



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

SYDENHAM HIGH SCHOOL GDST

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Sydenham High School GDST

Full Name of School	Sydenham High School GDST		
DfE Number	209/6309		
Registered Charity Number	1026057		
Address	Sydenham High School GDST 19 Westwood Hill London London SE26 6BL		
Telephone Number	020 8557 7000		
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Email Address	heads.secretary@syd.gdst.net		
Head	Mrs Kathryn Pullen		
Chair of Governors	Ms Sasha Bhavan		
Age Range	4 to 18		
Total Number of Pupils	629		
Gender of Pupils	Girls		
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS):	0	5-11: 203
	3-5 (EYFS):	20	11-18: 406
Head of EYFS Setting	Mr Huw May		
EYFS Gender	Girls		
Inspection dates	04 Oct 2011 to 05 Oct 2011		
	02 Nov 2011 to 04 Nov 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 November 2005.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Sydenham High School is an independent day school in south east London for girls aged from four to eighteen years. It was founded in 1887 by the Girls' Day School Trust (GDST). The senior school premises, set in a Victorian house in five acres of grounds, have been sympathetically extended. The junior school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is set within its own grounds, a short walk away from the senior school, with which it shares facilities. Extensive sports fields are a twenty-minute drive from the school.
- 1.2 The GDST Council provides governance and holds legal responsibility for the school. A group of local governors, the School Governing Body (SGB), provides informal advice and support to the school. The school sets out to provide a first-class education for girls, to enable each to achieve her academic potential. It aims to create a positive social and learning environment, in which an innovative approach to pupil development seeks to ensure that girls leave educated and not simply examined, aware of the transferable skills that will underpin their adult lives.
- 1.3 There are 629 pupils in the school, of whom 406 are in the senior school. In the junior school there are 223 pupils, including 20 in the EYFS. Across the school the ability profile is above the national average, with most pupils having an above average ability and few having ability that is below average. In the sixth form there is a wider spread of ability than at GCSE. Pupils come from diverse ethnic and economic backgrounds, reflecting the local community. In the senior school 29 pupils have English as an additional language (EAL); 2 receive support for their English from the school. In the junior school there are 15 pupils with EAL, 2 of whom receive support. The senior school has identified 75 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); 28 receive specialist learning support from the school. In the junior school there are 18 pupils with SEND, all of whom receive specialist learning support.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, a new chair of the SGB has been appointed. A new head of the junior school was appointed in September 2011. Both sites have been enhanced. The performing arts centre now comprises a professionally equipped theatre, a recital hall and a recording studio. The sixth-form centre has undergone significant refurbishment. In the junior school, additional classrooms have been constructed and the playgrounds refurbished.
- 1.5 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 is highly successful in its aim of providing a first-class education for its pupils. In public examinations they achieve well in relation to their ability, and throughout the school, from the EYFS onwards, they make very good progress. The school is also successful in helping every pupil to achieve her potential through excellent teaching and by using detailed systems for tracking and monitoring progress. In both the junior and senior schools, pupils with SEND or EAL are identified early and given support to enable them to achieve in line with other pupils. The school provides many opportunities for the most able pupils, both in and out of lessons. The pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum that is enhanced, at every stage, by the inclusion of thinking skills, study and communication skills. Junior school pupils are thoroughly prepared for entrance to senior school, and senior school pupils almost without exception go on to university, most to their first choice of institution. Outside the classroom pupils achieve success in music, speech and drama, The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and sport. They are eager, aspirational learners who develop excellent attitudes to learning.
- 2.2 The pupils' excellent personal development is greatly assisted by the school's concern that their development should encompass academic and social well-being. Pupils of every age are constantly encouraged to consider how others feel and they learn to be aware of others and themselves. They show concern for the needs of others through charitable fund raising. Excellent systems are in place for the pupils to make their views known and they are proud of their contribution to decision making. In pre-inspection questionnaires, almost all pupils confirmed that the school listens and responds to their views. Every pupil who responded said that she liked being at the school.
- 2.3 The school is extremely well governed by the GDST and by the SGB. They are meticulous in ensuring that the school meets the regulatory requirements and in planning for the future, responding fully to recommendations in the previous inspection report. Outstanding leadership and management are equally committed to planning and there is a genuine desire to innovate in terms of addressing the needs of pupils. In pre-inspection questionnaires parents were overwhelmingly positive in their responses, although some parents of pupils in the junior school expressed reservations about extra-curricular activities, a view shared by inspectors. At every level, parents applaud the school's success in promoting its ethos and values.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is given in the Preface)

- 2.4 At the time of the initial visit, the school met all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that the quality of extra-curricular provision in the junior school is consistently high.
 2. Share best practice in the senior school to ensure consistency across departments in marking and assessment.
 3. Provide appropriate guidance to pupils of all ages, from the EYFS to the senior school, on healthy choices of food at lunchtime and help EYFS children with managing their food.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Throughout the school the quality of pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and skills is outstanding.
- 3.2 In the junior school pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aim for them to become confident independent learners. Their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills are strong and they are encouraged to work independently to produce projects of a high standard. They are enthusiastic, and full of ideas and imagination. The older junior school pupils show great confidence in discussion and can present ideas coherently and accurately. In mathematics and science they demonstrate a thorough grasp of concepts and associated vocabulary. In music, drama and sport pupils perform at a very high level, both within school and in local and regional events. The quality of art and design technology work on display throughout the junior school is outstanding and demonstrates pupils' creativity. Pupils are successful in gaining places at senior schools, many of them choosing to remain at Sydenham.
- 3.3 In the senior school the aim of enabling each pupil to achieve her academic potential is fulfilled. Those pupils with SEND or with EAL and the most able pupils all achieve well, in line with other pupils. Pupils are very confident in their skills; their speaking and writing are lucid and cogent, and they are adept at applying numeracy effectively in mathematics and science. Creativity and flair are evident in art, design technology, English, music and drama lessons. The use of ICT in a variety of applications across the curriculum is excellent, and the school recently gained a national award. All pupils achieve places in higher education, usually at their first choice of institution. They enjoy success in a variety of activities, such as in national art and science competitions. They regularly achieve distinctions in drama and music examinations. Many pupils achieve The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and, in sport, they gain successes in local and national competitions.
- 3.4 In the junior school pupils do not sit national tests. However, it is clear from regular standardised tests that most pupils achieve above the national average for their age. In the senior school, results at GCSE for the last three years for which comparative data is available, 2008 to 2010, have been above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to the average for girls in maintained selective schools. In 2011 every pupil achieved at least eight GCSEs, and almost half of them gained nine A* or A grades. Results at A level are above the national average for girls in maintained schools and similar to the average for girls in maintained selective schools. At all ages pupils' progress is very good overall in relation to their ability, as shown by standardised measures, and as observed in lessons and from written work. In 2010 and 2011, GCSE results showed exceptional progress when compared to pupils of similar abilities.
- 3.5 Pupils are enthusiastic learners with an excellent work ethic. In lessons, they collaborate effectively, listening sensitively to others' views, but they also work by themselves with skill. Their written work is of a very high standard, well presented and substantial. Of particular note at all levels is the willingness of the pupils to take risks and to work independently, confident that they will be corrected where necessary in a positive, constructive fashion.

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

- 3.6 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is good, with many excellent features. In the junior school the broad curriculum contributes strongly to the pupils' development. For younger pupils, the creative curriculum allows learning across different subject areas and provides age-appropriate activities that stimulate learning. The range of subjects taught to the older junior school pupils helps them to grasp subject-specific vocabulary and concepts. The provision for pupils with SEND is very strong, with targeted plans and close monitoring in place. As at the previous inspection, the lack of curriculum co-ordinators for each subject area limits progression from one year group to another. However, the school has firm plans to appoint co-ordinators. The quality of extra-curricular activities on offer is uneven, with many after-school activities being outsourced and at times unstructured in content. Lunchtime activities are well run by staff and enhance the broader curriculum. Residential trips and day visits provide valuable opportunities to enrich and extend the curriculum and to develop pupils' self-confidence and social skills.
- 3.7 The senior school's curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent. The curriculum is broad and balanced, with a wide range of choices at GCSE and A level, satisfying fully the learning requirements throughout the age and ability range and enabling pupils to be intellectually fulfilled. The provision of GCSE ICT in Year 9 enables all pupils to become capable users, benefiting their studies throughout the school. Option blocks are constructed around pupils' preferences at both GCSE and A level, enabling almost all choices to be satisfied. In Year 7 all pupils undertake a course about different learning styles so that all, including those with SEND, discover the strategies that suit them best as individual learners. In Years 8 and 9 communications skills are provided instead of Latin for some pupils with SEND, giving them confidence in developing their learning. The most able are challenged through opportunities to study single sciences, statistics and additional languages at GCSE. The Extended Project Qualification in the sixth form provides additional challenge in a pupil's chosen area of academic interest through research and independent study. The many clubs offer lively and intellectually stimulating enrichment beyond the classroom.
- 3.8 In the senior school, a wide and varied range of activities is on offer during lunchtime and after school, some of which are run by sixth formers, alongside competitive sports, music and drama. The school is keen to respond to pupils' interests and clubs provide something for everyone. Registers are kept in all activities, with some progress in key areas being recorded electronically on pupils' records. Pupils compete with other GDST schools in sports and the trust offers other opportunities, such as training for competitive university entry. The school has close links with local independent and maintained schools, and uses facilities nearby to provide some of its extra-curricular activities, such as swimming.
- 3.9 The school makes good use of links with the community, to the benefit of pupils. All those in Year 11 undertake work experience, and pupils in Year 13 participate in interviews organised by the careers department, utilising the expertise of parents. Visiting speakers and other professionals help to extend pupils' awareness and to develop their skills. The choirs perform at prominent locations at home and abroad. International links are further maintained through sports trips and visits, to, for example, Barbados in 2012, as well as cultural visits to America and a cross-curricular visit to Iceland.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 Throughout, the contribution of teaching is outstanding and extremely effective in enabling pupils to achieve high standards, in accordance with the school's aim of providing a first-class education. The best teaching is characterised by well-paced, challenging activities, encouragement of independent thinking and good use of resources. Prime examples of excellence include peer assessment and consistently good practice in meeting the differing needs of all pupils, both of which enable pupils to increase their subject knowledge and to develop their skills.
- 3.11 Most lessons are extremely well planned with very clear objectives. Effective use is made of questioning to check understanding, and to encourage reflection and independent thinking. At all levels, teaching uses ICT effectively and creatively. The varied teaching styles employed in lessons create a stimulating atmosphere conducive to co-operative work. A strong, trusting rapport exists between teachers and pupils, fostering mutually respectful and enquiring individuals who feel at ease asking questions and are not afraid to take risks in their learning. Teachers are knowledgeable and skilful. They know pupils extremely well and have an equally good understanding of their aptitudes and abilities; they sensitively support those who are less able whilst effectively stretching the more able.
- 3.12 Teaching is supported by excellent resources. Information gained from pupils' performance, and from tracking and target setting is well used in informing planning. Pupils enjoy lessons and teachers prioritise pupils' learning. Special themed 'Superlearning' days in the senior school, outside the timetable, provide further opportunities across the curriculum for extending pupils' knowledge, as do a variety of extra-curricular clubs such as Japanese, ancient history, Arabic and cipher club.
- 3.13 In a significant number of subject areas pupils' work is regularly and thoroughly marked. In these cases marking includes encouraging and detailed comments that outline strategies for improvement and highlight areas where pupils have excelled. In interviews, pupils expressed satisfaction with this approach. Best practice incorporates a substantial volume of pupils' work, peer marking and self-assessment. This was not consistent across all departments in the senior school.
- 3.14 Since the previous inspection, the senior school has increased the amount of standardised assessment data held on individual pupils to monitor and evaluate their progress and performance as they move through the school. The same information is used to identify pupils' under performance. In such cases swift and effective intervention by the learning strategies department successfully enables pupils to make progress. Heads of year monitor the pupils' profiles to check their progress, sharing the data with heads of department and the senior leadership team (SLT), in order to contribute to excellent pupil development.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is outstanding and fulfils the school's aims. In the junior school the pupils are capable, confident and compassionate, and in the senior school the pupils are educated beyond examination requirements. At all ages they are friendly, polite and welcoming. The pupils respond positively to their challenging environment.
- 4.2 The pupils' spiritual awareness is developed within and beyond the curriculum. They are self-confident and enjoy taking part in productions and assemblies. They show respect for one another and empathy with those who experience difficulties. In discussion, pupils reflect on their own and society's values, showing both self-awareness and an awakening appreciation of different points of view.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral development is excellent. In the junior school they appreciate the value of the 'golden rules'. Throughout the school they have a true sense of right and wrong, and are keen to give each other praise. Pupils' behaviour is extremely good in and out of lessons. In the extended form time, pupils discuss current affairs, using newspapers as their starting point, and they eagerly debate the rights and wrongs of real situations facing contemporary society. Outside the timetable, days focused on personal, social and health education topics enable them to explore moral issues, such as bullying, in depth and to gain understanding through discussion and teamwork.
- 4.4 Pupils enjoy taking on responsibilities within the school. In both the senior and junior schools, there are many opportunities for such roles as house captains, class helpers and form captains. The senior and junior schools have school councils which are each given a budget to spend after consulting peers and consequently can have a direct impact on the school environment. In the junior school, pupils actively use the 'buddy stop' in the playground to look after each other. Each form has an 'eco-warrior' who encourages her cohorts to be considerate towards the planet. Senior school pupils have a 'round table' meeting for each year group where representatives meet the SLT to raise issues of concern to them. Sixth formers are trained to act as mentors to younger pupils who, in interviews, expressed appreciation of their support. Pupils have a strong sense of justice and readily engage in raising money for charities. Of particular note is the raising of thousands of pounds for bone marrow cancer research.
- 4.5 The pupils have an excellent understanding of different cultures both within the school community, which is ethnically diverse, and in a wider sense. They learn about major world religions within the curriculum and work together in harmony, showing excellent relationships and understanding towards each other. They learn about their own culture through the curriculum and through visits to central London, to galleries and museums.

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

- 4.6 The contribution of welfare, health and safety is outstanding. The school aims to provide a positive social and learning environment for the pupils, believing that their development is at the heart of what it does. The school considers welfare as integral to the pupils' full development as individuals and it directs resources towards ensuring that they are cared for, supported and guided. From the outset, pupils are taught to be aware of how others are feeling, a consciousness that is nurtured by the way in which staff relate to them. Within the school's diverse community, relationships are warm, friendly and constructive. Relationships between pupils and staff are outstanding. The excellent systems in place for pupils to make their views known and the way in which they are listened to were commented on favourably by the pupils in interviews and add to their sense of responsibility for each other and the school. They are supported and guided by their form teachers and heads of year, benefiting from an extensive form time. Pre-inspection questionnaires indicated that some pupils feel teachers do not monitor their workloads. The inspection team found that pupils are freely able to discuss this matter with staff.
- 4.7 The school has effective procedures for promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying. Clear policies are well understood by the pupils and they are confident that any incidents would be dealt with promptly. In the junior school, pupils respond enthusiastically to the way in which good behaviour is rewarded.
- 4.8 Safeguarding arrangements are excellent. Staff training in child protection is thorough and scrupulously recorded. The school enjoys a helpful, supportive relationship with local agencies and works effectively with them.
- 4.9 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are carefully attended to and include provision for pupils who are ill or injured. The sites are extremely well maintained to provide an environment that is attractive and bright. There is a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND and individual pupils' needs are carefully considered.
- 4.10 The school encourages the pupils to maintain healthy lifestyles. They are taught the value of exercise and encouraged to participate fully in what the school has to offer. The school provides nutritious food for the pupils but their choices are not monitored to ensure that they are healthy and well balanced.
- 4.11 The admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and correctly stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The governance of the school is outstanding. The GDST monitors the success of the school annually, evaluating its performance, including academic and welfare provision. It provides a wealth of financial, legal, educational, ICT and estates expertise and support for the school. The school leadership is able to contact the trust at any time to draw on this assistance and there is a link member of council with the school. The trust provides opportunities for continuing professional development to all staff.
- 5.2 Both the trust and the SGB plan for the future of the school. The SGB discusses the strategic plan with the school's leadership and it is then taken forward to the trust to be approved. There are excellent links between the chair of the SGB and the GDST. She visits the trust several times a year for discussion and training, and appreciates the chance to draw on its expertise. The school leadership reports fully to the SGB at termly meetings, and informal meetings also take place. The SGB provides active support to the school, both by attending events and through involvement in projects such as the refurbishment of the sixth-form centre. Members of staff give presentations to the SGB and the new head girls are introduced to the group annually, as are new staff. There is a stimulating exchange of ideas between the head and the SGB, as well as more formal systems of review.
- 5.3 The GDST ensures that the school is able to meet its aims through the provision of appropriate resources and facilities. It responded fully to the recommendation in the previous inspection report to improve the junior school library. It is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities with regard to child protection, welfare, health and safety.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management in the school is outstanding. The leadership shows particular strength in self-evaluation and in preparation for change where it is perceived to bring improvement. For example, the structure of management is currently undergoing change to give higher prominence to the role of head of year, to have oversight of the pupils' development, both academic and social, thus working towards the school's aim to take an innovative approach to pupils' development. As yet, the systems are in transition and cannot be fully evaluated, but the school is building on the excellent pupil development identified at the previous inspection. The leadership provides clear educational direction for the school and sets priorities that are achieved. It is a strength of the school that all staff share the vision identified by leadership and they contribute fully to achievement of the school's aims.
- 5.5 The leadership is most effective in discharging its duties for implementing policies and the safeguarding of pupils. Its arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, volunteers, supply staff and governors are thorough and records are extremely well maintained. Leadership is successful in appointing high quality staff and in ensuring that they are suitably trained for their roles in meeting the needs of all pupils, safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The SLT is diligent in identifying training needs, both for the whole staff and for individuals, and in meeting those needs. A well-structured appraisal system contributes successfully to continuing professional development.

- 5.6 In the junior school new leadership has identified educational priorities and a development plan shows how those priorities are to be met. The previous inspection report identified a need for subject co-ordinators to be appointed, however the school has firm plans to appoint co-ordinators. Library provision and timetable anomalies have been addressed.
- 5.7 Heads of year and heads of department understand their responsibilities clearly and excellent communication between them ensures that the needs of pupils are well served. In the previous inspection report, development planning was noted as an area for improvement. At every level of management, this is now well established and accords with the school's strategic plan. Electronic systems are extremely well used to support both academic and administrative management. In pre-inspection questionnaires, pupils and their parents expressed very positive attitudes towards the leadership and management of the school.

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

- 5.8 Links between the school and parents are outstanding. These links provide both strong support and many varied opportunities for the pupils. Those parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire were extremely happy with their children's progress and the worthwhile attitudes the school promotes.
- 5.9 Parents have a wealth of opportunity to become involved in school life, including sports fixtures and educational trips. Parents support the school by conducting interviews with sixth formers, providing work experience placements for pupils and giving careers talks. In order to encourage parents to be active partners in their children's education, the school invites them to attend thinking skills workshops. The Parents' and Staff Association plays a significant role by raising a considerable sum of money in support of the school, for example to purchase a minibus, and organising social events.
- 5.10 Parents of current and prospective pupils are provided with the required information about the school. Parents of current pupils appreciate the magazine, newsletters, information evenings and related booklets. Access to the school's website and the parents' portal furnishes them with further information about their children's progress and staff contact details. Currently, parents of those in Years 7 and 8 can access pupils' progress reports through the portal and the school is intending to extend this to the other year groups. Day-to-day communication is maintained through pupil planners, and by telephone or email.
- 5.11 In the senior school, parents are provided with full, detailed progress reports once a year. In other terms they receive interim grade cards or attend parents' evenings. Reports and grade cards provide performance data from which pupils, with staff guidance, set targets for improvement. In the junior school, parents receive one full report and attend two parents' evenings a year.
- 5.12 The school has a complaints policy that complies with regulatory requirements. It seeks to resolve issues at an early stage and handles the concerns of parents with due care and sensitivity, aided by robust procedures. Parental concerns were expressed in the pre-inspection questionnaires regarding extra-curricular activities, which inspectors found to be uneven in the junior school. In the senior school, inspectors found these to be plentiful, varied and extremely worthwhile educationally.

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 in meeting the needs of all children is outstanding. The children all make excellent progress in relation to their starting points and abilities. The excellent relationships between staff and children, and the emphasis on independent learning ensure that the setting provides a stimulating and secure environment and instil a positive attitude to learning. Planning and formal systems to monitor and evaluate the provision are a particular strength.

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

- 6.2 The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding. A notable strength is the excellent balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities. Careful, regular observations by all supporting adults identify the children's development needs. Effective implementation of policies and procedures ensures that all children are safeguarded, equality is promoted and diversity is respected. Enthusiastic staff work well as a team. Regular training, self-evaluation and appraisal take place. Risk assessments ensure that buildings and equipment are safe. Partnership with parents is strong and staff effectively involve them in their children's learning, both daily and with termly consultation meetings. Parents attend an induction session and a reading workshop. A weekly newsletter informs them of events, the week's learning objectives and how they can support their children at home. Parents are very appreciative of the setting. Links are made with the wider community and with the local authority, as well as the GDST for guidance.

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

- 6.3 The quality of the provision is outstanding and it supports learning and development extremely well in all six areas. The classrooms are bright and attractive, with many displays of recent work. The timetable is presented pictorially and discussed daily. The curriculum is enriched with specialist lessons in music, games and French. After-school activities are available. The outdoor playground area has been refurbished to include many new resources that encourage tactile, independent and purposeful learning. The quality of the staff's use of questioning develops children's critical thinking and listening skills. Through topic work the children learn about themselves and their surroundings. Guidelines are sent to parents on healthy snacks, and a nutritious lunch is served from the senior school, although little guidance is given to the children about sensible choices and managing their food. Links with other parts of the school are very good. Before moving up, classes experience a taster session with their new teacher and older pupils help them to feel at home.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. They concentrate well and make excellent progress. Almost all children meet and sometimes exceed the Early Learning Goals. They demonstrate a progressive understanding of phonics, can use ICT appropriately and have an understanding of the numbers one to ten. They also have a good knowledge of how to recognise sequence patterns and shapes. Their excellent relationships with adults enable them to respond positively to all that is on offer. They are polite and friendly to their class mates. Children understand how to stay safe, responding readily to adult guidance. Visits are made from people who serve the community, such as the police. Children are confident to approach staff and talk to them about what they have done and are doing at home. They are being well prepared for the next stage of their education and all enjoy coming to school.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the chair of governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

Mrs Deborah Forbes	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Sue Butcher	Director of Sport, IAPS school
Miss Vivienne Davis	Headmistress, GSA school
Mr Richard James	Vice Principal (Academic), HMC school
Mrs Nicola Matthews	Headmistress, GSA school
Mrs Stephanie Piper	Headteacher, IAPS school
Mrs Clare Trelfa	Deputy Head, GSA school
Mrs Deborah Buckenham	Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector