



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HILDEN OAKS SCHOOL & NURSERY

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Hilden Oaks School & Nursery

Full Name of School	Hilden Oaks School & Nursery
DfE Number	886/6032
EYFS Number	EY360192
Registered Charity Number	307935
Address	Hilden Oaks School & Nursery 38 Dry Hill Park Road Tonbridge Kent TN10 3BU
Telephone Number	01732 353941
Fax Number	01732 353942
Email Address	secretary@hildenoaks.co.uk
Head	Mrs Susan Webb
Chair of Trustees	Mrs Caroline Phillips
Age Range	3 months to 11
Total Number of Pupils	172
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (39 boys; 133 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 32 5-11: 96 3-5 (EYFS): 44 11-18: 0
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 172 :
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Gill Palmer
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	08 Nov 2011 to 09 Nov 2011 05 Dec 2011 to 07 Dec 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 Hilden Oaks School was established in 1919, as a day school for girls. It became co-educational in 2010, and now caters for boys and girls from three months to the age of eleven. The school is run by a trust, made up of local people from business and education, a number of whom are former parents. They meet in sub-committees regularly and as a whole trust termly.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide opportunities for all its pupils to learn and to achieve; to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life. These aims are based on an approach that stresses continuity, challenge, balance and recognition.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, 172 pupils were on roll, of whom 76 were in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which provides day care, two Nursery classes and a Reception class. The school draws pupils mainly from the Tonbridge area of Kent although some come from further afield. They come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds but very few have a first language other than English. The ability range of pupils is broadly average with some gifted and talented pupils, although variations are evident from year to year. The school has identified eleven pupils who require additional support for their learning and one has a statement of special educational need. Most pupils remain in the school until the age of eleven and, on leaving the school, around half move to maintained grammar schools, the others continuing in independent education.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, the school day has been extended and specialist teaching for sports has been developed throughout the school, with sporting fixtures on offer from Year 3. A music specialist has been employed and music is taught from the early years onwards. A "Saturday Academy" was introduced in September 2009, and a "Holiday Club" was introduced in the Easter holidays 2010 for pupils and their siblings. The school now offers holiday care throughout the vacations.
- 1.5 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage

School	NC name
Nursery	EYFS
Kindergarten	EYFS
Transition	EYFS
Reception	EYFS

Pre-preparatory/Preparatory

School	NC name
Form 1	Year 1
Form 2	Year 2
Form 3	Year 3
Form 4	Year 4
Form 5	Year 5
Form 6	Year 6

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 Pupils in all parts of the school, including the EYFS, are well educated. They achieve very well and reach excellent standards. Pupils make rapid progress in their learning and achieve the school aims of fulfilling their full potential, so that they emerge as confident, articulate, independent learners, extremely well prepared for the next steps in their education. This is due to excellent teaching, a stimulating and exciting curriculum, very good parental support, and highly motivated learners.
- 2.2 The pastoral care is excellent and strongly supports pupils' outstanding personal development. The pupils are self-assured, positive and responsible. Their excellent social skills are evident in all that they do. Pupils' awareness of others is well developed through their charitable work and involvement in extra-curricular activities, where they celebrate each other's successes. Careful attention is given to pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- 2.3 The school is governed well. The school is extremely well led and managed. The clear vision, high aspirations and dedication of senior managers, and trustees motivate all to achieve. Efficient and well-organised curriculum management ensures pupils are challenged and stimulated to learn, and clear ideas for development put the pupils at the heart of all that the school does. Excellent relationships with parents support pupils' high achievement and preparation for the future. The school has effectively met every recommendation from the previous inspection.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

- 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. Improve the use of information and communication technology (ICT) for research and independent learning, through the development of cross-curricular links.
 2. Extend the use of ICT in the EYFS.

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' achievement is excellent and, in accordance with the school's aims, opportunities are provided for all pupils to learn and to achieve. The warm, friendly, family environment ensures that pupils are well-educated. By the time they leave the school, pupils achieve outstanding levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across all subjects, including speaking, listening, reading, writing, and the application of mathematics. Throughout the school, pupils are articulate and confident speakers. They are highly motivated and achieve well in the excellent curricular and extra-curricular activities on offer. Cross-curricular links between some subjects are fully supportive of pupils' achievement and really support the excellent progress which they make. A noticeable range of significant achievements is evident in academic distinctions, music, and sporting success and also in a number of successful scholarships to pupils' secondary schools, both maintained, grammar and independent schools of their first choice.
- 3.2 The school does not enter pupils for national tests; therefore attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against a fixed national norm. On the evidence available attainment is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. This level of attainment, as judged, indicates that pupils' make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils in Year 6 are successful in gaining entrance to senior schools of their choice, many of which are selective, obtaining a variety of scholarships. Across the school, pupils who require support with their learning attain well and make good, constant progress.
- 3.3 All pupils enjoy finding out about new things. There is a real love of learning. Pupils have genuinely positive attitudes to their work and achieve outstanding levels of concentration and determination to reach the high expectations demanded of them. The responses from the pupil questionnaires were overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of school life. The pupils are enthusiastic and work hard. Their written work is extremely well presented across all subjects and pupils speak enthusiastically about what they study and how they enjoy the activities they do. They apply themselves very well both individually and when working with others; team work and co-operation is a positive aspect that supports their learning.

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

- 3.4 The school offers a high quality curriculum, which supports the pupils' achievement and personal development extremely well. It enables pupils to develop their intellectual, creative and physical talents to the full. It is suitable for all ages and abilities and includes all National Curriculum subjects, with the addition of French, which is taught by a specialist teacher from Reception onwards. There is clear emphasis on literacy and numeracy and timetabling of these lessons in the mornings helps to support the good attainment and progress which the children make. Since becoming a co-educational school, the school has been very aware of ensuring that the physical needs of boys are met well, particularly through sport. A specialist games coach has been engaged and there are many more opportunities to develop specific skills, such as football skills, which have been warmly welcomed by both the boys and girls. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) successfully reflects the aims and ethos of the school.
- 3.5 In some areas of the curriculum, good cross-curricular links, such as those between ICT and history, promote research and independent learning but this good practice is not yet embedded across all of the curriculum. The school offers a wide range of extra-curricular activities from flower arranging to art clubs, multi sports to puzzle club and dancing opportunities. These take place either after school or at lunchtimes and also through the Saturday Academy. Clubs are available to all children from Nursery through to Year 6. Individual and group music lessons are offered throughout the week. The children also go on educational visits which further enhance the curriculum. A Year 5 visit to Hever Castle, effectively supplemented their topic on the Tudors and another visit to the local town secured pupils' understanding of what they had seen. The school has a good link with another local school having the use of their swimming pool and other facilities on a regular basis.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.6 Teaching overall is excellent. This enables all pupils, regardless of their age and ability, including those who have learning support, to make outstanding progress, acquire new knowledge and develop effective skills. Teaching provides all pupils with the opportunity to learn and achieve in accordance with the school's aims. All are prepared extremely well for the next stage of their education.
- 3.7 Teachers demonstrate a clear knowledge and understanding of the subject matter being taught thus enabling pupils to enjoy and learn successfully. Teachers make use of excellent questioning techniques which encourage pupils to develop the ability to think and learn for themselves. There are specialist teachers in many subject areas which adds extra value to certain areas of the curriculum and enables the sharing of good practice. Lessons are well planned and in many lessons different activities cater to the range of pupil abilities and enhance the progress made. In a verbal reasoning lesson, worksheets with differing sizes of print were used to make the curriculum accessible to all.
- 3.8 Teachers provide pupils with a variety of ways in which to learn, including working as individuals, working co-operatively, engaging them in written tasks, discussion, and role play. Such variety is appreciated by pupils who, overwhelmingly, enjoy their lessons and the efforts their teachers make to help them. The pace of the lessons is generally good, although in one or two cases the lessons were over directed and therefore progress was less rapid. The pupils' behaviour is exceptional and the teachers manage this effectively by using praise.
- 3.9 Displays of high quality around the school and in the classrooms are excellent examples of the pupils' creative talents. They create an attractive and supportive environment which enhances the pupils' learning experience. The flower arrangements made by the after-school club enhance the communal areas and again are evidence of these talents.
- 3.10 The standard of marking is excellent; encouraging comments, notes on how to improve their work, stickers and house points are used on a regular basis. In some subjects there was evidence of pupils' self-assessment which showed their understanding of the areas covered. The regular marking audit and book scrutiny is an excellent tool in ensuring consistently high standards across all subjects and year groups. Subject co-ordinators keep portfolios with examples of pupils work; these are marked but not all benefit from comparison with National Curriculum grades such as the good practice seen in Years 1 and 2 children's portfolios.
- 3.11 Pupils in Years 3 to 6 are periodically assessed in verbal and non-verbal reasoning, spelling and reading, and spelling and reading throughout the school. The results help to monitor pupil progress and inform the planning of teaching. Parents may be verbally notified of these results.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent both in the EYFS and in the rest of the school. Pupils are very confident, polite and go out of their way to be friendly to visitors. Their personal development is paramount, and right from the beginning of their time in the school the youngest children are encouraged to develop their confidence through joining in and participating in all activities. Performances, concerts and discussions enhance this aspect of pupils' personal development.
- 4.2 Pupils' spiritual awareness is excellent. They have strong values, are socially aware and show real respect for one another. Both whole-school and class assemblies, along with Christmas performances, provide a healthy forum for developing spirituality. The pupils have a good awareness of a variety of religious faiths and show tolerance and understanding of one another.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral awareness is excellent. Through personal, social and and health education (PSHE) lessons pupils derive a positive and secure understanding of right and wrong. In a good PSHE lesson, for example, pupils acted out different scenarios for their peers to find peaceful solutions to problems set by the teacher. There are a number of opportunities for taking on responsibility, such as the joint Christmas performance between Year 6 and Reception. Pupils treat one another with courtesy and respect. They are aware that there are many people less fortunate than themselves and raise sums of money for a wide range of charitable causes.
- 4.4 The pupils' social awareness is excellent. Pupils show respect for staff and peers alike. Excellent opportunities in areas such as music, drama, dance and other activities help to develop confidence and a sense of self-worth. There are many opportunities for public performance to friends and family and these are greatly appreciated by all. The story of Babushka, performed by the older girls, was particularly well received by the rest of the school.
- 4.5 Pupils have a good cultural awareness. They respond well to being introduced to a variety of cultures through religious studies, history and geography, as well as in music, art and drama. The pupils benefit enormously from the local environment which affords them many exciting and stimulating opportunities including visits to places of interest both locally and further afield.

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

- 4.6 The staff provide excellent support and guidance for the pupils in accordance with the school's aims. The pastoral care system is highly effective and the open door policy of the head ensures that she is readily available to discuss any concerns that may arise. Relationships between staff and pupils are good, sometimes outstanding, and pupils are very clear that they know who to go to if they have any problems. The school has effective procedures for promoting good behaviour and guarding against harassment and bullying. Safeguarding arrangements, policies and procedures have regard to regulatory requirements. They are up-to-date and ensure that pupils are well looked after. Pupils are encouraged to live healthy lifestyles and have suitable opportunities through sport and games activities and by eating healthy lunches to develop this.
- 4.7 Fire practices and evacuation procedures are held regularly. Excellent risk assessments are regularly checked and reviewed and are in place for all classrooms, for activities around school, for moving between buildings and for off-site visits. Appropriate staff are trained in first aid and pupils who are ill are well cared for. Information booklets are sent to all parents containing information about approaches to anti-bullying. Admission and attendance records are appropriately maintained. Training in safeguarding is current and compliant.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

5.1 The trust's oversight of the work of the school is very supportive, and helps secure the school's aims, which effectively support pupils' personal development. Regular visits and meetings ensure that they keep abreast of their responsibilities and are strongly involved in financial and strategic planning, so that resources, both human and material, are used to best advantage to meet the needs of the pupils. Trustees receive regular reports from the head, which gives them an insight into the school, its achievements and its challenges.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

5.2 The school, including the EYFS, is extremely well led and managed. The success of the leadership and management of the school is clearly apparent in the excellent levels of pupils' personal development, in their high levels of achievement and the high standards which they attain. School improvement planning is excellent; all of the school community are involved and contribute to it. Relevant and realistic objectives are clearly identified. Successful practices ensure that senior management has a good understanding of the quality of performance through careful monitoring and observation of teaching, marking, and the work pupils produce. Tracking of pupils' performance is close and careful. Since the previous inspection subject co-ordinators have been appointed for each subject and they are very clear and focused in their roles. Regular observations of colleagues are timetabled; a focus is set for each term and rigorous records are kept. Book scrutinies and marking audits are undertaken throughout the year, one subject per month, which clearly lay down the high expectations. Schemes of work are well produced and show clear guidance of what is to be taught.

5.3 Policies and procedures for all aspects of school life are of high quality, well organised and implemented effectively and consistently by the staff. Teachers, classroom support staff and other non-teaching staff are deployed appropriately and contribute significantly to pupils' learning and welfare. Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is excellent. Strong support is given to pupils who are identified as needing extra help and the success of the support given is carefully monitored.

5.4 The school runs extremely well on a daily basis, and is very well maintained. The administrative staff are very welcoming, efficient and supportive. All those working with pupils are suitably checked and the single central register of appointments is completed accurately and fully.

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

- 5.5 The school's outstanding relationships with parents and carers, reflect its aims and contribute effectively to pupils' outstanding personal development. Parents are extremely supportive of both their children and the school. The hall was packed for the Christmas productions. Responses to the parental questionnaire, completed prior to the inspection, indicated very high levels of support for the school, and overall genuine appreciation of all that the school does for their children. New parents expressed appreciation of the rapid progress made by their children since joining the school.
- 5.6 There are good clear channels of communication between home and school. Parents receive useful information about the school and comprehensive information concerning the school is available on the school website. Parents regularly have opportunities to meet the teachers through three formal parents meetings and reports per year. Informally, they are able to discuss their children's progress with staff and are encouraged to contact the school at any time if they have a concern. The school procedure for the reporting of parental concerns and complaints is followed correctly and with due care.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is outstanding, fulfilling its aim to provide a safe, secure and stimulating learning environment in which children can flourish. Staff are effective practitioners who keep the welfare and learning needs of the children at the heart of everything they do. The school has demonstrated that it is able to improve its existing high standards. It has implemented the recommendations of the previous inspection well and made a number of improvements, which include developing the accommodation and reorganising planning.

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

6.2 The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. Well-qualified practitioners, highly committed to safeguarding, through the effective implementation of policies and procedures, ensure that children are safe and their individual needs met well. Key persons form strong links with parents who indicated in pre-inspection questionnaires that they are very pleased with the progress their children make. Valuable expertise and guidance from outside agencies, including the local authority, and staff training have had a positive impact on children's learning and development. Regular reflection on practices has led to a clear vision for the future and the identification of priorities for further improvement. Strategies are in place to ensure that each child has an equal opportunity to make progress supported by the excellent use of a wide range of appropriate resources.

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

6.3 The quality of provision is outstanding. Adults provide a safe, comforting environment for the under-threes in which they enjoy new activities. The three to five year olds are provided with excellent opportunities for active, independent learning, with a very good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities but the use of ICT is under developed. Because staff know children's interests and learning styles they are able to plan activities matched to their current level of understanding. Early identification of additional needs, followed by strong support, enables children to make rapid progress. Daily observations and assessments are used well to plan next steps for learning, and individual progress is carefully tracked. Key persons very effectively promote children's welfare by constantly reinforcing good health and hygiene routines, such as hand washing. Practitioners encourage children to think about their safety and that of others so that they learn how to keep safe. Rigorous risk assessments on the learning environment ensure that children are safe.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are outstanding. They respond well to the high expectations of the staff and are beginning to develop skills for the future. By the end of Reception most children have made very good progress across all areas of learning. Their skills are particularly strong in numeracy and literacy. They are confident when dealing with numbers up to twenty, recognise two-dimensional shapes and understand terms such as one more and one less. They read simple texts and write basic sentences using capital letters and full stops. Children under three count up to five accurately, and use their newly acquired vocabulary with confidence. Personal development is excellent. They care for each other, take turns, share willingly and demonstrate their knowledge of the wider world in their role play. They understand the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle by being active and eating sensibly. They feel safe and enjoy making a positive contribution by helping with small tasks.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

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.

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 two trustees, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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 Sue Vale

Reporting Inspector

Mr Gareth Davies

Head teacher of IAPS school

Mrs Gillian Proctor

Head teacher of IAPS school

Mrs Valerie Good

Early Years Lead Inspector