



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE BEACON SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Beacon School

Full Name of School	The Beacon School
DfE Number	825/6029
Registered Charity Number	309911
Address	The Beacon School Amersham Road Chesham Bois Amersham Buckinghamshire HP6 5PF
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Headmaster	Mr Paul Brewster
Chair of Governors	Mr Ian Plaistowe
Age Range	3 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	470
Gender of Pupils	Boys
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 59 11-13: 78 5-11: 333
Head of EYFS Setting	Miss Katy Morgan
EYFS Gender	Boys
Inspection dates	20th September 2011 to 21st September 2011 17th October 2011 to 19th October 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 The Beacon is a day school for boys from the age of three to thirteen, set in Chesham Bois on the edge of Amersham. Founded in 1933, it acquired a neighbouring farm in the 1950s. Timbered barns still form part of the accommodation. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) comprising Nursery and Reception classes is an integral part of Lower School. Middle School comprises Years 3 and 4 and Upper School Years 5 to 8. The school became an educational trust in 1972 and is overseen by a governing body. Since the previous inspection, extensive building development has taken place to provide a range of new facilities and the school has devised its 'Beacon Certificate of Achievement', which seeks to provide a more challenging and relevant curriculum.
- 1.2 The school seeks to inspire boys to achieve their best within a happy, safe and stimulating environment. In fostering lifelong thinking, learning and communication skills to enable boys to work independently and as part of a team, it aims to promote high standards of academic achievement and nurture talent in art, drama, music, sport and technology. It seeks to enable boys to develop social and emotional skills, believe in themselves, show consideration for others and value diversity.
- 1.3 Entry to the Lower School is non-selective. Admission at Year 3 provides in equal measure for pupils joining from the maintained and independent sectors. Roughly a third leave at the end of Year 6 to go to local grammar schools. Pupils also join the school at Year 7. Those in Years 7 and 8 continue their education in order to gain admittance to a broad range of senior independent schools, some achieving scholarships. Results in standardised tests in mathematics, reading and spelling indicate that the ability profile of the school is above the national average. Around a third have ability that is far above the national average.
- 1.4 At the time of inspection there were 470 pupils on roll, 131 in Lower School, 193 in Middle School and 146 in Upper School. Of the 59 children in the EYFS, the 21 in Nursery attend part time. Pupils are mainly of British origin, and most families have professional or management backgrounds and live within a few miles of the school. Twelve have English as an additional language (EAL). Their understanding of English is deemed sufficient for them not to receive specialist support from the school. The school has identified 34 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), who receive specialist learning support from the school. A further 41, identified as having mild difficulties, have been placed on a monitoring list. There are no pupils with a statement of special educational needs.
- 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 Pupils' academic achievements and attitudes are excellent, as a consequence of a broad and balanced curriculum, which enables them to reason, evaluate and extend their learning and skills in information and communication technology (ICT), sport, music and drama. Success in gaining entry and scholarships to first choice senior schools attests to high achievement. Curricular and extra-curricular provision are excellent. The 'Beacon Certificate of Achievement' (BCA) greatly enriches the pupils' experience. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is currently uneven, resulting in a shortfall in pupils' experience in some year groups. The curriculum provides effectively for pupils with individual needs. The programme of clubs and activities is extensive and enriching. Good teaching promotes high standards. In the best lessons, it is inspiring and imaginative. Teaching makes good use of ICT. However, the quality of planning, marking and report writing is inconsistent. Assessment is thorough and informative in Years 7 and 8.
- 2.2 Personal development is excellent throughout the school. Relationships of trust and mutual appreciation are strong. Pupils are open, cheerful and courteous, and take pride in their achievements. They are confident and have a strong sense of self-esteem. Pupils are well mannered and tolerant. They treat each other and adults with great respect. Their cultural awareness is strongly developed. Welfare, health and safety and pastoral care are excellent. The sense of community is extremely positive. The school has effective procedures to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying. Safeguarding arrangements are thorough. Risk assessments are detailed. The school makes excellent provision for pupils who are ill or have accidents and those with SEND. Pupils have a clear understanding of keeping healthy and healthy eating.
- 2.3 Governance is good, benefits from a broad range of experience and supports the school strongly. Governors monitor the school carefully, undertake regular training and fulfil their responsibilities for safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. A designated child protection governor undertakes an annual review of safeguarding procedures. Leadership and management are good, with some excellent aspects. Recommendations made at the previous inspection have been addressed. The school is led with vision, commitment and energy and is very well supported by an effective and recently remodelled leadership team. However, the monitoring of teaching is not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency in planning, marking and report writing. Links between the school and its parents are excellent. The school maintains varied channels of communication and encourages parents to liaise closely with teaching staff and play a part in the education of their children. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire were highly supportive of the school.

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) Recommendation(s) for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

1. Through more rigorous academic monitoring, ensure consistent quality in marking and report writing, including reference to national norms and clear indications of next steps for improvement.
2. Develop consistency in the quality of classroom planning and its execution, to provide better for individual needs and ensure equality of experience between parallel classes.
3. Develop the PSHE programme to provide more even provision between year groups and embrace the whole curriculum, assemblies and broader aspects of school life.
4. Devise an EYFS development plan so that the future direction of the setting is clearly set out.

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 is excellent and has improved since the previous inspection. During their time at the school, pupils become increasingly confident in their individual abilities and make great strides in their academic progress. This reflects the school's aims to promote high standards of academic achievement and for the pupils to develop social and emotional skills and believe in themselves. Pupils of all ages are particularly keen to learn, clearly enjoy what they do, both in lessons and in other activities, and commit themselves to producing work of the highest standards.
- 3.2 Pupils are articulate, express themselves clearly in both oral and written tasks, and listen carefully to their teachers and to one another. They work well, both independently and collaboratively, and apply their excellent language, mathematical and scientific skills with confidence across all areas of the curriculum. Pupils have strong evaluative and reasoning skills, which are particularly evident in their ability to write discursive essays in religious studies. They have a strong grasp of mathematics, where their progress is positively facilitated by grouping by ability higher up the school. Well-honed expertise in ICT is applied successfully, both in the subject itself and across the curriculum. Improvements in computer facilities have enabled pupils to become particularly adept at using ICT to enliven the presentation of their work and as a research tool to support their learning.
- 3.3 Pupils perform outstandingly well across the school in a range of academic and non-academic activities, including music, sport, art, drama and public speaking. They compete regularly in mathematics challenges and a place was gained in the top three of the Junior Olympiad from 2008 to 2010. A large number of pupils have been successful in graded music exams and places have been gained in national choirs, orchestras and bands. Scholarships to senior schools include academic, drama and sports awards. The school achieves outstanding success in drama exams, and high levels of distinctions in public speaking examinations. Pupils have gone on to national success at Under 11 cross country, they have represented the Prep School Barbarians Under 11 Representative Team and have achieved county level cricket, hockey, golf, badminton and swimming representative honours.
- 3.4 Attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average but, on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. They follow a broad and demanding curriculum and a high proportion of leavers, both at the age of eleven and thirteen, secure a place at their first choice selective senior school. Inspection evidence confirms the high levels of attainment. Throughout the school, pupils' progress is excellent in relation to those of similar above average ability. This can be seen in the school's nationally standardised assessment data and arises from the excellent pastoral support and understanding which reinforces the good teaching. Records maintained by the learning support department show that pupils with SEND also make significant progress. Clubs to provide extra challenge to the most able and the personal attention given to them by dedicated staff ensure that these pupils are suitably challenged and make excellent progress.
- 3.5 Pupils' success in academic work and other areas of the curriculum owes much to their excellent, positive attitudes to their work. They take pride both in their own

achievements and the successes of others. They sustain high levels of concentration and motivation during lessons, making the most of the challenges set.

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

- 3.6 Curricular and extra-curricular provision are excellent and have improved since the previous inspection, strongly supporting pupils' achievements, and meeting the school's aims to nurture talent in art, drama, music, sport and technology. High quality resources ensure that the school is able to fulfil its aim of inspiring pupils to achieve their best. The curriculum is suitable for all ages and abilities, and prepares pupils well for the next stage of their education. They learn effectively within a supportive environment, characterised by inclusive teaching of a broad and balanced range of subjects. Pupils greatly enjoy the subjects they study, which cover all requisite areas of learning.
- 3.7 The pupils' excellent educational experience clearly promotes their positive attitudes, motivation and self-esteem, and high standards of achievement. The BCA, a programme of study for Years 7 and 8, greatly enriches the pupils' educational experience and provides a challenging and relevant curriculum, investigative and independent learning and clear and rigorous assessment.
- 3.8 Deficiencies in French and Latin provision, identified at the previous inspection have been resolved; the curriculum is now balanced, providing an excellent breadth of subjects. Pupils also benefit from new facilities and buildings which enable additions to the curriculum, such as international studies and food technology. A programme of PSHE across the school reflects the school's aims and ethos. However, unevenness in the way it is taught and a lack of coherence in its provision across the curriculum and in other areas of school life, such as assemblies, result in a shortfall in pupils' experience in some year groups.
- 3.9 The school provides effectively for pupils who have SEND or EAL. When appropriate, programmes of study are adapted to meet their needs. Detailed individual education plans strongly support subject teachers in understanding and addressing pupils' specific needs. The use of this information is good overall and, in the best lessons, these pupils are provided with different tasks according to their ability and individual needs. Further challenge for the most able, through the extra-curricular programme, meets their needs extremely well in academic, creative and sporting areas of school life. The extensive provision of ICT across the site supports the curriculum strongly and its use is now fully integrated into many subjects.
- 3.10 The curriculum is enriched by a programme of educational visits, both day and residential. These extend the pupils' learning and their independence and they speak about them enthusiastically. The Year 7 residential trip to France, for example, enriches their experiences of life and culture in other countries.
- 3.11 Across the three sections of the school, pupils benefit from the excellent extra-curricular provision. From Lower School onwards, pupils opt to take part in a wide range of clubs and activities outside the taught curriculum. These provide them with a broad range of different learning experiences. Football coaching with a local professional club, judo and drama, for example, provide challenge and stimulation. Beacon Voices and other school choirs sing at public events. Orchestral groups and ensembles offer musicians with a range of abilities and experience the chance to perform with others.

- 3.12 Pupils benefit from links with the local and wider community. Through a connection with a school in Kenya, they learn about the lives of those less fortunate than themselves and this helps them put their own lives into perspective. Parents and friends are invited into the school to speak about their work, faith or culture, helping pupils to understand life outside school.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.13 The quality of teaching is good, promoting high standards and fulfilling the principal aim of the school to inspire pupils to achieve their best within a happy, safe and stimulating environment. In the best lessons teaching is stimulating, inspiring and imaginative, resulting in enthusiastic and responsive pupils. Less successful lessons were characterised by shortcomings in planning and limitations in the teaching. Teaching ensured that the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were excellent at all times.
- 3.14 Teaching enables pupils of all abilities to make progress. It promotes exploration and independent learning, and gives them confidence in their abilities. Teaching encourages pupils to work independently and in co-operation with others. In a Lower School design technology lesson, for example, pupils investigated the stability of bridge design by using straws to create their own bridges. Teaching fosters thinking and reasoning skills, and allows the pupils to develop effectively their written and oral communication. In the better lessons good pace, the use of humour, and relevant and interesting material captured the pupils' imagination. Pupils studying Hiawatha, for example, made very effective use of tablet computers and were completely absorbed by their tasks.
- 3.15 Teaching shows a good understanding of the pupils' needs, successfully creating a supportive and challenging environment in which pupils learn rapidly. A skilfully taught games lesson with a younger age group ensured that they all mastered difficult basic techniques in rugby. Teaching draws well on thorough subject knowledge, which ensures that learning is enhanced. Relationships between teachers, support staff and the pupils are excellent and a warm atmosphere is evident in lessons. Topics are often pertinently linked with relevant environmental, ethical and social issues. In discussion with inspectors, pupils reported that they appreciate the help their teachers give them, particularly before school and during breaks, and that they feel confident in their learning.
- 3.16 Assessment systems are thorough in Years 7 and 8 and work well; they are less cohesive and informative in other year groups. Information gained from learning support department assessments is mostly used effectively. Marking is thorough, punctual and positive in some subjects and much less so in others. The best marking gives targets for improvement but in some subjects and year groups, a lack of regularity and consistency results in insufficient information for the pupils. In a number of lessons, poor planning resulted in lower levels of engagement, lack of direction given to support staff and insufficient provision for different needs, limiting the pupils' learning. In a small number of year groups shortfalls in collaborative planning and its execution result in inequalities of experience between pupils in parallel classes. Teaching is enhanced by the skilful use of excellent resources; ICT is an integral part of the teaching in many lessons, support staff are often deployed very effectively and the well-equipped libraries are a valuable resource.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent throughout the school. It fulfils the school's aims in enabling pupils to develop social and emotional skills, believe in themselves, show consideration for others and value diversity, and has improved since the previous inspection. Relationships of trust and mutual respect are strong. Pupils are open, cheerful and courteous, and take pride in their achievements. They enjoy one another's company and welcome visitors. They thrive in a positive and happy atmosphere with a strong sense of purpose and enthusiasm. They regard each other and their teachers as friends, and feel valued as individuals.
- 4.2 The pupils' excellent spiritual development is evident in many facets of their school life. They are confident and have a strong sense of self-esteem, due to the recognition they receive for their achievements in both class and assemblies. They are kind and considerate, and value their peers. The school's strong Christian foundation gives pupils an excellent spiritual awareness, and experience of other world religions, for example in the celebration of Diwali, is frequent, valued and broadens their understanding. In assembly they listen attentively, say prayers purposefully and engage energetically in hymn singing. They benefit from a scheme of work in PSHE which is satisfactory overall and, appropriate to their age group, though varies in quality between age groups. In the best lessons purposeful teaching engages them keenly, contributing strongly to their personal development.
- 4.3 The quality of the pupils' moral awareness is excellent. The example set by the staff gives them a strong sense of right and wrong. They understand that fairness is important if a community is to function harmoniously. Good manners are the norm and pupils treat each other and adults with great respect. They have an excellent understanding of those who are less fortunate than themselves and engage actively and generously in charity fundraising, often using their own initiative. The school's 'Golden Rules' ensure high levels of behaviour.
- 4.4 From the earliest age pupils show considerable social awareness and outstanding social skills. In the many clubs and the eco committee, they play and work well together. Social skills are extended through participation in dramatic productions, concerts and sports teams, and through trips and residential visits in this country and abroad. The three age-related school councils are more active and focused than at the previous inspection and now contribute more regularly to the school's decision making, with proposals being discussed with the headmaster and bursar each term. Members, elected by their peers, enjoy experiencing democracy in practice, and pupils are active in suggesting ways to improve the school. They feel that their voice is heard. Pupils' social skills develop strongly through their enjoyment of the collaborative use of a wide variety of equipment at playtimes. They thrive on developing leadership skills through a range of positions of responsibility in their final year.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural awareness is highly developed through literature, art and music, and participation in many dramatic and musical events. Horizons are further challenged through a wide range of visits and visitors. They develop a deep understanding and appreciation of other cultures through, for example, history, geography, RE and international studies.

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

- 4.6 The school's arrangements for the pupils' welfare, health and safety are excellent, including in the EYFS, and have been strengthened since the previous inspection, reflecting the school's aim to enable pupils to develop social and emotional skills within a happy, safe and stimulating environment. Pastoral care is a clear strength, with staff providing secure support and guidance. It is closely monitored by the school's leadership team, who ensure the successful gathering and sharing of pastoral information within the school and with parents. The school's counselling service enables the pupils to understand difficult situations better, and provides effective communication with staff, parents and outside agencies. In the pre-inspection questionnaires and the interviews with inspectors, pupils expressed confidence that they have someone to turn to in case of concern.
- 4.7 Extremely positive relationships between staff and pupils provide a strong foundation for the work of the school. Excellent relationships between pupils, both within and between age groups, are also a key factor in a cohesive school community. The school has developed effective procedures to promote good behaviour, prevent bullying and address any instances which occur, all closely monitored by the governors through a report from the pastoral team. The Lower School's "three point plan" to resolve disagreement is particularly successful in enabling pupils to settle their differences independently, rather than calling for a teacher's arbitration as a first resort.
- 4.8 Safeguarding arrangements are thorough and include appropriate measures to ensure that staff are duly checked and suitable to work with children. All staff have undertaken appropriate child protection training and key staff are trained in safer recruitment. Detailed risk assessments are a strong feature of school life. They are carefully prepared and reviewed for both on-site and off-site activities, ensuring that pupils enjoy a safe environment. Recent measures to remove vehicle traffic from the school site have resulted in increased safety and provided additional recreational space. The school's measures to reduce risk from fire and other hazards are very thorough. Equipment is tested at appropriate intervals and regular evacuation drills are evaluated carefully.
- 4.9 The school makes excellent provision for pupils who are ill or have accidents and good provision for those with SEND. Cover is provided at all times by at least one of two qualified matrons. The senior matron is also a qualified nurse and members of staff, both teaching and non-teaching, hold current first aid or paediatric first aid qualifications. Incidents are correctly recorded and carefully reviewed to identify potential concerns. Staff ensure that parents are appropriately informed. The school has a thorough and well-prepared plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND. The pupils' extensive participation in games and physical education ensures a keen sense of health and fitness and, through various aspects of the curriculum, notably science and food technology, they gain a clear understanding of keeping healthy and healthy eating. Admission and attendance registers are carefully maintained and meet requirements.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is good and aids the school strongly in the fulfilment of its aims. The governing body has recently undergone a number of changes in personnel and, consequently, has identified a need to strengthen its understanding of the roles of leaders and governors within the school. New governors have brought to the board a wide range of expertise and additional experience in key areas and it is well placed to support and challenge the school's leadership in development and improvement. The allocation to individual governors of specific areas of responsibility, including child protection, Early Years and health and safety, and their facility to report to the board ensure that the governing body has a clear oversight of the life of the school.
- 5.2 Three governors' committees, including an education committee which receives presentations from members of staff about their spheres of responsibility, monitor the school carefully and report to the full board, ensuring that governors have a well-informed insight. Governors review regular reports from the headmaster and bursar, as well as an annual welfare and child protection report. Feedback from governors who, in termly rotation, spend a day in school, adds depth to the governors' understanding of the school, which is further supplemented by their attendance at major school events.
- 5.3 The governing body is successful in discharging its responsibilities for child protection, welfare, health and safety. A designated child protection governor is a regular visitor to the school, liaising with key staff and undertaking an annual review of child protection arrangements. Policies are reviewed on a rotational basis. Governors' professional development includes an induction programme, and has recently covered training in safer recruitment, child protection and sustainable learning.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Leadership and management of the school are good. Some aspects are excellent. This maintains a similar standard to the previous inspection and meets the school's aims to promote high standards of academic achievement and nurture talent in art drama, music, sport and technology. The school is led with vision, commitment and energy, very well supported by an effective and recently remodelled leadership team. Together they are committed to improving the quality in teaching and learning and keeping the fulfilment of the school's aims firmly in focus. Structures and routines are clear, comprehensive and well communicated. The school leadership team, along with newly formed supporting committees, works well together and has made great strides forward in identifying correctly, and addressing perceptively, the school's areas for development. The team has an excellent understanding of how to drive the school forward in the future. The strengths in leadership are reflected in high academic standards and outstanding personal development as well as the happy and friendly ethos that pervades the school.
- 5.5 A new, coherent development plan has recently been agreed with governors and sets out a clarity of vision that will benefit the whole community. The leadership is beginning to reinforce this with a discrete development plan for the EYFS. Communication and consultation are purposeful, informative and collaborative. The ethos and direction of the school are clearly set by the leadership team and staff

work hard to maintain these principles in the life of the school. Procedures and policies throughout the school are clear and appropriately detailed and are well implemented by most staff. They contribute well to the smooth and safe running of daily school life. Following a recommendation at the previous inspection, the classroom workload of subject heads of department has been recently reduced to ensure they have time to carry out their functions as subject leaders and managers. However, the monitoring of teaching is not yet sufficiently rigorous to ensure consistency in planning, marking and report writing.

- 5.6 The deployment of teaching, support and administrative staff is excellent. In response to a recommendation from the previous inspection, many more full time teaching assistants have been appointed, resulting in a strong benefit for the pupils' learning and welfare. Staff are well qualified and all are trained in child protection, welfare, health and safety. The school has thorough procedures for checking their suitability on appointment. They make a good and in many cases excellent contribution to pupils' learning and welfare, particularly for those pupils requiring additional support. In further response to a recommendation from the previous inspection, the staff training budget has recently been increased significantly and linked to a new, more robust and simpler appraisal system, currently in its first cycle.

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

- 5.7 Links between the school and its parents are excellent and strongly support the school in the fulfilment of its aims. They have improved since the previous inspection. The school maintains varied channels of communication and actively encourages parents to liaise closely with teaching staff and to play a part in the education of their children.
- 5.8 In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires, parents indicated that they are highly supportive of the school and happy with the education their children receive. Many consider their children to be fortunate to be at the Beacon. They commented favourably on their children's good progress and the strong support given to them. They also praised the school's pastoral arrangements and its extra-curricular activities, all of which are endorsed by the inspectors.
- 5.9 Parents are able to involve themselves in the life of the school through attendance at formal and informal performances, concerts, parents' evenings, open mornings, sports fixtures and the parents' society. Parents appreciate the facility to contact staff easily, personally or by email, and value the benefits of the school's text messaging service which is used to notify them about any last minute changes to arrangements. The parents' society, besides raising money for the school, involves itself actively in many different ways and contributes in a positive way to the pupils' learning and welfare. For example, it organises recreational activities and helps with the induction of new parents. The school produces an excellent school magazine.
- 5.10 Parents are given detailed information in the form of regular reports regarding their sons' progress, though these lack consistency regarding formative reporting and targets for future improvement. The headmaster and senior staff make themselves readily available so that parents can approach them about any concerns; as a result the vast majority can be dealt with swiftly and informally. The school has a comprehensive complaints policy which meets requirements and is followed appropriately.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding. It meets the needs of all children, ensuring that no-one is disadvantaged. The school's mission to inspire boys to achieve their best within a happy, safe and stimulating environment is met extremely well. A high quality, developmentally appropriate curriculum lays sure foundations for learning. Children make notable progress and outcomes are consistently good. Well-qualified, knowledgeable and hardworking staff place considerable emphasis on the children's individual learning patterns and requirements, and demonstrate a commitment to sustaining the current high standards. Improvements since the last inspection include the introduction of staff appraisal and greater provision for independent learning.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are outstanding, benefiting from a wealth of knowledge and experience. Through detailed self-evaluation, the new leadership has an excellent understanding of the setting's strengths and areas for development, though this has not yet been formalised into an EYFS development plan, detailing clear direction for the setting. Good practice is shared and reviewed in weekly staff meetings, ensuring that children's needs are met. Exemplary attention to detail in comprehensive documentation safeguards each child, promotes equality and eliminates discrimination. Child protection is overseen by staff with appropriate training and qualifications. All staff have been suitably checked. Safe practices and the implementation of up-to-date risk assessments, including those for outings, ensure that children are secure. A wide range of resources is well used. Highly-valued links with external agencies enable staff to extend their skills and understanding. Parents speak extremely positively about the setting, particularly the induction procedures for children and the high quality of communication with the school.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. Rigorous assessment through observation informs the planning of next steps. Extremely good coverage of the six areas of learning provides stimulating and challenging activities, enhanced by specialist teaching in PE, ICT and music and access to the well-resourced Lower School library. A balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities ensures successful independent learning. Challenging questioning is a strong feature of the teaching and staff are quick to see where support is needed. Provision for the children's welfare is exemplary. Good health and well-being are emphasised. The behaviour policy is very well implemented. Adults prepare children particularly well for a seamless transition to the next stage of their education.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for most children are good and, in some cases, outstanding. Children's learning and achievement are consistently good, sometimes excellent, though the most able are not always fully extended. Children are observant and inquisitive and develop their thinking skills. By the end of the EYFS most children achieve or exceed the early learning goals in all six areas of learning; Reception children use their knowledge of letters, sounds and words when reading and writing independently and use and apply numbers up to, and sometimes well beyond twenty. By the end of Nursery many children can hear and say sounds in words and count reliably to ten. Children learn their new routines and behavioural expectations well and respond positively to praise and encouragement from strong adult role models. Children feel secure and build positive relationships with their key person and each other. They develop a keen awareness of personal safety. An appropriate understanding of health and hygiene was clear in their hand-washing routines, enjoyment of physical activities and recognition of the importance of exercise.

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 members of staff and with the chairman and other members of the governing body, 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 Christopher Sanderson

Reporting Inspector

Mr Nathan Close

Deputy Head, IAPS School

Mr John Shackleton

Head, IAPS School

Mrs Penny Oates

Early Years Co-ordinating Inspector