systems exist for those with responsibility for leading subjects to monitor the work of colleagues.

5.6 The school has secure recruitment procedures, ensuring the suitability of staff. Those who are new to teaching, or to the school, are fully supported and a well structured appraisal system encourages self-evaluation and helps to identify training needs, which are then met. Staff work as a team to ensure the very best education for pupils, in accordance with the school's aims. Safeguarding, welfare, health and safety are treated as priorities, with very high standards maintained.

5.7 Since the previous inspection the workload of senior leaders in the junior school has been reviewed, to provide more time for the monitoring of school policies. However, there is still a variation in both the senior and the junior schools in the way some

policies, such as those for marking and the support provided for pupils with particular learning needs, is implemented.

- 5.8 Meetings between subject leaders in the junior and senior schools are used to develop links and ensure the best possible transition from Year 6 to Year 7, to maximise progress. Those with management responsibilities ensure that a good supply of useful resources is available to enhance the learning of pupils.

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

- 5.9 The school enjoys an excellent relationship with the parents, carers and guardians of pupils of all ages. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents express very positive views about all aspects of their relationship with the school. They are very pleased with the progress made by their children and are satisfied with the information they receive. Inspectors agree. Parents of senior school pupils receive interim reports every half-term and full or summary reports at the end of each term, and have the opportunity to attend annual parents' evenings. Junior school and pre-prep parents are very well informed about their children's academic and general progress, through the helpful daily contact with class teachers and senior staff, regular parents' evenings and assessment cards and reports. Parents are also very pleased with the range of subjects offered by the school and the experiences that the school offers their children, including its boarding provision.
- 5.10 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. Parents are encouraged to attend the many school events that take place and to involve themselves in the life of the school; the sports grounds provide a useful place for informal and social meeting. Parents are invited into the pre-prep and junior school every week for assemblies, and in the senior school parents are welcome to attend a termly question and answer session with the headmaster.
- 5.11 The information provided to parents meets requirements. Communications from the school to parents include a weekly newsletter in the junior school and a monthly newsletter in the senior school; both these publications are brimming with the pupils' achievements and are testimony to the varied and wide ranging extra-curricular and curricular programme. Parents of prospective pupils are provided with helpful information about the school, including a detailed and extensive parental handbook. The recently updated school website is also a useful source of information for parents. The school aims to respond to e-mails within 24 hours and parents are very happy with the way the school handles its concerns; there were no formal complaints last year and the parents' questionnaires revealed very strong support for the school.

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. Children thrive within a secure and happy family atmosphere because they are so well supported and valued by the caring and conscientious adults. Meeting the children's needs lies at the heart of the setting and staff continually evaluate their provision and strive to move it forward. The Nursery has recently increased its outdoor area and plans are in place to develop the learning opportunities that this can provide.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Meticulous policies and procedures promote equality and eliminate discrimination. The consistent implementation of policies, and thorough and on-going risk assessment, ensure that children are safeguarded. The exceptional organisation, good use of resources, together with an ambitious vision for continuous improvement, all combine to meet the needs of pupils. An established and effective appraisal system and good links with the local authority ensure that there are excellent training opportunities for staff. Well qualified and committed adults make excellent use of resources. Links with parents are excellent and there are many opportunities for them to be involved in their children's learning. Reporting to parents is thorough but does not consistently identify targets for pupils across the setting.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. Children respond positively to the warm and nurturing setting which ensures they feel happy and secure. Staff work very well as a strong team, who plan thoroughly together using everybody's expertise and have an excellent understanding of their children's needs and interests. The acquisition of language for EAL children is a high priority and they receive excellent support. Information from observation and assessment is used well to plan activities and next steps in children's learning. A stimulating environment, both indoors and outside, provides children with a balanced curriculum in every area of learning. There are many opportunities for adult-led and child-initiated learning. Teaching is structured to meet children's different needs, and challenges their thinking. Good work and positive behaviour are encouraged within a calm and happy atmosphere. Staff promote the health and welfare of children at all times.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes are outstanding. They are enthusiastic, happy and independent learners who progress well in relation to their starting points and begin to develop skills for the future. They are confident and articulate children who respond enthusiastically and happily to adults. They learn to think critically and to reason. They persevere with activities and begin to make choices and decisions. They understand about eating healthily, maintaining good hygiene and being safe. Reception children make a good attempt to write words independently using their phonic skills; they can order numbers to twenty and can use language such as one less than. They use ICT enthusiastically, for example when playing a mathematics game and making owl pictures. Nursery children can use the mouse to click and drag sweets on to a cake; they recognise their names when finding their boots; they know the sounds in their names and can recognise numerals to ten. In the Forest School they learn to work co-operatively when making dens, listen to one another, take turns and share and keep safe. They are kind friends who help one another. They have many opportunities to develop independence. Their understanding of the wider world is clearly demonstrated through their role play, the visitors to school and visits out. Behaviour is exemplary because children know what is expected of them.

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, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and 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
Mr Chris Compton	Director of Studies, HMC school
Mr Alan Bougeard	Head of Middle School, HMC school
Mr Huw Marshall	Head, IAPS school
Mrs Helen Morgan	Vice-Principal, HMC school
Mrs Mary Ireland	Head, HMC school
Mrs Bridget Forrest	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector