



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

RUCKLEIGH SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Ruckleigh School

Full Name of School	Ruckleigh School
DfE Number	334/6007
Address	Ruckleigh School 17 Lode Lane Solihull West Midlands B91 2AB
Telephone Number	0121 705 2773
Fax Number	0121 704 4883
Email Address	head@ruckleigh.co.uk
Headmistress	Mrs B M Forster
Proprietors	Mrs C Laurens, Dr H Carr-Smith, Mr R Carr-Smith
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	241
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (135 boys; 106 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 54 5-11: 187
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection date/EYFS	18 May 2010 to 19 May 2010
Final (team) visit	21 Jun 2010 to 23 Jun 2010

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 March 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended with effect from January 2005, May 2007 and February 2009. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) The quality of education provided (Curriculum)
- (b) The quality of education provided (Teaching)
- (c) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) The welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) The suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) The premises and accommodation
- (g) The provision of information
- (h) The manner in which complaints are to be handled

Legislation additional to the welfare, health and safety Standard 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 does not examine the financial viability of the school or investigate its accounting procedures. The inspectors check the school's health and safety procedures and comment on any significant hazards they encounter: they do not carry out an exhaustive health and safety examination. Their inspection of the premises is from an educational perspective and does not include in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommended action	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(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
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	7
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	7
(b) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	8
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	9
(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
6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	11
(a) The overall effectiveness of the early years provision – how well the school meets the needs of children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	11
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	11
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	11
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	12
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	13

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Ruckleigh School was founded in 1909 and has been in its present building in the centre of Solihull since 1930. Ruckleigh was acquired by the Carr-Smith family in 1948. The school is a limited company, with three members of the family, who make all major decisions regarding finance and buildings, as its major shareholders and directors. One member of the family is the administrative director. The school currently occupies an Edwardian building extended and converted to suit its present purpose. The Nursery and Reception classes are in purpose-built accommodation across the playground. The school has access to its own playing fields and hard surface tennis courts. The present headmistress was appointed in 2000 'to oversee the daily running of the school'.
- 1.2 The school is a co-educational day school for pupils aged from 3 to 11 years. It attracts children from a wide geographical area, but mainly within a ten-mile radius of central Solihull. The majority of pupils are of white British extraction, though a significant proportion of pupils are from Asian backgrounds. The school has a mix of socio-economic groups, world faiths and cultures. At the time of the inspection the school had 241 pupils, comprising 135 boys and 106 girls. Fifty-four children were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and 187 in Years 1 to 6. The ability profile of the school, though wide, is above the national average. Two pupils have statements of special educational need (SEN) and 32 have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 14 receive support. None has English as an additional language. Forty-seven pupils are financially supported by the local education authority.
- 1.3 The school aims to provide a caring and safe learning environment in which children can reach their full potential, in preparation for entrance into grammar, independent and local authority schools. To this end the school says it is 'unashamedly academic', though it also seeks to help pupils reach their potential physically, creatively, socially and morally, and to display kindness, care and sensitivity towards the needs of others. The main aims for those in EYFS are to work together as a team to provide positive learning outcomes for all the children.
- 1.4 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
Kindergarten	Reception

Junior Department

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

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL AND ACTION POINTS

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils make good and often excellent progress in relation to their ability, which is above average, from the earliest years. Attainment in national tests at age 11 has been high when compared with the national average for all maintained primary schools. The school fully meets its aim to prepare pupils for entrance into senior grammar, independent and local authority schools. Pupils enjoy their studies and apply themselves purposefully. The school offers pupils a good curricular experience. The curriculum is generally carefully planned, though there is some imbalance in the time given to different subjects, which limits the timetabled teaching of science and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils are offered a wide range of extra-curricular activities, which effectively broadens their educational experience, and in several of these activities pupils achieve excellent results. The quality of teaching is good and often excellent. It is supported by effective planning that is strong in identifying the different academic needs of pupils, but which does not always provide sufficiently challenging tasks for those on the gifted and talented register. The quality of assessment and marking is outstanding, and they provide a clear picture to parents and pupils of the progress being made.
- 2.2 The pupils' development in relation to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural life is excellent, fulfilling the school's aims to help pupils reach their potential socially and morally. The quality of pastoral care is outstanding and ensures that pupils feel safe and cared for. The relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils with pupils are excellent. Procedures and policies for safeguarding pupils are effective, as are measures to reduce risk of fire and other hazards. Links with parents are excellent, though the parental responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire did indicate some dissatisfaction among a minority of parents with special educational needs provision, homework, extra-curricular provision and parental links; however, inspection evidence did not support these concerns.
- 2.3 The quality of governance is good, as are the leadership and management of the school. The headmistress is well supported by the senior management team. Subject co-ordinators carry out their responsibilities effectively, ensuring that pupils have the strong educational provision referred to in the report. The systems of formal monitoring at different levels of management are in place and findings properly recorded. The school has responded well to the recommendations of the previous report and now provides reasonable time for physical education and music, has useful curricular links between different sections of the school, has improved the provision for information and communication technology (ICT) and provides good opportunities for staff in-service training.

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 2003, as subsequently amended.
- 2.5 The school's provision for childcare met the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage and no action was required.

(ii) Recommended action

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Provide more time in the curriculum for science.
 2. Provide more structure for the approaches used in the provision for PSHE.
 3. Ensure that appropriately challenging work is set for those on the gifted and talented register in all lessons and subjects.
 4. In the EYFS, continue the excellent initiative of valuing parents by encouraging them to attend further workshops linked to the six areas of learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 From the EYFS onwards, pupils make good and often excellent progress in relation to their ability, which is above average. Attainment in national tests at the age of 11 has been high when compared with the national average for all maintained primary schools. This fulfils the school's aim to provide the pupils with a good academic education.
- 3.2 Pupils show a good command of language, have good listening skills and develop an appropriate subject vocabulary, as demonstrated in a Year 2 English lesson where they skilfully used a range of adjectives in extended writing. In mathematics and science they develop good investigative and problem solving skills, observed in a Year 6 mathematics lesson when tackling improper fractions. Work in exercise books is extremely well presented and organised, and contributes to the high standards reached. The pupils produce some good extended writing, and display effective skills in the use of imagery; in a Year 6 English lesson, for example, pupils confidently used simile, metaphor, alliteration and onomatopoeia. They have a good understanding of ICT, their work being displayed around the school as well as preserved in folders; in a Year 4 lesson pupils worked effectively on independent research. They speak with confidence, as they demonstrated in the work-based interviews, and they draw on previous learning effectively, which helps them make good or sometimes excellent progress.
- 3.3 Pupils have a mature attitude to their learning. They know the pieces of work they have done well, being used to carrying out self-assessment, and can identify the points for development. Pupils work well together, or independently if need be, to good effect, and they take a pride in what they do as indicated in the high quality presentation in their books. They enjoy their studies and demonstrate outstanding commitment. They are keen to succeed and willingly persevere. Their behaviour is generally exemplary and they enjoy extremely good relationships among themselves and with their teachers and other staff.
- 3.4 Pupils achieve excellent results in a wide range of extra-curricular activities. They achieve awards in London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA) examinations and several pupils have demonstrated exceptional talent in other areas of the performing arts. Two boys are signed with a Premier League football team and school teams have been regular winners in the Independent Schools Association (ISA) netball, athletics and swimming tournaments. Their success in academic work, sport and music owes much to the commitment of their teachers and their own positive attitudes. Most pupils gain admission to the senior schools of their choice.

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

- 3.5 The curriculum provided in EYFS is excellent and that in the rest of the school is good. It is broadly based throughout, and is generally well balanced. In Years 1 to 6, the school offers the National Curriculum subjects plus religious education, French and speech and drama. The school places considerable emphasis on the basic skills of language, literacy and mathematics, which means that some subjects, for example science, are slightly restricted on time. While the majority of the curriculum is taught by the class teacher, specialists teach French, music, science, ICT and physical education; this specialist teaching contributes strongly to the good progress and high standards seen. Well-planned schemes of work provide for pupils of all abilities, and year group teachers collaborate well to ensure that pupils in different classes cover similar work. The transition from one section of the school to another is handled well. The PSHE syllabus is designed to fulfil the school's aims and is based on 'education in human values'. The underlying philosophy of the course permeates the ethos of the school and impacts successfully on the pupils' attitudes and understanding. PSHE is delivered in assemblies, RE lessons and by the class teachers when they feel appropriate, ensuring that all topics are covered during the year. Since the previous inspection, the provision and skills in ICT have improved, as witnessed in a Year 6 geography lesson where the pupils were undertaking research and emailing a world leader on the building of the Belo Monte Dam. Design and technology (DT) and art successfully provide opportunities for pupils to explore and develop ideas using a range of materials.
- 3.6 The excellent provision for pupils with LDD includes individual, group and classroom support. The special needs co-ordinator writes thorough, helpful individual education plans, which are discussed with the parents and staff. Extra support is given to pupils with specific difficulties by external teachers at parents' request or by learning support assistants. Provision is made for those on the gifted and talented register, though the extension work is not always challenging enough.
- 3.7 The educational experience is suitably broadened through an excellent variety of extra-curricular activities. The programme, which includes gardening and yoga, successfully appeals to all ages and all tastes. The yoga club observed offered enjoyment and relaxation to an enthusiastic group of pupils, whilst a homework club provided a worthwhile working environment beneficial to the pupils. Pupils also have opportunities for instrumental tuition and many represent the school successfully in a range of sports. Educational visits successfully promote the education programme; these include visits to local places of worship, nature reserves and museums, and for Year 6 a residential activity week. The school supports local communities by letting out its premises, welcoming visitors and parents into school and going out into the local environment to further the pupils' understanding of community cohesion.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.8 From the earliest years the quality of teaching is good and often excellent; it is a key element in the pupils' progress and achievement. Teachers are knowledgeable, know their pupils well and use effective teaching techniques. They enable pupils to extend their learning through the sharing of ideas with their peers and, on other occasions, working independently. Lessons are very well planned, and pupils in different classes within the same year benefit from this by having similar demanding experiences. Teachers generally provide different work for pupils of different ability, as observed in a Year 6 geography lesson, enabling pupils across the ability range to make good and sometimes excellent progress. Resources ranging from videos and interactive whiteboards to simple paper and pen are used to great effect. The latter was well demonstrated in a Year 4 design and technology lesson where pupils built on the learning they had experienced in a local book shop when producing examples of pop-up books. Although little was seen of pupils actually using ICT in lessons observed, there were good examples of its use in pupils' folders and on display around the school, indicating its positive impact on progress. Pupils contribute to their own learning effectively through individual research at home and in school, as seen in a Year 6 lesson when pupils were experimenting with different ways of presentation on computers. Relationships throughout are excellent and support effective learning.
- 3.9 Assessment in the school is outstanding. Teachers mark books thoroughly, provide helpful comments and set clear targets for individual pupils. They use assessment outcomes to aid their planning and identify those pupils who need extra support or extension work. On occasions the extension work consists of more of the same type of work, and is insufficiently challenging, but at best it stretches the most able and helps them to reach the highest standards. The use of standardised tests helps the school to monitor the pupils' progress, and results are shared with staff and parents, contributing effectively to the pupils' learning. Pupils know how well they are doing through detailed marking, the regular testing programme, and their own written assessments and target setting. As a result, the strong progress that pupils are making helps them to develop a confidence in their learning which contributes to the generally high standards they reach.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 Pupils throughout the school, including the EYFS children, have excellent personal development, which fulfils the school's aim to help pupils reach their potential creatively, socially and morally.
- 4.2 Spiritual development is outstanding. Pupils develop strong self-esteem and confidence. They are curious, asking questions as they search for information. They express opinions willingly. A good proportion of the pupils have deep religious commitments and pupils have no hesitation in professing these. They recognise there is something unique about each individual, demonstrated by their ready response on that theme in an assembly led by a visitor. They also recognise the gifts they and others have, and this spills over into their perceptions of the gifts of nature. Their actions in assemblies demonstrated that they have no difficulty in speaking or singing about their faiths.
- 4.3 Pupils show a strong moral commitment, recognising what is right and wrong in human relationships. Their understanding of right and wrong stems from the expectations of their teachers and their families. They have an acute sense of social justice, which a Year 5 pupil expressed in the words: 'My brain tells me if what I am doing is wrong'. Pupils recognise the importance of rules and abide by them, demonstrated by the generally excellent behaviour in class and around the school. Pupils recognise the need for fairness in rewards and punishments, a few expressing in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire their feeling that teachers did not always award or punish fairly or justly. The willingness of some pupils in Year 6 to research and debate Britain's involvement in the war in Afghanistan provides a clear indication of their growing maturity in relation to moral values. Pupils recognise their responsibility to those less fortunate than themselves, and willingly participate in fund raising activities for causes such as leukaemia and Haiti and they often have a say in choosing projects for which to raise the money.
- 4.4 Pupils develop exceptionally well socially in the EYFS and as they move on through the school. Children of all ages are given age-related roles, such as monitors or form captains. Year 6 pupils take on a range of responsibilities, as prefects, head girl and boy, house captains and librarians. The school council feels it has some influence, particularly with fund-raising projects. The children's interpersonal skills and communication skills develop exceedingly well and they have no difficulty in relating to older pupils or adults. Their experiences help them to begin to understand the importance of relating well to others and developing an idea by Year 6 of social cohesion and of social organisation. In assemblies and a range of other school activities, such as the recent mock election, pupils discuss the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. They learn about people in other lands and times through history and geography and the values of British culture through the opportunities they take to participate in school activities. The cultural mix in school encourages cultural integration and understanding. Pupils from Year 3 demonstrate a ready knowledge of the World Faiths, from talking about them in religious education and, in the case with Year 5, from visiting a Sikh Temple. The range of visitors to assembly, speaking for example about individual uniqueness or New Year in the USA, positively benefits the cultural development of the pupils.

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

- 4.6 The quality of the school's pastoral care is excellent, as are the arrangements to secure the welfare, health and safety of pupils. The school fulfils its aim to provide a caring and safe learning environment for pupils throughout the school.
- 4.7 Staff in EYFS show outstanding care for their pupils, which is reciprocated by the children in the confidence they have in their teachers. In Years 1 to 6 the headmistress, deputy and co-ordinator for PSHE have overall responsibility for pastoral care and provide helpful support for the class teachers, who have primary responsibility for support and guidance. Class teachers carry out their responsibilities most diligently. They know the children well and so quickly become aware if any problems arise. As a result, pupils display great confidence and trust in their teachers. The atmosphere of mutual respect, courtesy and purposefulness that teachers create in their classrooms encourages pupils of all ages to respect and support each other remarkably well, and play happily in the playground.
- 4.8 From an early age pupils learn to behave towards each other with emotional maturity. They do not regard bullying as a problem, but are very clear about what they would do if they or their friends encountered any. The policies for anti-bullying and behaviour management are comprehensive and include expectations for positive behaviour. The disciplinary policy is clear, and has been used effectively when the need has arisen. The school has an appropriate system of rewards for good behaviour, kindness and achievement, though questionnaires revealed that a small minority of pupils thought they were awarded unfairly. Sanctions are rarely used or needed.
- 4.9 The health and safety of pupils are catered for well. The safeguarding policy meets all requirements. The safe recruitment of staff is given priority, and the proprietors are also appropriately checked. All staff are trained in child protection, and two have received advanced training. The school buildings and grounds provide a safe and secure environment for pupils. Pupils are well supervised at play. Medical facilities and first aid procedures are suitable and staff have had appropriate training. Risk assessments are carried out appropriately, and those for external visits are clearly documented. Recent risk assessments have been carried out by fire officers and have confirmed that all is in order. Admissions procedures and attendance registers are completed as required, and the school fulfils its obligations.
- 4.10 The lunches prepared for pupils by kitchen staff are nutritious and popular. All pupils stay for lunch. There has been a focus on healthy eating through assemblies, PSHE and the school council. The thriving gardening club is also raising the pupils' awareness of different vegetables and the benefits of healthy eating. The pupils take regular exercise in the grounds, and one afternoon per week is designated to sport.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good. Three directors, all family members, own the school. They strongly support the school's efforts to provide a good educational experience for the pupils. They have skills in research, ICT and administration, which they use in the interests of the school. Directors carefully consider the school's needs and seek to ensure it has appropriate resources, staffing and facilities. One director, the administrative director, is also the bursar. She has kept up to date with the requirements of good governance, and has recently attended courses relevant to the effective discharge of her responsibilities for marketing, safeguarding, employment law, finance, safe recruitment and school building regulations. She is on site during the school day, has a thorough oversight of the school, and supports the headmistress well in furthering the school's aims to provide a caring and safe learning environment in which children can reach their full potential. She recognises the headmistress as having executive responsibility for the educational direction of the school.
- 5.2 The directors meet each term. They are well informed of the standards achieved, and of the school's successes, through regular reports from the headmistress. The directors have a vision for the future of the school, which includes improving the educational provision and developing the accommodation and facilities whilst maintaining the school's present size and ethos. As yet, this had not been written into a long-term strategic plan.
- 5.3 The directors are fully aware of their responsibilities and are committed to the welfare of the pupils. The safeguarding policy has recently been reviewed and approved. The bursar has responsibility as the named director and she is assisted by two trained members of the teaching staff.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Leadership and management are good overall. In the EYFS and throughout Years 1 to 6 the school is effectively led and managed, and is fulfilling its goals. The thoughtful approach of the headmistress is well supported by the school's senior management team, who meet regularly to discuss short- and long-term issues. Their success is reflected in the achievements of the pupils and their high level of personal development. Subject co-ordinators work hard and successfully in furthering the aims of the school and ensuring that pupils receive a high quality education. They take responsibility for the development of their respective curricular areas and support staff in developing planning, teaching and assessment. They are hard-working and experienced professionals, an asset to the management of the school. Careful planning by all teachers ensures clear progression and continuity in the pupils' learning. Pupils are prepared well for senior schools through the demanding academic curriculum, with an emphasis on literacy and numeracy, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities.
- 5.5 The school development plan is well structured, with measurable objectives, clearly defined priorities, linked finance and specific time frames. The directors and the school staff have been consulted and their suggestions incorporated into the plan. Systems are in place to monitor and evaluate lessons and pupils' work, and the findings are carefully recorded. These contribute positively to the school's success.

Peer monitoring has a strong impact on standards of teaching and is thoroughly appreciated by those involved. Staff appraisal is carried out annually and involves lesson observation and interviews. Targets are identified for the ensuing year with a view to improving overall performance.

- 5.6 The school has thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of staff. A staff induction policy supports new staff in understanding the day-to-day organisation. Appropriate training designed to improve educational provision and personal development is provided for staff through whole-school training days and external agencies; this includes relevant training in matters of safeguarding and in health and safety.
- 5.7 Support staff and administrative staff play an important role in the school. The former contribute significantly to the work of teachers and the welfare of the pupils whilst the latter ensure that the school runs smoothly and is kept clean and tidy.

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

- 5.8 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. The school has continued to build on the very good links commented upon in the previous report. Parental expectations are extremely high. Parents are keen for their children to do well and so are supportive of the school's efforts to prepare them successfully for their future lives. They are willing to do what they can to further the school's success. The school supplies an informative parents' handbook, issues regular newsletters, and has a very useful website which provides present and prospective parents with a wide range of information on matters such as school policies, the school curriculum (including provision for the LDD pupils), and the school's expectations in relation to homework. Parents receive regular, well-written reports and have opportunities to discuss their children's progress at parents' evenings. An appropriate complaints procedure is in place and access is made known to parents. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents indicated that they are very pleased with the quality of the teaching, the breadth of the curriculum, their children's progress and achievements and the pastoral care their children receive. However, a small minority has reservations in relation to the amount of information they receive from school, the support provided for pupils with LDD, the quantity of homework, the limited extra-curricular provision and the handling of parental concerns. These were matters explored by the inspection team who, as is indicated earlier in the report, judged that the school was in fact performing well in these aspects.
- 5.9 Parents have many opportunities to be involved in activities in the school. The thriving parents association contributes generously to the school through raising money, recently helping in the purchase of classroom equipment such as interactive white boards, as well as organising social occasions. Several parents help the school when asked, as was the case during the book fair. Parents are encouraged to support their children at school events, concerts and matches. The sports day held during the inspection was very well attended by parents, who supported their own and other parents' children enthusiastically.

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 This is an outstanding setting with a welcoming family atmosphere, in which children make significant progress in their learning and development. Children's needs are very well met through a broad range of activities. Outstanding assessment ensures that no child or group is disadvantaged. Staff enable the children to achieve high standards by identifying areas to improve. Robust safeguarding procedures strongly promote children's welfare. The recommendations of the previous inspection have been met.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are exemplary. Children are cared for exceptionally well because of the efficient implementation of comprehensive policies and the nurturing environment where individuals are valued by the suitable, well-qualified staff. Equality and diversity are promoted well. Staff identify areas for further improvement through thorough, weekly self-evaluation. They are striving, with success, to increase parents' understanding of their children's development through offering parent workshops linked to the six areas of learning. Staff are a happy, caring and effective team. Learning is enhanced through effective use of a good range of resources, and the easy access to pupils of those which are appropriate. Relationships with parents are extremely positive, as is reflected in their supportive and appreciative comments in the recent questionnaire.

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

6.3 Provision is outstanding. Assessment through observation is rigorous and information gained is used effectively to guide planning and target next steps. Adults provide children with a stimulating experience in every area of learning, carefully balanced between challenging, purposeful play, some of which is teacher-directed, and some of which is child-initiated. Children's work and interests are valued and reflected well in the many colourful and stimulating learning environments and displays around the setting. Outdoor provision is outstanding and is used effectively, with children benefiting from the frequently operating "free flow" system, in which they can choose indoor or outdoor play. Parents are well informed of their children's learning and achievements through the provision of an excellent range of information.

6.4 Safety and security are accounted for well, and care is outstanding. Children develop good attitudes to health and personal hygiene because of established systems followed by key workers and teachers, who know each child well. Staff prepare children for a seamless transition from Nursery to Reception and Year 1.

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

- 6.5 Outcomes for children are outstanding. Children make outstanding progress and achieve well by the end of the EYFS. They are extremely well motivated, confident learners, who respond to school life with great enthusiasm and enjoyment. They cooperate well in their learning and are able to make choices and decisions. They are eager to contribute and listen to other's views, and respond most positively to adults. The children enjoy using the computers, acquiring strong skills that are a valuable foundation for future learning. Relationships at all levels are outstanding and children make friends easily. All children respect and trust their workers and teachers. They feel safe and secure and know about eating healthily and exercising. They are aware of the need for good hygiene and understand about being safe.

What the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve is given at the beginning of the report in section 2.

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 one of the school's three proprietors, 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 Terry Dillon	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Maxine Shaw	Head, ISA pre-preparatory school
Mrs Elizabeth Henson	Former Head, GSA junior school
Mrs Philippa Thompson	Former Head, GSA junior school
Mrs Lynda Boden	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector