



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BRIGIDINE SCHOOL, WINDSOR

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Brigidine School, Windsor

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|---------------------------|---|-----|--------|-----|
| Full Name of School | Brigidine School, Windsor | | | |
| DfE Number | 868/6011 | | | |
| EYFS Number | EY381885 | | | |
| Registered Charity Number | 1104042 | | | |
| Address | Brigidine School Kings Road Windsor Berkshire SL4 2AX | | | |
| Telephone Number | 01753 863779 | | | |
| Fax Number | 01753 850278 | | | |
| Email Address | mail@brigidine.org.uk | | | |
| Headmistress | Mrs Elizabeth Robinson | | | |
| Chair of Governors | Mr Michael Wyld | | | |
| Age Range | 2 to 18 | | | |
| Total Number of Pupils | 250 | | | |
| Gender of Pupils | Girls | | | |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): | 6 | 5-11: | 49 |
| | 3-5 (EYFS): | 29 | 11-18: | 166 |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: | 250 | | |
| Head of EYFS Setting | Mrs Thalia Milton | | | |
| EYFS Gender | Mixed | | | |
| Inspection dates | 5th Oct 2010 to 6th Oct 2010 | | | |
| | 1st Nov 2010 to 3rd Nov 2010 | | | |

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The previous ISI inspection was in November 2004.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 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 Brigidine School aims to provide inclusive education, personalised to meet individual needs in a safe, happy and culturally diverse environment in which each pupil achieves their best and can contribute positively to the community. The school is a charity governed by its trustees.
- 1.2 Founded in 1948 as a Catholic girls' school by sisters of the Order of St Brigid, Brigidine is now a day school for 250 pupils aged from two to eighteen years, including boys to age seven, under lay management and welcoming pupils of all faiths and abilities. Located in the historic town of Windsor, it occupies a self-contained site on the edge of Windsor Great Park. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) setting is housed on the main school site with its own outside play area.
- 1.3 Since the last inspection, the EYFS provision has been extended to include children from the age of two and the school's transfer to lay leadership has been completed. The present headmistress was appointed in 2008.
- 1.4 Entry to the school normally follows a 'taster' visit, reports from previous schools and, for candidates for Year 7 and above, tests to assess ability to benefit from the education provided. Standardised tests indicate that the ability profile in the junior school is broadly in line with the national average, and that in the senior school up to GCSE it is above the national average. GCSE results indicate that the ability profile of sixth-form pupils is broadly in line with that of sixth-form pupils nationally. The range of pupils' abilities is wide throughout the school.
- 1.5 About a quarter of the pupils are from Roman Catholic families. Almost all pupils live within 15 miles of the school. A quarter of the pupils are from minority ethnic groups, including one in six from Asian families. About a third of the pupils in the senior school receive bursaries or scholarships, increasing access to the school.
- 1.6 No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. The school has identified 48 pupils who have learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), of whom 8 receive specialist additional tuition. Twenty pupils do not have English as their first language. One pupil receives specialist help with English; the remainder are supported in class.
- 1.7 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 throughout the school achieve well in relation to their abilities. In line with the school's aims, the teaching and the curriculum are skilfully personalised by the staff to match girls' individual needs and interests. Strong and effective teaching, which is often outstanding, enables pupils of all abilities to make good progress. The excellent and highly supportive relationships between pupils and staff throughout the school, based on the school motto of *Fortiter et Suaviter* (Strength and Gentleness), are highly conducive to good learning and high standards of behaviour. Throughout the school pupils' attitudes to their learning are excellent. The personal development of pupils is outstanding, resulting in confident, articulate, well-rounded young people with an acute sense of right and wrong, a well-developed tolerance for the cultures and beliefs of others and strong spiritual awareness. The pastoral care and guidance provided are excellent throughout the school. Standards achieved in some aspects of the extra-curricular programme are of high quality, most notably in the performing arts, although the programme is of limited scope, particularly in the provision made for the sporting needs of senior girls.
- 2.2 The governance and management of the school are effective, and ensure that the ethos of the school is clear and that the values and attitudes intrinsic to the school's foundation permeate every aspect of its life. The pupils are enthusiastic about and proud of their school and say that they like being there. The school generally takes good care to ensure the welfare, health and safety of the pupils, and responded rapidly to rectify deficiencies in the recruitment procedures identified during the first inspection visit and to ensure that the governors have rigorously reviewed the child protection policy and procedures.
- 2.3 Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire were strongly supportive of the school, rating most positively the attitudes and values promoted by the school. Rated least positively was encouragement for parents to be involved in the life of the school, although inspection evidence indicates that opportunities for involvement are appropriate. The school has addressed all the recommendations of the previous inspection and the leadership and management of the school, the implementation of policies, the use of assessment to track and promote achievement and the library have all been significantly improved.

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:

- ensure that the governing body undertakes an annual review of the school's child protection policies and procedures, and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged [Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety];
- if any person appointed as a member of staff starts work before the receipt of a Criminal Records Bureau certificate, conduct a check that they have not been barred from working with children before they commence their duties [Part 4, paragraph 19.(2)(a), under Suitability of staff and proprietors and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety];
- conduct such additional checks as are considered necessary to establish their suitability on any person appointed as a member of staff who has lived or worked abroad [Part 4, paragraph 19.(2)(d), under Suitability of staff and proprietors and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety];
- require proof of the identity of any person who is offered for supply by an employment agency before they begin work at the school [Part 4, paragraph 20.(2)(c), under Suitability of staff and proprietors and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraph 7(a) and (b), under Welfare, health and safety].

2.5 At the time of the final team visit, the school had rectified all of the above shortcomings, as noted in the text of the report.

2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Extend the range of the programme of extra-curricular activities.
2. Provide more opportunities for senior girls to participate in sport and physical activity, and improve the changing facilities needed to support such activities.
3. Widen the range of experience represented on the governing body.
4. In the EYFS, improve access to outdoor learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 Pupils at Brigidine School receive a good quality education, personalised to match their individual interests and needs in line with the school's aims to value and nurture the uniqueness and development of each pupil. Pupils of all abilities are enabled to make good progress and to achieve well in relation to their abilities. Pupils in the junior school rapidly acquire the literacy and numeracy skills needed to support their further progress and acquisition of knowledge. They show good levels of knowledge and understanding both in class and in their books. Increasingly they are articulate and able to think both logically and creatively. Pupils in the senior school listen and read with understanding, are competent in the use of mathematics and information and communications technology (ICT) and are able to work well on their own initiative or in collaboration with others. High standards are achieved in some extra-curricular activities, as, for example, in music, drama, dance and speaking in public, and both a junior school musical and a senior school play (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*) were being rehearsed at the time of the inspection, although the limited scope of the activities available restricts the number of fields in which girls can experience success.
- 3.2 Pupils' attainment in the work seen in lessons and books in the junior school is above national expectations for pupils of their ages, and nationally standardised measures of progress indicate that pupils in the junior school make good progress in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability. The following analysis uses national data for the years 2007 to 2009, the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at GCSE have been above, and at A level have been similar to, the national average for girls in maintained schools. These results indicate that pupils make good progress to GCSE in relation to the average for pupils of similar ability, as is shown by standardised measures of progress, and considering the wide range of abilities in the senior school. The A-level results indicate that sixth-form pupils make progress that is appropriate relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. Performance at both GCSE and A level improved between 2007 and 2009.
- 3.3 Excellent relationships throughout the school promote outstanding attitudes to learning from the pupils. Pupils come to their lessons ready to co-operate and to engage fully in the tasks set. They work well either on their own or in collaboration with others. They listen to each other with respect, and are ready to express their views and to ask questions. They apply themselves well and maintain their concentration, take a pride in their work and are eager to achieve well. Most are capable users of ICT to assist their learning. They participate with enthusiasm in the extra-curricular activities that are on offer. When they have the opportunity to represent a school sports team, they do so with zest.

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

- 3.4 The curriculum throughout the school is well constructed and covers all the required areas of learning. Parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the range of the curriculum. A recent whole-school curriculum review has been conducted, as recommended in the last inspection report. Current provision is largely appropriate and is sufficiently flexible to adapt to individual needs, in line with the school's aim to provide personalised learning. Lesson times are coordinated across the two phases of the school, enabling some staff to teach in both, which enhances continuity of the curriculum.
- 3.5 The curriculum for Years 1 to 6 is wide ranging, enabling pupils to develop appropriate scientific, linguistic and creative skills, as well as those of literacy and numeracy, and the other skills needed at this stage. All pupils have lessons in religious education (RE), in accord with the school's aims. The planning and teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE) are particularly effective at this stage. The curriculum for Years 7 to 11 is similarly well devised, providing a broad and balanced experience. RE is compulsory at GCSE, in line with the school's Catholic foundation. The sixth-form academic curriculum offers a wide range of subjects and, as the timetable is constructed round the pupils' options, a personalised programme for each pupil is possible. At present no provision is made in the curriculum for regular physical exercise for girls in the sixth form. The sixth-form enrichment programme attempts to accommodate the interests of pupils, and provides occasional opportunities for physical activity, but it is largely unchallenging and not all pupils benefit from a fully prepared programme. The programme is also complemented by a life skills course in both Years 12 and 13, but the benefits of the course are limited by an informal approach to its planning and teaching.
- 3.6 Some good extra-curricular activities are provided in both the junior and senior schools. These are particularly evident in the performing arts, with music, drama, dance and speaking in public being strongly represented. The range of the extra-curricular programme in the senior school is not wide and the time available during the school day is short. Many opportunities are provided to take part in trips and visits, including trips abroad and visits to the theatres and museums of London. These opportunities enrich the curriculum for those who participate in them.
- 3.7 Links with the community are good and have positive benefits for those girls who are involved in them. Links with the local parish church are strong and the deacon and his wife are regular visitors to the school. The school works with the East Berkshire Business Partnership to enhance the careers programme in Years 9 and 10. The school choir sings at a variety of local venues. Pupils participating in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme undertake service activities in the community. Co-operation between the junior and senior schools is very positive as older girls work with younger ones to support their literacy skills, so that both age groups benefit.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.8 Strong and effective teaching, which is often outstanding, enables pupils of all ages and abilities to achieve well and to make good progress. Teachers know the pupils well, prepare their lessons carefully and ensure that lessons are suitably adapted to meet the varied needs of individual pupils, in line with the school's stated aim to provide personalised learning.
- 3.9 Teachers in both the junior and the senior school have good subject knowledge and are skilful at varying the activities during each lesson so as to maintain the pupils' interest, as was seen in a Year 12 business studies lesson which involved first playing a business game and then discussing questions displayed on a prepared computer presentation. Expectations of the pupils' co-operation and response are consistently high. Questions are carefully framed so as to match the different understanding of individual pupils. Encouragement and challenge are adroitly interwoven. Lessons are invariably purposeful and well paced. The good rapport between teachers and pupils creates a positive classroom atmosphere and encourages girls to express their views and to offer answers to questions with confidence. Resources are used frequently and well to stimulate learning, and teachers throughout the school make effective use of ICT facilities to enhance their lessons.
- 3.10 The quality of marking throughout the school is good. It is regular, consistent, detailed and frequently supplemented with helpful comment to support further progress. Assessment is used very effectively in the junior school to plan academic provision, using both National Curriculum levels and standardised tests to measure pupils' attainment and progress. Assessment information on each pupil is used to compile an ability profile which follows the pupil through each year group and on to the senior school, providing an important source of continuity between the two phases of the school. Assessment procedures in the senior school have recently been reviewed to improve monitoring and the setting of targets, using standardised test scores. The tracking of an individual pupil's progress is now more effective, in line with a recommendation of the last inspection report. Pupils in Years 10 to 13 are made aware of their strengths and targets for improvement, but this is less evident in Years 7 to 9, when girls are not always made aware of how well they are progressing and the focus is on encouragement.
- 3.11 Learning support in both the junior and senior school is good. The small class sizes allow teachers to provide support effectively in the classroom. For those pupils with particular learning needs, clear individual education plans are in place and regularly monitored. A small number of girls benefit from one-to-one learning support and two teaching assistants support other pupils in lessons, enabling appropriate progress to be made.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The personal development of pupils is excellent and accords fully with the school's aims, as was identified at the last inspection. Pupils' spiritual development is strong. They engage successfully in spiritual reflection, as in a Year 7 RE lesson when they compared how we reveal ourselves to other people with how God reveals Himself to us. Appreciation of the spirituality of non-Christian faiths is often evident, as when Muslim girls in Year 6 talked about their faith. A small oratory is used by pupils who wish to be quiet or to write prayer requests in a communal book. The ethos of the founding order to promote strength through gentleness underlies relationships throughout the school and fosters appreciation of the value of each individual and of the respect due to the whole of creation. Pupils of all ages demonstrate well developed self-esteem and self-awareness. Delight is apparent in such creative pursuits as singing in the chamber choir or in the confident drama and music presented by clearly inspired Year 5 and 6 pupils at an assembly.
- 4.2 Pupils' moral awareness is outstanding. High standards of behaviour and the attitudes and values promoted by the school were two of the aspects rated most highly by parents responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire. Good conduct is accepted as the norm. The hierarchy of school officers acts as role models and, through the mentoring 'buddy' system in both the senior and junior schools, provides additional peer-based support and guidance as a complement to those already stemming from the close relationships with staff. Consideration for others and politeness are noticeable features throughout the school. Pupils engage in a wide range of charitable activities, such as public performances by the choir and extensive fund-raising.
- 4.3 The social development of pupils is excellent. Pupils of all ages are articulate, confident and courteous. They behave in a responsible and mature manner and are excellent ambassadors for the school. Senior school girls know those in the junior school well and foster a strong sense of community in their interactions with them. Pupils from Year 3 upwards participate readily in the school council. Older pupils organise house activities such as competitions and assemblies. Pupils responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire rated highly the encouragement received to be independent.
- 4.4 Pupils' well-developed cultural awareness is apparent from their appreciative approach to the diversity of cultures within the school. Pupils are well informed about world religions through their RE courses. They eagerly engage in such activities as Indian and Brazilian dancing, international cookery and learning to sing in Hebrew. Many pupils participate in the rich range of theatre trips offered, and drama is used routinely by pupils in role plays within lessons, in school plays and assemblies. The quality of music making is high. All pupils from Years 1 to 4 learn the violin and a wide range of other instruments is taught. Senior school pupils were rehearsing a Shakespearean production, whilst pupils in Years 5 and 6 recently studied *Macbeth* within a rich and varied literary course. Pupils have appropriate knowledge about the public institutions of England through their PSHE course and through visits, such as to Parliament or to the Garter ceremony at Windsor Castle, and they have experienced English governmental processes through both the school council and the debating society.

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

- 4.5 Overall, the arrangements to promote the welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good, effective and accord fully with the school's aims. The excellent pastoral care, support and guidance provided for pupils at all stages of the school emanate from the close relationships between the teachers, who know their charges particularly well, and the pupils, and lead to each individual being treated according to their personal needs. Throughout the school, pupils share a strong sense of mutual responsibility for the welfare of the community as a whole. They are confident in approaching and confiding in their teachers, who they recognised in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire as being concerned for them as people. As a pupil attested, "we can talk to teachers ... as the teachers want children to be happy". Mutual respect and consideration underlie the excellent teacher-pupil relationships throughout the school. Pupils appointed to official roles in both phases of the school are encouraged to take on mentoring or supportive responsibilities to other pupils within the school, but the prevailing ethos is for all pupils to be tolerant and supportive of each other's needs.
- 4.6 Pupils appreciate and understand the procedures to promote good behaviour. House point certificates were proudly received in the junior school assembly, but house points were also inspiring responsive behaviour from pupils in a Year 7 history lesson. Golden awards for responsive behaviour and high levels of application are valued, particularly in the junior school. The school has effective procedures for guarding against bullying. Pupils throughout the school report that bullying and harassment are not normally a problem but have confidence in whom to approach should unkindness occur. The PSHE course in the junior school deals effectively with anger management issues. A 'buddying' regime in both phases of the school provides additional support for pupils who may be feeling vulnerable. Pupils in Year 12 are trained to assist them in their role as peer mentors.
- 4.7 The arrangements to safeguard the welfare, health and safety of pupils are generally good and effective, and now have strict regard to official guidance, although some aspects of recruitment procedures and the annual review of the child protection policy have not been sufficiently rigorous in the past. Child protection procedures have been established that are in accordance with locally agreed practice and members of staff have appropriate training, which is regularly updated.
- 4.8 All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards including regular fire drills, a fire risk assessment and appropriate training. Accidents are properly recorded and suitable facilities for those who become ill during the school day are provided. An appropriate disability plan has been devised with the aim of improving educational provision for pupils with disabilities. Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through developing healthy eating habits and taking exercise. Pupils in the junior school spoke supportively of the school meals that are nutritional and provide plenty of choice.
- 4.9 Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is sound, and in many respects good. The governors are highly committed to the school and have a clear understanding of its aims and ethos. They exercise close and effective oversight of the educational standards achieved, of the financial planning and management, and of the provision of suitable resources to support the education provided. They are a small group and the majority have gained much of their experience of educational practice through Brigidine School itself as former teachers, parents or pupils. They are aware of the need to widen the range of experience currently represented in their membership.
- 5.2 The governors have a good knowledge of the workings of the school through their own direct experience of it, through the frequent presence in the school of the chairman and another governor who works as a part-time volunteer in the junior school, and through their contacts with the staff. They are fully involved in planning and have a clear vision for the school's future development. Particularly through their participation in the beginning-of-year staff training days, they have regular opportunities to be known by the staff and to offer the appropriate advice, support, challenge and stimulus that they do.
- 5.3 By the time of the final inspection visit, the governors were fully discharging their responsibilities with respect to child protection, welfare, health and safety. However, they have not been sufficiently aware of what was required of them in this respect, with the result that at the time of the first inspection visit they had not conducted an annual review of the child protection policy, nor had they ensured that all the required recruitment procedures for staff were being rigorously followed. These deficiencies were fully rectified before the final visit and appropriate procedures established to ensure that they will not recur.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 Leadership and management throughout the school are good and have improved markedly. The headmistress and her senior team have worked hard to bring about consistency and quality in many areas of school life, in line with the recommendations of the last inspection report. The senior leadership team established is effective in promoting the aims and ethos of the school, and has a good level of awareness of how policy is being implemented and its effect on the safety and welfare of pupils. Heads of department are efficient managers of their own areas of responsibility, accepting responsibility for the monitoring, encouragement and appraisal of those teaching in their department.
- 5.5 The headmistress and her senior staff provide clear educational direction to ensure continuous school improvement and high expectations at all levels. The quality of teaching and marking is regularly monitored by the senior leadership team, using both lesson observation and book scrutiny. The importance of sharing good practice in teaching and learning is emphasised by, for example, the staff 'triads' established to encourage discussion of personalised teaching approaches. Pupils' personal development is strongly promoted in accordance with the school motto, with respect and courtesy being an expectation throughout the school.

- 5.6 Self-evaluation and development planning at both whole-school and departmental level are thorough and perceptive and, again, have been significantly improved since the last inspection. Heads of department review their departmental plans annually with senior staff.
- 5.7 Appropriate induction procedures have been established for newly qualified teachers and for all other new staff. Sufficient resources are made available to support professional training. Teachers are well supported in both their teaching role and in providing high quality pastoral support. Regular performance review is established practice for both teaching and support staff. A suitable range of non-teaching staff provides good support for the work of the school with cheerful efficiency.
- 5.8 The premises and grounds are well maintained by the bursar and her team. The accommodation is mainly good and appropriate, although space in the sixth-form rooms is restricted, and the facilities for showering after physical exercise are inadequate. Resources are ample and are used widely and well. The library is now well managed with the support of a library committee, and is a pleasant place in which to be. It contains a good stock of fiction but the non-fiction stock is inadequate and does not support independent learning.
- 5.9 Arrangements for checking the suitability of staff are now thorough, although they have been insufficiently rigorous in the past. Such checks are recorded in a single central register as required.

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

- 5.10 The school has established a strong partnership with parents, which is reflected in a close and supportive relationship that underpins the school's aims. Responses to the parents' pre-inspection questionnaire indicate strong support for the school's provision. Parents rate most highly their satisfaction with the attitudes and values promoted by the school. This is closely followed by satisfaction with the progress their children make, the range of the curriculum, the quality of pastoral care and the high standards of behaviour. Least satisfaction was expressed about the encouragement given for parents to be involved with the life of the school; however, inspection evidence did not support this view.
- 5.11 Parents are encouraged to be involved in the work and progress of their children. A large number of parents attended an assembly led by girls in Years 5 and 6 - and were even incorporated into the celebration of birthdays. Parents are routinely welcomed to drama presentations and concerts. Contact forms are available on which parents may express concerns, and electronic communications, along with pupils' planners or the message books in Year 2, are effective conduits for the exchange of information and concerns. The headmistress is visibly accessible in the front hall at the end of the school day and form teachers in the junior school maintain an open-door policy. A full-colour weekly newsletter, *Brigidine Matters*, is published digitally, highlighting recent news and providing information about future events. Parents with a variety of professional backgrounds give talks as part of the careers guidance to pupils in the senior school. The Friends of Brigidine arrange valuable fund-raising events and effectively manage the school's second-hand uniform provision.
- 5.12 Reports contain helpful and constructive comments, appropriate targets and meaningful grades and are complemented with parent-teacher consultations during the day following the end of each term. Additional meetings are arranged to discuss

particular issues, such as work experience, option choices and university application. Prospective parents are provided with good quality information about the school. Concerns raised by parents are handled with proper care and urgency. Appropriate records are kept of matters raised by parents. These are dealt with initially by form teachers but, if necessary, they are referred on to the senior leadership team. The school has established suitable procedures for parents to pursue their concerns to the governors if they cannot be satisfactorily resolved at an earlier stage.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

- 6.1 This is a good setting, with some outstanding features. It meets the needs of children well, fulfilling its aim to provide a safe, secure learning environment in which each child is able to achieve their potential. Children enjoy the warm environment created by practitioners, who are highly committed to providing for their welfare. Staff have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the provision and have identified areas for improvement. The recommendations from the last Ofsted inspection have been implemented.

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

- 6.2 Leadership and management are good, with some outstanding features. The setting offers a stimulating environment indoors and out, with a curriculum based on an inclusive approach meeting the diverse needs of children. Adults are highly committed to the safeguarding of children's welfare. Through effective systems of evaluation clear priorities are set for improvement, demonstrating an ambitious vision for the future. Hitherto, the school has not been sufficiently rigorous in carrying out recruitment checks before appointment. Although the governors are strongly supportive of child protection there has not been a formal annual review of the policy. These deficiencies are being rectified and all other welfare policies and procedures are efficiently implemented, ensuring that children are safeguarded. Valuable expertise and support is given by outside agencies. Links with parents and carers are strong. The questionnaire and conversations indicate that they are very happy with the caring environment and especially with the small classes. A wide range of good quality resources enhances children's learning.

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

- 6.3 The quality of provision is good, with some outstanding features. Detailed observations and assessments are used to plan challenging activities for all abilities. Opportunities for active, independent learning are excellent, with a very good balance between adult-led activities and those which children choose for themselves. Whilst good use is made of the outdoor environment, its use in inclement weather is limited due to the lack of a covered area. Children are exposed to a language-rich environment in which adults model language well to extend children's speaking skills. Each child's 'Special Book' is used to record individual targets and provides a detailed record of achievement, highly valued by parents. Adults care for all children effectively and are sensitive to the needs of the two-year-olds as well as the older children. Good hygiene routines are in place.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding, providing them with a firm foundation for the future. They enjoy learning, are well motivated and are beginning to develop good learning skills. Children under three are able to use newly learnt words to communicate their needs, whilst the children in the three to five age range have well-

developed conversational skills. They make particularly good progress in literacy and numeracy and have good ICT skills. Knowledge and understanding of the world are demonstrated in their play and conversations. Personal development is excellent. They are well behaved, share and take turns, showing respect for each other. The younger children are gaining confidence and feel pride in their achievements. All are highly active, understand how to stay safe and lead a healthy lifestyle.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

- 6.5 In order to meet the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006, those responsible for the registered provision must:
- ensure that CRB checks are completed before staff start work [Regulation 4.(2)(b)];
 - ensure that a procedure is developed by the governing body to review the child protection policy and its effectiveness annually [Regulation 3.(2)(b)(h)].

Complaints since the last inspection

- 6.6 Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required any action to meet national requirements.

Section 2 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision other than take the action specified above.

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 library and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

Inspectors

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| Mr Rodney Fox | Reporting Inspector |
| Mr Peter Nicholson | Headmaster, IAPS school |
| Mrs Jane Abbotts | Headmistress, GSA school |
| Mrs Lynn Doughton | Head of Department, GSA school |
| Mrs Valerie Goode | Early Years Lead Inspector |
| Ms Amanda Emery | Early Years Team Inspector, Head of Foundation Stage, IAPS school |