



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

ST MARY'S SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

St Mary's School

Full Name of School	St Mary's School		
DfE Number	825/6006		
Registered Charity Number	310634		
Address	St Mary's School Packhorse Road Gerrards Cross Buckinghamshire SL9 8JQ		
Telephone Number	01753 883370		
Fax Number	01753 890966		
Email Address	head@st-marys.bucks.sch.uk		
Headmistress	Mrs Jean Ross		
Chair of Governors	Mr Derek Wilson		
Age Range	3 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	304		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 118
	3-5 (EYFS):	19	11-18: 167
Number of Day Pupils	Total:	304	
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Alison Maycock.		
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	18 Jan 2011 to 19 Jan 2011		
	16 Feb 2011 to 18 Feb 2011		

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in March 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

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

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Education (DfE) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendation(s) for further improvement	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 St Mary's School is a day school for girls from the ages of 3 to 18. It aims to provide a stimulating and well-balanced education that will challenge and excite pupils, encouraging excellence in all aspects of their development. The school's framework of support is intended to help pupils achieve their full potential, building confidence and assurance. The school upholds a value system based on tolerance, welcoming diversity, and reflecting its Christian traditions and Anglican foundation. The school strives to build strong partnerships with parents.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1872 and moved to its present site in Gerrards Cross in 1937. The Nursery and Reception classes and Years 1 to 5 comprise the Junior House, and Years 6 to 11 are taught in new purpose-built accommodation. Older pupils in Years 6 to 13 are taught in the original house; this is the Senior House. A new headmistress took up her post in September 2010. Since the last inspection, posts have been created for a deputy head of the Junior House and for co-ordinators of Junior House literacy and numeracy. New building has provided a sports hall, design and technology facilities for junior pupils and textiles facilities for older pupils. The sixth-form centre has been extended, information and communication technology (ICT) provision for senior pupils has been enhanced and Spanish has been added to the curriculum.
- 1.3 Pupils come mainly from the surrounding area and parents generally have a professional or managerial background. There are 304 girls in total, with 19 pupils in the Nursery and Reception classes, 82 in Years 1 to 5, 167 in Years 6 to 11 and 36 in the sixth form. Girls wishing to join the school are assessed to ensure that it can provide a suitable education for them. Standardised test results for pupils across the school indicate a wide range of ability, but most pupils are above average. The school has identified 42 pupils as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). St Mary's welcomes pupils with a diversity of ethnic and cultural heritage. There are very few who are at an early stage in learning English as an additional language.
- 1.4 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 Pupils achieve well at St Mary's. They learn effectively in the classroom and profit well from the wide range of additional activities. They develop independence and self-assurance. Throughout the school, most pupils give their best efforts to all that they do. They take a pride in themselves and in their school. In accordance with the school's aims, they aspire to excellence and aim to achieve their full potential. There is considerable progress in the Junior House and, by Year 6, pupils have reached standards that, for most, are well above average in the majority of subjects. In the Senior House, though a few pupils occasionally find learning difficult, results at GCSE have been above the national average for maintained schools. Pupils make good headway in the sixth form. There is very good achievement in sports, creative ventures and activities such as The Duke of Edinburgh's Award (D of E).
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is good. In the Junior House, pupils thrive and grow rapidly in self-esteem. They are keen to respond to high expectations and challenges. Throughout the school, pupils have well-developed social skills. They have a keen sense of fairness. Older pupils have a ready grasp of social and personal issues; for instance, they are articulate in debate as to whether Shakespeare's sonnets convey a realistic view of love. In the main, older pupils have positive attitudes in lessons. The school's welfare provision is good and pupils' progress with classwork and homework is monitored appropriately. A few less able pupils in the Senior House sometimes struggle with their learning and with tackling the curriculum because they have limited support.
- 2.3 The school's outcomes are good overall and often excellent, particularly in the Junior House. Senior leaders are aware of the strengths and areas for development with teaching. They recognise that, whilst the great majority of pupils are exceptionally happy, a few do not always find things easy. Senior staff work very effectively as a team. They are ambitious for the success of the pupils and for the further development of the school. The school is well governed and governors are diligent in the discharge of their responsibilities. They ensure that financial provision is appropriate and provide senior staff with wise counsel. Though a minor weakness in attending to regulatory matters was evident at the first inspection visit, it had been rectified by the time of the second visit. The school maintains good links with parents, who value highly all that the school does for its pupils. Pre-inspection questionnaire returns from parents were highly supportive of the school and those from pupils were mostly positive.

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 did not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it was required to:
- implement all appropriate safeguarding arrangements with regard to pre-appointment checks on the suitability of staff to work with children and young people [Part 4, paragraph 19.(2)(a), under Suitability of staff and proprietors].
- 2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified the above shortcoming, as noted in the text of the report.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that all teaching in the Senior House matches the quality of the best, and strengthen the arrangements for the quality assurance of teaching.
 2. Improve the learning and achievement of less able pupils in the Senior House by extending the provision of individual support and modifying the demands of the curriculum.
 3. Develop opportunities for the pupils' voice to be heard, in confidence as well as in a more public forum, so that any emerging concerns can be addressed quickly.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils' overall achievement is good. They are well educated, in accordance with the school's aims. Academic achievement is very strong to the age of eleven and older pupils make good headway academically. Extra-curricular activities promote pupils' wider achievement well.
- 3.2 Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) make excellent progress and by the time they move into Year 1, most are well advanced for their age. With this excellent preparation, pupils have very effectively mastered the rudiments of learning. They go on to make very good strides forward in Year 1 and Year 2, where there is vibrant enthusiasm and eagerness for learning. As pupils move on through the Junior House, their skills in numeracy and literacy advance very effectively. They make contributions to discussion with poise and awareness of the needs of others. They use these skills and their increasing confidence with computers to good effect in tackling the wider curriculum. Help is freely available for any pupils who need support with their learning. With the more formal curricular arrangements in the Senior House, Year 6 pupils draw very effectively on earlier learning. For instance, in an excellent physical education lesson, Year 6 pupils showed in-depth knowledge of the theory of dance and well-refined collaborative skills, demonstrating strong achievement. Skills in numeracy are stronger than is usual at the age of eleven. Pupils in Year 6 apply their literacy skills confidently and with considerable effect to work in subjects such as religious education (RE) and history. Their achievement is very good across a broad front of academic and personal skills. Some pupils move on to other schools at the end of Year 6; many continue into Year 7 and are joined by pupils who are new to the school. The new community gels quickly. Whilst there is some variation in the effectiveness of learning from one lesson to another between Year 7 and Year 11, overall achievement is good in relation to the school's aims. Sixth-form pupils achieve well in their academic and personal development, and many are successful in competing for much sought after university courses. There is good achievement throughout the school in extra-curricular activities such as badminton, trampolining, drama and the science club. There is extensive successful participation in the D of E scheme. Pupils have performed well in graded music examinations.
- 3.3 Attainment is above average and pupils make good progress. Attainment is excellent in Year 6 in relation to that normally found in maintained primary schools. Pupils have made good progress since Year 1. Results at GCSE show attainment that is above the average for maintained secondary schools. The school uses a national system for data analysis, which shows that, relative to their starting points early in secondary schooling, pupils make good progress. However, there is some variation between subjects. Progress in sixth-form lessons seen was generally good and occasionally excellent. Results in A-level and AS-level examinations compare favourably with national standards.
- 3.4 Pupils generally enjoy their time at St Mary's. Where teaching is good or excellent, they respond well. They feel that independence is encouraged. They are alert to the importance of aspirational values in the school and wider community; they have a strong sense of fairness. Pupils coming to the end of primary education in Year 6 have very positive attitudes; they take a pride in all that they do. They are well

prepared for the next stages of their education. In Years 7 to 11, pupils are generally positive in outlook, but some have a perception that the way they are treated is not always fair. In a few lessons, pupils do not fully engage with learning. Pupils are diligent in their sixth-form studies and value the support and good teaching they receive. Across the school, pupils' work is well presented and shows that they generally give their very best efforts to it. They present themselves with confidence. Older pupils value opportunities for independence in their learning and for taking responsibilities in the school.

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

- 3.5 The curriculum is good. For pupils in Year 1 to Year 6, it covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and some outside it, such as 'thinking skills'. In the Senior House, the range of National Curriculum subjects is taught, while Spanish has recently been introduced as an alternative second language in Year 8, following demand from the pupils.
- 3.6 The level of challenge is often high, in accordance with the school's aims; it is usually appropriate for pupils' needs. In the Junior House, the curriculum is carefully planned and monitored, with the involvement of staff at all levels. Pupils with LDD are supported well, both by well-deployed teaching assistants and by a special educational needs teacher, who carefully assesses needs and puts in place appropriate individual education plans. The library has recently been refurbished and is a valuable resource. There are good specialist rooms for science, textiles and technology.
- 3.7 In the Senior House, curricular arrangements take account of the aspirations of pupils and parents. All three sciences have recently been made available at GCSE. There is support for pupils with LDD but it is somewhat limited. Some pupils are supported less than they need to be when they are challenged by the content of the curriculum. Where necessary, pupils are allowed to adopt a reduced number of GCSE subjects, but in a few lessons some weaker pupils struggle with work that is too challenging for them. In the sixth form, a wide variety of subjects is available. Every effort is made to accommodate pupils' subject choices, leading to some groups of only one or two pupils.
- 3.8 Many educational visits broaden the scope of provision. A wide variety of extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' experience. These are often enthusiastically supported, particularly in the Junior House. For example, groups of junior pupils enjoyed an excellent gym club. Senior pupils were observed gaining confidence in tennis skills and improvising well in a drama activity. In an excellent science club run by the sixth formers, rockets were made to great effect. The school band is greatly enjoyed. The D of E scheme is very popular at bronze and silver level. There are sporting and other links with local schools and the wider community. Carol singing and the exhibition of artwork make a further contribution.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.9 Teaching is good overall. The teaching in Years 1 to 6 is resoundingly good and often excellent. In Years 7 to 11, teaching is often good and occasionally excellent, but some teaching is less effective. In the small number of lessons seen in the sixth form, teaching was generally good and occasionally excellent.
- 3.10 In the best lessons seen in the Junior House, teachers were perceptive in assessing pupils' needs. They knew how much challenge pupils could cope with, planned work at different levels of difficulty for different groups and judged well how much time to allow for whole-class discussion, independent work or other activities. Lessons were planned carefully, with a variety of activities that engaged pupils' enthusiastic interest and made points effectively. Pupils' contributions were valued. They were given ample opportunity to develop skills of talking and writing, sometimes by working in pairs. In a Year 2 lesson, the teacher posed as Florence Nightingale and pupils grasped very clearly the importance of hygiene; they learnt about the difficulties of changing people's attitudes, and some wrote about it cogently with joined up handwriting. The very effective teaching leads to very good progress across the range of subjects, and engenders resilience and self-esteem. There is very good, well-judged support in the Junior House for less able pupils, which ensures that they can access and make headway with their tasks. Junior pupils greatly enjoy lessons and are proud of their achievements. In the Junior House, teachers' lesson plans are of a good standard and arrangements for the quality assurance of teaching are effective.
- 3.11 In the best lessons observed in Years 7 to 11, teachers had high expectations and demonstrated respect for pupils, for instance by giving opportunities for them to prepare and deliver short presentations to the class. Less able pupils are often helped by painstaking marking that values their efforts and carefully explains how improvements can be made. Such pupils value such explanations and the additional help they sometimes have with basic skills. However, there are some lessons where a few pupils find it difficult to keep up, and there is generally no in-class support for those who struggle. A few lessons are not well organised and activities lack interest. Some pupils flounder because the work is too hard and explanations are too thin, while a few pupils are bored because the work is too easy. The planning of lessons is variable in quality and arrangements for the quality assurance of teaching are not yet well developed.
- 3.12 In the sixth form, high expectations are evident in the thoroughness of the notes that pupils have taken in lessons. Lessons observed featured exciting and novel practical work and careful explanations of challenging concepts. In the main, pupils are confident about the material they have covered and say they are well advised about examination preparation.
- 3.13 Throughout the school, books show that the tasks pupils are set are very often varied and interesting. Books generally show evidence of considerable effort by pupils. Marking is generally very good, with encouraging comments and indication of how improvements might be made. Good use of ICT by teachers is seen in many lessons; there is limited evidence of its use by pupils.

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 good and is fully in line with the aims of the school. A supportive ethos is evident in all aspects of school life, including in the relationships amongst pupils, and between pupils and staff. The pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem are also well developed during their time in the school. They are articulate and are able to present a well-balanced argument in support of their views. The programmes of study for personal, social and health education are of high quality and make a significant contribution to pupils' moral and social development.
- 4.2 In the Junior House, pupils are confident and are very supportive of each other, and offer opinions in a considerate way. By Year 6, they raise questions about why there is illness and unpleasantness in the world. They are able to express spiritual values with understanding. By Year 11, pupils can debate cogently causes of poverty in Britain and abroad. In the Senior House, spirituality is well supported through weekly chapel services and assemblies. In an assembly led by members of the sixth form, pupils pondered the tribulations of families in Uganda that have been devastated by malaria. Pupils show a well-informed empathy with those less fortunate than themselves. Their spirituality develops in line with the Anglican Christian foundation of the school. All pupils study a GCSE short course in RE.
- 4.3 From an early age, the pupils show a clear understanding of principles that distinguish right from wrong. They are generally aware that there are clear boundaries of acceptable behaviour and understand the reason for them. On rare occasions in the Senior House, instances of negative behaviour in class were observed, particularly where there was a lack of pace.
- 4.4 Younger pupils value their friends, appreciate the support they receive from adults, and feel that they are prepared well for both progression through the school system and life in general. Pupils' social development is generally good and they show a well-developed awareness of social responsibility. They have opportunities to take on positions of responsibility and service within the school, as a member of the school council, form representative, house representative, in the D of E scheme or as a form mentor when in the sixth form. Pupils raise substantial amounts of money for a variety of charities at home and abroad.
- 4.5 An excellent cultural awareness, both of the pupils' own and other cultures, develops well through the many opportunities the school provides in music, art and drama, through the study of literature and through the wide ranging programme of external visits that the school organises.

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

- 4.6 The school has appropriate provision and high quality structures in place to promote the welfare, health and safety of pupils, in line with its aims. In the Junior House, the form tutors have oversight of the pupils on a day-to-day basis and strong supportive relationships are formed. Welfare is covered very well, both in physical and personal terms. There are safe procedures for arrival and for collecting pupils at the end of the day. In the Senior House, pastoral leaders work together as a cohesive team, and along with the form tutors, have a clear overview of the pastoral and academic welfare of each pupil. The school has a comprehensive anti-bullying policy, but there have been no significant recent issues. Successful measures have been established to encourage pupils to care for each other.
- 4.7 Should younger pupils have difficulties, they know that they can talk to an adult, and there is a 'worry box' in which they can place notes about any concerns. Throughout the school, most pupils feel that they have a wide range of people they can talk to about many of the issues that might concern them. Pupils are regularly consulted, for example through the school council, and their ideas acted upon where possible, such as in the Senior House, with the changing of the school scarf. However, a small number of pupils in the Senior House feel that their views are not heard on matters such as the quantity of work. The school's code of conduct is clear, accessible and understood by pupils. There are appropriate sanctions and rewards to deal with unacceptable conduct and to celebrate positive behaviour, although some pupils feel that these are not always fairly administered.
- 4.8 Safeguarding arrangements are secure. A minor weakness noted at the time of the first inspection visit had been remedied by the second visit. Child protection training is undertaken by all staff, with the required frequency. There are two designated child protection officers, one for the Junior House and another for the whole school, and a nominated governor with responsibility for safeguarding; policies and practice are reviewed annually. Appropriate attention is given to minimising risks from fire and other hazards. There is suitable provision for any pupils who are unwell. The school has given due consideration to access for those with LDD. A healthy and balanced diet is provided. Pupils' physical activities are suitably provided for. Admission and attendance registers are accurately maintained; absence is followed up punctiliously.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The school is well governed. Governors are committed to overseeing the development of the school and ensuring that provision is consistent with its aims and the aspirations of the community it serves. In the main, they are aware of their responsibilities and diligent in discharging them. The great majority of policy documentation is scrupulous in meeting statutory requirements and in setting out good professional practice. However, there has been a minor shortcoming in procedures for attending to necessary checks relating to welfare. Governors recognise this and, as a result, have successfully attended to policy statements and guidelines to ensure that necessary protocols are followed.
- 5.2 The arrangements for governance and the committee structure of the governing body are effective. Governors bring a wealth of experience to their work, including that in education, law and finance. There are good links with parents and some governors are, or have been, parents of pupils in the school. Individual governors have links with different subject areas and particular aspects of the school's work. The governor nominated for safeguarding and child protection matters is appropriately involved with school staff in discharging that responsibility. Governors frequently attend school functions and many of them know the staff well. The chair of governors visits the school frequently and works closely with the headmistress in moving the school forward. As at the last inspection, the level of support the governing body provides is good.
- 5.3 Governors are vigilant in doing all they can to ensure the highest quality of pupils' achievements and their personal development. Significant new appointments have been made in the Junior House over the last two years. Governors recognise importance in investing in staff. Financial planning is astute. There has been significant improvement to accommodation, and to computer equipment and other learning resources since the last inspection. Governors are highly effective in facilitating the work of the school, and in giving senior staff wise counsel and every encouragement in their endeavours.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The school is well managed. At all levels, leaders and managers strive to ensure that the work of the school is efficient and that it provides a high quality education in accordance with its aims. The day-to-day running of the Junior House and the Senior House is very effective and well guided by detailed and well-conceived policy documentation. Roles and responsibilities are clear. The headmistress joined the school in September 2010. There is well-focused leadership, with a firm intention of promoting improvement in the quality of all aspects of the school's work and a clear view of what should be achieved. The headmistress is supported by a hard working and effective senior team.
- 5.5 An appraisal system involves all teachers. Opportunities for professional development are made available and there are sound procedures for identifying where training might be appropriate. Senior staff have a reliable impression of where strengths lie in classroom practice and where there may be a need for refinement. However, formal evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and action to establish robust quality assurance are not yet fully developed.

- 5.6 Staff are keen to uphold and promote the school's values of tolerance and fairness, and to establish a culture of respect for others, and support and encouragement for those who need it. Parents overwhelmingly appreciate all that the school does to ensure that their daughters are happy and thrive. Younger pupils and those in the sixth form are extremely positive about the ethos of the school. So too are many pupils in Years 7 to 11, but that view is not universal. Opportunities for the pupil voice to be heard confidentially are more limited.
- 5.7 The school is successful in appointing and retaining suitable staff, and in encouraging their best efforts. There are appropriate arrangements for the induction of new staff. In the main, safeguarding checks with appointments have met requirements; this has recently been tightened. The school is mindful of pupils' safety on site and on school visits, with good arrangements in place.

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

- 5.8 Links with parents, carers and guardians are good. The views of parents both in the questionnaire and in interviews were generally very positive. Parents of pupils in the Junior House particularly are very pleased with the overall development of their daughters, which is seen as attributable to the very positive ethos maintained by the staff. Parents say that teaching is good, with some excellence identified, and a few instances where they feel that improvement could be made. Some parents feel that support for those who are less able is more effective for younger pupils; inspectors agree. Homework is generally felt to be appropriate, though a few parents commented that the load can be heavy.
- 5.9 Communications with staff are found to be very easy overall, although questionnaire responses indicate that a few parents do not feel encouraged to be involved with the life of the school. Reports to parents are very thorough and provide detailed feedback, though a few parents felt that they would value even more information. The school deals effectively with any concerns that parents raise. The school prospectus and a detailed, newly developed website make all necessary information available.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding in meeting the needs of all children and fully appreciating their individual differences. Constant self-review ensures the achievement of the setting's aims to nurture children in an environment of mutual respect and positive relationships, valuing the individual uniqueness of each child. Staff sustain the established high standards by regularly identifying areas for improvement. Children's needs are very well met through a broad and exciting range of activities. Staff have a clear understanding of children's needs and create a stimulating and colourful environment where children feel valued and safe.

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

6.2 The leadership and management of the setting are outstanding. Excellent and comprehensive arrangements are in place for safeguarding children and all staff are suitably trained. Drawing on contributions from parents and all the staff, clear direction is set for developments within the EYFS. There is a strong focus on achievement, learning and the well-being of all. The head of the setting has an excellent understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. She has a clear vision about the importance of the development of children's learning in the EYFS as a basis for their ongoing development as they move through the school. All policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting are in place and implemented rigorously. Risk assessments are detailed, carefully organised, well managed and reviewed regularly. During informal discussions, parents expressed appreciation of the recently redesigned website, which they find extremely useful. They also expressed strong appreciation of their children's progress and the care they receive. Every opportunity is taken to inform parents of their children's progress, and to give clear information about the way activities are organised and made available in the EYFS learning environment. The effective use and good management of resources, including those outdoors, lead to successful outcomes for all children.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. All children learn and develop extremely well through stimulating play and valuable first-hand experiences, which are specifically aimed at their individual needs. There is a clear focus on what children are going to learn, rather than what they are going to do. A well-judged balance is maintained between adult-led and child-initiated activities, with many opportunities for independent learning. Outdoor provision is used very effectively, with children regularly benefiting from both indoor and outdoor play. Children are observant and inquisitive, and staff ask challenging questions to develop their thinking skills. Children's work and interests are valued and reflected well in the many colourful and stimulating learning environments and displays around the EYFS setting. Provision for the welfare of children is exemplary. Good health and well-being are emphasised. The behaviour policy is well implemented, leading to a happy and busy atmosphere, where children benefit fully from all the opportunities provided.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. They make rapid progress and are on course to meet all the Early Learning Goals, including communication, language and literacy, and mathematical development, by the end of their Reception year. Nursery children were confident when working with computers, exhibiting good mouse control when using a spray paint programme, confidently changing colours and printing out their work. Using number fans, Reception children were able to understand the concept of 'one more than' and 'one less than', working with numbers up to ten. Children are inquisitive, enthusiastic and self-motivated, relating well to adults and to one another. Children respect and trust their teachers and they feel safe. They co-operate well in their learning and begin to make choices and decisions, for example when choosing indoor and outdoor play. They enjoy their healthy lunches and snacks. Children are provided with secure foundations for their future well-being in all aspects of their learning.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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 Jim Bennetts

Dr Ruth Weeks

Mr Adrian Procter

Mrs Deborah Northin

Mrs Lynda Boden

Reporting Inspector

Headmistress, GSA school

Head of Department, IAPS school

Head of Lower School, HMC school

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector