



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST BEDE'S PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	St Bede's Preparatory School
DfE Number	845/6011
EYFS Number	EY340176
Registered Charity Number	278950
Address	St Bede's Preparatory School Duke's Drive Eastbourne East Sussex BN20 7XL
Telephone Number	01323 734222
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Email Address	nick.bevington@stbedesschool.org
Headmaster	Mr Nicholas Bevington
Chairman of Governors	Major General Tony Meier
Age Range	3 months to 13 years
Total Number of Pupils	421
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (255 boys; 166 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 23 5-11: 192 3-5 (EYFS): 66 11-13: 140
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 395
Number of Boarders	Total: 26 Full: 21 Weekly: 5
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Nova Shoemith
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	15 May 2012 to 18 May 2012

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State 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, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: www.legislation.gov.uk. Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

Legislation additional to Part 3, Welfare, health and safety of pupils, is as follows.

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and/or disabilities).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning 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 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.

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. This inspection contains 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, personal development and welfare. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in December 2009 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, although inspectors 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.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the

school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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 chairman of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house 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

Mr Robin Lewis

Mrs Patricia Guy

Mr Gordon James

Mr Benjamin Moir

Mrs Lynne Weeks

Mrs Vivienne Wells

Mr Richard Balding

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (SENCO, GSA school)

Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Director of Sport, IAPS school)

Team Inspector (Head of Pre-Prep, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 St Bede's Preparatory School (St Bede's Prep) was founded in 1895 in Eastbourne and is a co-educational school for pupils between the ages of three months and thirteen years. Situated on the town's edge at the foot of the South Downs, the school overlooks the sea. Its buildings and facilities, including the sports hall, swimming pool, theatre, boarding house and a separate building for the youngest pupils occupy the main site. The games fields are a ten-minute walk away along a coastal path. Since the previous inspection, considerable rebuilding and refurbishment has taken place, including the accommodation for the pre-prep, the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and information and communication technology (ICT).
- 1.2 The school forms part of the St Bede's School Trust, a registered charity which includes a senior school, a dance school and an international summer school, all some miles distant. A single governance structure embraces all trust establishments. The senior school's headmaster is chief executive. Under his aegis, St Bede's Prep has its own headmaster. Administration and maintenance arrangements and some overarching policies deal with all trust schools. A few senior school staff teach St Bede's Prep pupils.
- 1.3 The trust's common aims are to provide education for young people so that they may lead full, worthwhile lives as well-rounded, confident and balanced members of their communities. The school seeks to provide an outstanding educational experience, in and out of class, underpinned by supportive, friendly, non-confrontational pastoral care. It strives to encourage pupils to recognise and use their talents to achieve their goals. It aims to develop their spiritual, moral and ethical values, supported by the centrality of a welcoming, multi-cultural, boarding core.
- 1.4 At the time of the inspection, 421 pupils were enrolled, 255 boys and 166 girls. Eighty-nine pupils, 50 boys and 39 girls, form the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) from the age of three months to five years. Twenty-three of these pupils are under the age of three, and 62 are part-time. The school refers to pupils from Nursery to Year 2 as being in the pre-prep, those in Years 3 to 8 as the prep. Pupils may board from the age of eight. Twenty-six currently do so, with a greater number of boys than girls. EYFS children may receive after school care, organised and staffed by the school's EYFS specialists and arranged to fit with timetables in other parts of the school.
- 1.5 The school's ability profile is broad although slightly above the national average. Two pupils have statements of special educational needs and a further 148 have been identified as having some degree of special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). The majority of pupils reflect the white, British heritage of the locality where professional and business classes predominate. Others represent a wide range of ethnicities from Europe and further afield. Ten pupils receive specialist support in English as an additional language (EAL). Most pupils stay until the end of Year 8 when the majority transfer to St Bede's senior school; the remainder move on to other independent day and boarding schools.
- 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 school meets well the trust's, and its own, aims to provide for its pupils an educational experience of high quality, strongly personalised to each individual's needs and aspirations. In both the pre-prep and the prep school, pupils of all abilities, including those with SEND and EAL, attain well and make good progress in their learning. Pupils' success is driven by their strong, positive attitudes supported by enthusiastic teaching at a level which has improved significantly since the previous inspection. Pupils' overall success is further promoted by the school's assiduous care for individuals. The exceptionally wide-ranging and well-balanced curricular and extra-curricular provision strongly supports pupils' personal development and their achievement. Hour-long lessons are timetabled and this has improved considerably the delivery of the curriculum to the major part of the school. At the lower end of the school however, pupils' focus is not fully maintained throughout these sessions. Teaching is good overall and a significant proportion is excellent, although it does not consistently challenge the most able pupils in all lessons. The majority of marking is of high quality, but this standard is not consistent across subjects and year-groups.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is excellent, strongly fostered by the school's open, friendly atmosphere. The high levels of staffing and their close knowledge of pupils' abilities contributes strongly to this excellence. Much charitable fund-raising is undertaken by pupils and parents. Relationships across the school are outstanding. Pastoral care is consistently excellent and all staff work together for the great benefit of pupils. They work diligently to care for the pupils and ensure that the arrangements for their welfare, health and safety are excellent. Boarding staff contribute equally strongly so that boarders, as well as day pupils, enjoy an excellent all-round educational experience, in full accord with the school's aims.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are good. Governance in particular, has undergone a significant, strong evolution since the previous inspection with the identification and appointment of new governors, the strengthening of the governors' roles both as effective non-executives and in the oversight offered by their committees. Leadership and management are equally good and senior staff in particular have worked hard to fulfil the last report's recommendations concerning improving the school's communications with parents, strengthening the curriculum's balance, developing monitoring and assessment, and sharing good practice amongst the staff. Parental contact is well fostered, strong parental support being indicated in the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Both parents and pupils are particularly appreciative of the school's breadth of opportunity and level of pastoral care.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Reconsider the timetable allocations for pupils in Years 1 and 2 to enable their better concentration.
2. Ensure that the provision for more able pupils is consistent across subjects and lessons.
3. Ensure that the high quality of much of the marking is reflected in all areas of the curriculum.
4. In the EYFS, complete the current plans for supporting the pupils' transition from Reception into Year 1 with regard to the new EYFS curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school meets well its aim to develop pupils as well-rounded, confident and balanced members of their community. Both boarding and day pupils' excellent achievement and their progress in developing core skills in literacy and numeracy is evident across the range of subjects and in extra-curricular activities. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve high standards in all curricular and extra-curricular areas. They develop well the skills needed for these achievements. Their ability to read and to think logically and independently is strong. They apply their previous knowledge thoughtfully in creative areas such as art and music and in the application of mathematics. Pupils' achievements in physical activities and games are strong both in the numerous opportunities to use the school's facilities and those which involve the nearby hills and coast. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are excellent; they spoke passionately and enthusiastically about developing 'atmosphere' in their writing. They respond thoughtfully and work hard in lessons. They demonstrate excellent skills in ICT. Older pupils have developed their own websites as part of a long-term project.
- 3.4 All pupils enjoy and engage fully in the range of options available within the curriculum and in extra-curricular activities achieving excellent standards. Their strong commitment to the school's ambitious music performances and drama productions helps ensure a strong level of achievement. A wide variety of pupils' high quality artwork decorates the school. Some, for instance in the chapel, is commented on specifically in assemblies so that its merits may be more widely discussed. Pupils achieve highly in national and regional sports competitions. For instance, the Under-13 six-a-side team reached the Independent Schools' Football Association national finals and the boys in the school's Under-8 tennis team are the Sussex indoor mini-tennis champions.
- 3.5 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be good in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils follow a carefully planned curriculum and, on leaving, the large majority move to the senior school. In each of the last three years, over twenty pupils have gained scholarship awards to various local and more distant independent schools, and over fifty such awards to the senior school. In addition to academic awards, scholarships in art, drama, music, dance and sport are strongly represented.
- 3.6 This level of attainment, as judged in lesson observation, pupils' written work and curriculum interviews with them, indicates that pupils make good progress relative to pupils of similar ability. Attainment of pupils with SEND is particularly strong because individual and class support lessons are outstanding and their links to curriculum lessons highly effective. The monitoring of the progress of pupils with SEND in literacy and numeracy skills show that they make greater progress than expected and attain well in relation to their difficulties, whilst fully engaging in the broader curriculum.

- 3.7 Pupils generally progress strongly both in lessons and over longer periods. Academically able pupils do not always make fully effective progress in a small minority of lessons although their overall achievements are generally strong. Pupils with EAL progress well and, along with those pupils with SEND, are aided by the high staffing levels and the particularly close attention paid by staff to the specific needs of individual pupils.
- 3.8 Pupils are proud members of the school community. They are highly supportive of the staff and each other and are strongly motivated both in and out of class. Work in exercise books and files is consistently well organised and presented across all year groups. Pupils work well both independently and with others. They are well behaved and demonstrate a positive approach to learning. As a result of these positive attitudes, pupils of all abilities and aptitudes achieve success in their academic work and particularly in the other wide ranging opportunities with which they are presented.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.9 Curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.10 The broad, carefully planned curriculum, in line with the school's aims, strongly supports pupils' individual talents and achievement. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. The curriculum provides a wide and thoughtfully balanced programme of study suitable for all its pupils across the spectrum of ages, abilities and needs. Pupils are provided with a most appropriate range of experiences in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social, aesthetic and creative areas. Their linguistic skills are enhanced by the provision of French and, in the older age groups, Spanish. ICT is given strong attention. Since the previous inspection, all classrooms have been equipped with interactive white-boards and electronic notice boards are sited throughout the school. As a result pupils naturally incorporate modern technological understanding into their experience. Excellent opportunities in the arts strongly foster their high level of accomplishment in creative and performance skills.
- 3.11 Curriculum planning and schemes of work are both extensive and informative, in almost all areas. Across departments and subjects, short-, medium- and long-term planning is generally of high quality. Pupils with SEND are supported extremely well across the curriculum by high quality management systems. Learning support is especially well organised, both within class and in individual sessions. Planning for those with SEND is strong and, through addressing individual needs, it helps ensure these pupils make strong progress. Group education plans for each class support teachers' excellent knowledge of pupils as individuals. This diligent care is evident in pupils' achievements and progress. Good cross-curricular opportunities exist throughout the school; for example a highly successful project on landscapes encompassed geography and the related art.
- 3.12 Since the previous inspection, a ten-day timetable cycle has been implemented, consisting of hour-long lessons. This has improved considerably the delivery of the curriculum to the major part of the school. In some subjects, mainly at the lower end of the school, the allocated time is long and, as a result, the hour occasionally challenges the continuous application and concentration of the youngest pupils.
- 3.13 Extensive use is made of setting by ability. This has enabled staff to plan a greater variety of appropriate activities into each session and to build into lessons times for

independent study. Much independent study time is classroom based rather than through homework, providing the benefit of their specialist teacher who is on hand to give help, supervision and support.

- 3.14 An excellent options programme, giving pupils the opportunity to choose from an extensive range of more academically focused topics within lesson time, and an imaginatively wide range of extra-curricular activities significantly enhance the curriculum. Pupils much enjoy and appreciate these rich, flexible opportunities. In discussion, pupils explained clearly how these capture their enthusiasm and how they enable them all to make choices and develop and extend their interests, abilities and knowledge in many sporting and creative ways. The options programme is integral to the two-week timetable. The activities programme runs before and after school, as well as at lunchtime. Options and activities include such opportunities as art, chess, cookery, dance, drama, sport (including climbing, horse-riding, sailing and tennis) and the highly popular rocket club.
- 3.15 All pupils take music and, every year, they are involved in a dramatic production. A comprehensive range of day and residential visits and trips as well as visiting speakers is directly linked with the curriculum and further extends the pupils' knowledge and experience. This programme is carefully thought out to complement lessons so that the pupils' benefit is maximised.
- 3.16 Pupils in Years 7 and 8 are able to join the Legat School of Dance, St Bede's own dance school, which offers an intensive dance training programme while allowing students to continue to benefit from an extensive range of academic studies. Pupils in Year 8 are provided with an outstanding leavers' programme covering a range of activities, trips and events, making their final few weeks at St Bede's both memorable and informative.
- 3.17 Community links are strong and include such events as the fireworks evening and the Christmas Fair to which people from outside school are invited. The school holds annual engineering and science challenges for local schools benefitting the pupils through both participation and acting as hosts. The school takes part in the local arts festival and community dance workshops. All these give pupils good experiences of life outside school from which they benefit well.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.18 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.19 It promotes pupils' progress and supports the aims of the school well. A significant proportion of teaching throughout the school is excellent. The group education plans that accompany each teaching group, give summaries of information about pupils, their individual needs and strategies for support. The information provided covers pastoral and academic needs promoting a caring, holistic approach. This is a special strength across the school. Such plans allow staff to structure their lessons effectively based upon their close knowledge of the different approaches required by their teaching groups.
- 3.20 Lessons are generally well planned to fill the time available and they are based on teachers' strong understanding of pupils' needs. Interactive whiteboards and other ICT equipment are used extensively and capture pupils' attention and imagination well, as does the use of other resources. For example, in a Latin lesson full use was made of practical resources and interactive games. As a result pupils' concentration

was fully maintained, their enjoyment was maximised and, in further consequence, all progressed well and achieved a high standard.

- 3.21 Across all year groups, teachers are, in general, passionate advocates for their subject. The best examples of teaching use a range of approaches and demonstrate excellent subject knowledge. These lessons have effective and efficient pace. Time is built in for independent learning which gives pupils high quality opportunities for reflection and consideration of the lesson's issues. Pupils respond strongly to this personal, caring approach and, as a result, rapid progress is commonplace. Much of the teaching gives strong challenge to the most able pupils. This quality is not consistently seen across all subjects and year groups with the result that the most able do not always fully engage in their lessons and progress is less rapid.
- 3.22 Support for pupils with SEND is outstanding. Staff are highly knowledgeable and especially vigilant and forward thinking in their planning, focusing on individuals' specific needs. They use their extensive, professional expertise to assess the required steps in each pupil's learning, thereby ensuring good progress especially in the development of self-confidence and independence. For example, pupils developed well their knowledge, understanding and confidence in using mathematical tables through the repetition of amusing rhymes to match the sounds of the numbers. In such ways teaching addresses individual needs especially strongly and effectively, ensuring pupils' progress and achievement is of high quality.
- 3.23 Teaching matches very well the provision requirements set out in statements of special educational needs. Pupils with EAL are supported equally well by mainstream staff, who regularly and discreetly check their pupils' understanding and offer additional help as necessary. This thoughtful approach is fully in line with the school's pastoral aims.
- 3.24 In most subjects and classes, regular marking is evident in pupils' books and files. Comprehensive feedback is given to individuals, with constructive ideas for improvement; for example, targets are set and an emphasis is placed on positive reinforcement. Not all marking reflects the best standards and some pupils receive less informative feedback. Pupils' progress is monitored carefully overall to ensure that they are not falling behind, either academically or developmentally.

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.
- 4.2 It meets the school's aims especially well in that it strongly fosters pupils' spiritual, moral and ethical values so that they mature as confident, balanced individuals. By the time they leave the school pupils are responsible, strongly self-confident and are able to discuss issues sensitively and maturely both with their peers and adults. This is a particular strength of the school.
- 4.3 Spiritual development is excellent. Pupils are highly self-aware and exude confidence. Their self-esteem is high as is their sense of awe and wonder. These attributes are fostered in various ways, an especially good example being seen in the rocket club. Pupils have a strong understanding of respect and fairness, through the topics discussed within chapel attendance and assemblies. These are linked to the wide range of issues studied in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons. As a result, kindness and consideration for everyone in the school community is much in evidence, with pupils responding very well in emulating staff members' excellent examples. Pupils' respect for the environment is equally strong being reinforced by the school's beautiful surroundings and the use made of these for study.
- 4.4 Moral awareness is high. Pupils listen carefully to the views of others and are extremely articulate when expressing their opinions. They demonstrate an excellent sense of right and wrong which is evident in the courteous and supportive way in which they treat each other. They understand and appreciate the rules needed to keep them safe, recognising these as fair, and knowing too that they are responsible for their own actions.
- 4.5 Social development is excellent. Pupils show great respect and thoughtfulness in the strong relationships they form with one another and this leads to a particularly high level of social development. They co-operate very well in their play and their lessons and welcome new pupils so that they are quickly integrated into the school. The section (house) system gives pupils a strong sense of community and they work together to gain section points. Pupils of all ages are given the opportunity to take responsibility. Those in the older age groups have the opportunity to be prefects and take seriously their responsibilities of, for example, helping to supervise the younger children at break. Pupils are well aware of the needs of others, which is evident both in their formal and informal discussions and in their commitment to raising money for a range of charities, chosen by the pupils.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural awareness is excellent. They relate especially helpfully to people of different ethnicity and this is supported through a wide base encompassing experiences as diverse as visiting a Chinese restaurant, and making Torah scrolls. Pupils' strong understanding of and sympathy for the standpoints of world religions and cultures are developed through religious studies lessons and visits to places of worship. Visits abroad enable children to gain first-hand experience of other countries. Their cultural values are broadened further by experiences through attending art exhibitions, concerts and drama at all levels in the school. As a result of all these opportunities, pupils integrate smoothly, enjoying and appreciating different cultural experiences and valuing what each can contribute.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.7 Arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.8 The school is highly successful in meeting its aim of instilling strong respect for community life and for all its members. Staff are supportive of every child in their care. They give clear guidance in expected behaviour, not least through example. Pupils value the strong sense of community and generally trust the community's adults. As a result they know who to approach if they have a problem, they feel valued as individuals, safe and supported, and they know that staff are on hand to ensure their needs are met. Relationships between the staff and pupils and amongst pupils themselves are particularly positive resulting in a warm and family-style ethos to the school. Effective teamwork and co-operation, in and out of lessons, are particularly evident.
- 4.9 Pupils' health is strongly promoted. Opportunities for exercise are many and varied, in and out of class, within the immediate school grounds and on the playing fields which are located in an area of exceptional natural beauty. Pupils take every chance to make full use of these privileges. Healthy eating is encouraged and well-discussed in lessons. In the responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small number of pupils expressed reservations concerning the choice and quantity of food available at certain times of the day. Inspectors could not support this view, finding that a wide range of nutritious and healthy food is available in good quantity at every meal.
- 4.10 An effective framework to foster good behaviour linked with equally strong measures to guard against harassment and bullying underpin pupils' consistently positive behaviour. The school's calm, friendly atmosphere strongly supports the success of these measures. As a result, pupils are proud to collect section points for their behaviour. The few negative comments in the responses to the pupil questionnaire regarding the fairness of sanctions and the consistency with which the staff applied them were not supported by the inspection evidence. Should unacceptable behaviour take place, it is dealt with promptly and justly, the school's measures being sufficiently flexible to accommodate the particular circumstances of each case.
- 4.11 The school has a suitable plan for educational access for pupils with special needs and/or disabilities. Pupils have excellent opportunities to share their views with staff. These include the school council, whose members are elected, and a recent, internal, pupil questionnaire organised by the school. The results of this were analysed and, where possible, acted upon.
- 4.12 The school's excellent care for its pupils in all aspects of their lives makes a major contribution to the pupils' outstanding personal development.

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

- 4.13 The quality of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.14 They make an effective contribution to pupils' personal development and support the aims of the school. Policies for the safeguarding of pupils are carefully implemented on a day-to-day basis and have regard to official guidance. The designated child protection officers and all staff have received appropriate training according to their responsibilities.
- 4.15 Proper measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. Checks and tests on fire safety and electrical appliances are carried out properly and fully recorded. Fire evacuation drills take place regularly and detailed records are kept. General risk assessments ensure that safety is a priority and matters that require attention are identified and resolved. Detailed risk assessments are undertaken to ensure the safety of pupils whilst on trips and other school activities.
- 4.16 Strong policies currently support health and safety matters to good effect. Appropriate adaptations are clearly made when the needs of prep, pre-prep and EYFS pupils require special highlighting. A regular in-service programme of first aid training ensures that all staff are able to help children should the need arise. The medical room, staffed by a registered nurse and supported by suitably qualified matrons, is available to all pupils should the need arise.
- 4.17 The admission and attendance registers are accurately completed and stored for at least three years.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.18 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.19 Boarders' personal development is excellent. They are confident and self-assured, being able to make sensible decisions for themselves. Within the boarding house they have developed strong, secure relationships, mixing easily across the year-groups, supporting each other and showing mature levels of tolerance. All pupils have equal opportunity to participate in all of the boarding activities and to succeed academically and socially, and they inform themselves well of local and world events. This provision and the boarders' good relationships enable the considerable percentage of short-stay boarders, when new, to adapt swiftly and to integrate into the community.
- 4.20 The boarders greatly enjoy their experiences, feeling at home within the boarding house. Weekly boarding house council meetings are held and boarders could name subsequent suggestions that have been acted on, including the purchase of a cupcake maker for use in the new kitchen. They value the opportunity to contribute to decisions about weekend activities. Pupil questionnaires raised concerns over boarders' views being heard. Inspectors found that ample opportunities exist for boarders to express their opinions at house meetings, school council and through questionnaires and, where possible, the school acts positively to address the suggestions made. Older pupils have the opportunity to become prefects and those with these responsibilities take their duties, under appropriate staff supervision, most seriously.
- 4.21 Relationships between staff and boarders are pleasantly relaxed and boarders can identify a number of adults to turn to if faced with a problem. Staff and boarders mix

easily over meals and elsewhere. Excellent staffing levels in the boarding house ensure time is available for individuals and as a result relationships between staff and pupils and those amongst pupils themselves are excellent. All staff are acutely aware of the house ethos and actively foster a family atmosphere. Staff are particularly vigilant in their attention to the needs of the boarders coming from a wide variety of backgrounds and cultures. In this way they ensure that academic and pastoral support embraces the pupils throughout the school, academically and pastorally, as well as in the boarding house.

- 4.22 Boarding provision and care is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The development of a new kitchen area and improvements in the provision of snacks fulfil the recommendations well. Good communications between medical, pastoral and academic staff ensure that boarders are well-cared for and individual needs addressed well. A new electronic database with individual profiling is beginning to strengthen further the monitoring of boarders and the support which staff offer them. A school counsellor and regular 'chill and chat' sessions ensure that any boarder's emotional needs are well met. If necessary boarders' needs are referred on. For example, a variety of listening and counselling services may be used at times when boarders face particular difficulties.
- 4.23 Procedures for the safe administration of prescribed and household medication include a regular audit of drugs. House staff are trained in first aid and provide sensitive care for those boarders who are ill, accommodating them separately when necessary. Window restraints are now in place throughout the boarding house. Regular and robust risk assessments are carried out for off-site activities and visits as well as for all buildings on site. Fire assessments are recorded and fire practices regularly occur within boarding time.
- 4.24 A wide range of nutritious, healthy food, which is cooked on site, is available in good quantities at every meal. Further healthy snacks and drinks are also available at regular intervals during the school day and in the evenings. Special diets are catered for and good efforts are made to ensure boarders are able to eat normally. For example, gluten free pizza is served alongside the ordinary version. Inspectors sampled meals and menus and talked to catering and boarding staff, as well as boarders. As a result, inspectors could not support the views of a small group who, in the pre-inspection pupil questionnaire, expressed reservations over the choice and quality of the food available.
- 4.25 Boarders are accommodated in a detached house with boys and girls living on separate floors and mixing in communal areas. The accommodation ensures that boarders' health, safety and welfare are assured. Dormitories are comfortable and, since the previous inspection, refurbishment has considerably improved the main recreational areas. As a result boarders have a modern and attractive room for relaxation which has become the house's focal point. Some bathroom accommodation is not yet refurbished to this high standard.
- 4.26 Boarders are able to personalise their rooms and suitable arrangements ensure the security of their property. Boarders benefit especially well from an extensive range of after school and weekend clubs and activities and are able to make good, informed choices about how they use their time. They relax when tired in the 'chill and chat club' after-school activity. Routines are altered appropriately to take account of individual needs. For example, early morning swimming or an after school club may be cancelled for that boarder if he/she appears unduly tired.

- 4.27 Boarders may easily maintain frequent contact with their families through a variety of modern communications. At the same time, the school communicates equally effectively, and almost as frequently, with parents and guardians. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed considerable satisfaction with the quality of care and provision. Any concerns or complaints, from pupils or parents, are carefully, sensitively and quickly addressed.
- 4.28 Boarding is excellently led and managed by staff who have the appropriate training and experience. The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding in boarding are good overall. All boarding, academic and support staff are suitably trained in child protection and clear policies are in place to promote good behaviour and to guard against bullying. These are operated assiduously by boarding staff. A few negative comments in pupil questionnaires regarding the fairness and consistent application of sanctions were not supported by evidence during the inspection. The previous inspection recommendation that recruitment procedures be reviewed further to ensure compliance had not been fully resolved, as a few recruitment checks had not been carried out rigorously in the past. Considerable improvements have been made recently and robust systems are now operated.
- 4.29 Boarding priorities are clear and the boarding house is well run according to its published principles and practice, strongly supporting the aims and ethos of the school. School and boarding procedures ensure that staff are clear as to boarders' whereabouts at all times and they understand the procedures to be followed in the unlikely event that a boarder should go missing. The boarding house is well-staffed at night and boarders confirm that they can easily seek assistance when unwell or in difficulty. This results in a positive atmosphere within the boarding community. Regular boarding staff meetings enable information to be shared and good practice reviewed. Staff review their work for the pupils and undertake careful self-evaluation to identify areas in which they may improve the pupils' experience. The boarding development plan is updated annually and targets identified appropriately.
- 4.30 In a pre-inspection questionnaire, parents of boarders expressed strong support for the boarding provision. They particularly mentioned the individual care given to their children, the ease with which they may contact boarding staff and the evident enjoyment and happiness of the boarders.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Since the previous inspection, governance has undergone considerable evolution and its standard has improved markedly. The governors' position as non-executives has received renewed emphasis. Their particular professional skills have been identified and utilised with greater efficiency. New governors have been appointed and are undergoing the induction process which includes appropriate training. Governors' committees and areas of responsibility have been more clearly defined so that they work with more effective focus in support of the school. The trust does not have a separate prep school committee, preferring to take full board corporate responsibility. The innovation of the 'chairmen's committee', formed of the chairs of each committee, enables free discussion of governance matters amongst a number of governors and senior school leaders and is proving especially helpful in suggesting and informing policy development and future planning.
- 5.3 Some governors attend school each term to follow lessons, activities and to meet and talk to staff. Their written reports give the full board thorough information which enables it to identify areas on which to focus. The education committee adds an extra dimension to this understanding of the school's procedures. As a result the finance committee and the governing body as a whole are strongly briefed when prioritising necessary support and proposed developments. The major rebuilding of classrooms and dining hall is an example of this hard work. The governors are also particularly diligent in ensuring senior leaders have the financial and other backing to invest in staff and their teaching and other resources.
- 5.4 Governors work hard to discharge their responsibilities for statutory requirements. They have, for example, termly reviews of safeguarding matters presented by the governor specifically responsible for this task. The education committee also has a standing agenda item for child protection issues. Through the trust's senior leaders procedures are in place to ensure regulatory compliance in the collection of checks on the suitability of staff.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, is good.
- 5.6 Members of the senior leadership team lead through high quality example, in strong support of the school's aims. Senior leaders plan meticulously in the short, medium and long term. They pay special attention to their plans to anticipate and minimise risk and to maximise the care and support the school offers to pupils and the wider St Bede's community. Should a weakness be identified, managers across the trust respond decisively and with alacrity and efficiency.
- 5.7 Leadership and management provide very clear educational direction. Senior staff are both highly efficient and highly effective in identifying and setting priorities. They achieve their goals because of their effective self-reflection and evaluation through which they continually seek further improvement, always with the aim of strengthening what is provided for the pupils. The school development plan is the

result of thorough consultation throughout the school community. As a consequence of earlier plans the school trust has invested heavily and to very good effect in the prep school's premises and facilities, bringing benefit to all pupils.

- 5.8 The results of this assiduous work and the meticulous attention to pupils' pastoral care and personal development is evident in pupils' progress, their happiness and security. The needs of all pupils, including boarders and those with SEND and EAL, are well met. A new timetable structure, introduced in September 2011, has significantly improved the overall provision and delivery of the curriculum. Changes to the award of reward points have encouraged better use of this system by all staff. Senior leaders and managers at all levels are highly successful in recruiting, supporting, developing and motivating high quality members of staff. Pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety receive effective attention on a day-to-day basis, with all staff being trained in these areas. Appointment checks now receive particularly intense scrutiny although the inspection identified a single instance when the school's appointments procedure had not been rigorously followed. All current staff have been appropriately checked including through the Criminal Records Bureau. Their induction is followed up by suitable training for their roles.
- 5.9 An excellent programme of annual staff appraisals and regular lesson observations is carried out, including a developing peer observation system. Senior leaders give strong support to colleagues at all levels of responsibility and this support is willingly reciprocated. A strong system of professional development and training is operated and keeps staff abreast of educational developments.
- 5.10 The responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicated strong parental support for the school. Parents expressed approval for the wide range of options and extra-curricular activities provided, and considerable satisfaction with their children's happiness and security whilst at school. They are pleased with the educational standards and caring support the school provides and the quality of the communication they may have with the school.
- 5.11 The school maintains regular, constructive contact with parents through various formal and informal means. Formal communication includes the weekly newsletter, the school magazine, academic reports and an annual parents' evening for each year group. A commercial system is used to ensure rapid dissemination of important information. Staff communicate informally with parents at the start and end of the day and through emails and telephone calls. Frequently parental contact is initiated by different departments within the school, as is appropriate. For example, the department for SEND often holds multi-disciplinary meetings concerning individual pupils to which the pupil's parents, support teachers and mainstream staff are invited.
- 5.12 Helpful information evenings for parents serve both an academic and informative purpose. Recent meetings have included the presentation of information relating to scholarship applications, cyber bullying and drugs awareness. The latter event was organised through an outside agency as a joint parent and pupil event and was particularly well received by families.
- 5.13 'The Friends of St Bede's' is a dedicated association especially, but not solely, for St Bede's parents, past and present. It runs the successful second-hand uniform shop and holds very successful social and fund-raising evenings. Recent successful gatherings have included a 'Pamper Night' and 'Curry and Quiz' evening. All such events strongly foster the school's community spirit and corporate loyalty. Parents

may attend matches, plays and concerts and many do so. All this enables parents to relate strongly to the school and to be involved effectively in their children's education.

- 5.14 Parents of pupils and of prospective pupils are provided with comprehensive and colourful packs about the different aspects of the school which contain all relevant information, including details about 'taster days' that incorporate an overnight stay for boarders.
- 5.15 Parents receive clear and useful reports about their children's work and progress. Full reports are delivered electronically and in hard copy at the end of the autumn and summer terms. Summary reports are similarly communicated at the end of the spring term. Concerns are handled sensitively and quickly and in full accordance with the school's complaints policy, although it is rare that this has to be used.

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 effectiveness of the provision is outstanding. The setting meets all children's needs exceptionally well, because staff respond positively to each individual and this, together with extremely thorough and careful curriculum planning, ensures that they make substantial progress in their learning and development. Since the previous inspection, the setting has been completely rebuilt and a significant number of new staff have been appointed. As a result the recommendations from that time have all been met. New plans are being produced for a seamless transition from Reception into Year 1 with regard to the new EYFS curriculum.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding. Leaders share a strong, clear vision with the highly effective, fully-qualified staff team who, corporately, continually seek developmental opportunities to enhance their provision for the children. Governors visit termly and their involvement is valued. Staff undertake regular self-evaluation, which enables existing high standards to be maintained and rapidly identifies areas for further development. In-service training is extensive. Effective policies are rigorously applied, which ensure discrimination is eliminated and that opportunities are offered equally to all children. Extensive, appropriate, high-quality resources are used. Safeguarding procedures are robust and all necessary checks have been undertaken on the EYFS staff. Parents, in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, indicated very strong support. They appreciate the daily contact with staff, weekly newsletter and frequent e-mails giving full information of their child's progress. Strong links with the local authority support the setting's work.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding. All children learn and progress particularly effectively. Welcoming, thoroughly resourced classrooms enable numerous imaginative, developmental opportunities. A careful balance between child-initiated and adult-led activities underpins an accurate 'Learning Journey' for each child which informs staff clearly about the next steps. In Nursery, for the children under three years old, apart from sleeping and baby-changing facilities, a shop and a home, complete with washing machine and drying line, have been constructed which strongly supports their role play. Such facilities are well-used and complement outstanding outdoor areas so that children develop their imagination well in a wide variety of activities. Children in Reception develop their creative, numeracy and literacy skills with the support of a further vast range of suitable resources, as well as their own outdoor areas. All children are extremely well cared for. They are taught about keeping safe in many contexts including using scissors, outdoor mobile vehicles and climbing frames. Staff are always nearby to help, for example when changing clothes for swimming. Appropriately frequent equipment checks and risk assessments are thorough.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for children are outstanding. From different starting points all make substantial progress. By the end of Nursery, most children recognise numbers up to ten, know the sounds of most of the letters of the alphabet and make simple use of a computer mouse. Independence is rapidly evolving as are choice-making and social skills. At the end of Reception, children can write simple sentences, and most read simple text fluently with developing comprehension. By this time, most children achieve high standards in all six areas of learning, exceeding the Early Learning Goals. Children across the setting are enthusiastic learners enjoying all their activities and working exceedingly well individually and co-operatively. Artwork displays illustrate their creative skills. Careful observations of plants increase their knowledge and understanding of the world. As they mature, children develop considerable skills for the future. Increasingly, they care for and respect each other and adults, relating well through taking turns, sharing willingly and displaying exemplary behaviour. Strong safety sense develops as they move carefully inside and outdoors. They understand clearly that healthy lifestyles need careful food selection, personal hygiene and physical exercise.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 6.5 The school's registered provision for childcare meets the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 and no action is required.