



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THE PRIORY SCHOOL

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

The Priory School

Full Name of School	The Priory School
DfE Number	330/6002
EYFS Number	EY289773
Registered Charity Number	518009
Address	The Priory School Sir Harry's Road Edgbaston Birmingham West Midlands B15 2UR
Telephone Number	0121 440 4103
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Head	Mr Jonathan Cramb
Chair of Governors	Mr Stephen M Gilmore
Age Range	0 to 16
Total Number of Pupils	361
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (226 boys; 135girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 44 5-11: 89 3-5 (EYFS): 54 11-18: 174
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 361
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Anne Cleary
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	05 Oct 2010 to 06 Oct 2010 01 Nov 2010 to 03 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 October 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 The Priory School is an independent Catholic day school, which welcomes pupils of other denominations and faiths, or of no faith. The school aims to: value every pupil, enabling all to achieve academic success; to develop their individual talents; to use the Catholic ethos to foster spiritual and moral development in all pupils; and to maintain good communications with parents.
- 1.2 The school was founded in 1933 by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus on its present fourteen-acre site in a historic manor house in Edgbaston. The grounds include playing fields and pitches as well as extensive play areas.
- 1.3 When the order withdrew in 1986, the school became a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity with a governing council. The council and a number of committees offer advice and support to the vision and leadership team (VLT). Recent developments at the school include the refurbishment of the Lodge to become the learning support centre, redeveloped libraries in both the prep and the senior school, and upgraded information and communication technology (ICT) provision.
- 1.4 The school is co-educational for those aged from 6 months to 15 years, with girls only in Year 11, and has 361 pupils on the roll. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has forty-four children aged from six months to two years in four classes, and fifty-four pupils aged between three and five years in three classes. The prep school, with eighty-nine pupils, has one class in each year. Some pupils join the prep school in Years 4, 5 or 6, and a number move on to maintained selective grammar or independent senior schools. An increasing trend is for pupils to continue on to the senior school. The senior school has 174 pupils and, having previously been a girls' school, welcomed the first group of boys in 2007. The school will be fully co-educational in 2011 when this group moves into Year 11. The sixth form closed temporarily in 2008 and is scheduled to reopen as a co-educational setting in 2012.
- 1.5 The school admits pupils of a wide range of ability. The ability profile of pupils in the prep school is in line with the national average and is slightly above the average in the senior school. Pupils come from a wide catchment area and varied backgrounds. Five pupils have statements of special educational needs (SEN) and forty-nine have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD), and of these nineteen receive specialist learning support. Two pupils have English as an additional language and receive specialist support.

- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school for the EYFS setting and its National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following table.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Baby Poppets	Nursery (6 to 16 months)
Mini Poppets	Nursery (16 months to 2½ years)
Poppets	Nursery (2½ to 3 years)
Nursery	Nursery (3 to 4 years)
Reception	Reception (4 to 5 years)

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims and their achievement is good. Standards of attainment are good; pupils learn well across the range of skills including the use of ICT. In national tests at the ages of 7 and 11 pupils generally attain well, and GCSE results are above those achieved in maintained schools. In the prep school, pupils make good progress and between Year 7 and GCSE they make excellent progress. Pupils have positive attitudes to learning and to their involvement in activities outside the classroom. They benefit from an excellent curriculum which is very well structured to meet the needs of all. They participate in a wide range of activities and achieve considerable success in sporting and other areas. Teaching is good and teachers use assessment information to inform their planning, which is of high quality, meeting the needs of the pupils. Good resources are well used. Standards have improved since the previous inspection.
- 2.2 The excellent quality of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness reflects the strong sense of community in the school. The pupils' development fully meets the aims of the school. The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent and fully support the aims of the school. Teachers know their pupils well and are committed to the welfare of all in their care. The school has excellent arrangements to ensure the health and safety, and safeguarding of all pupils. All other requirements are fully met. The school has improved in all these areas since the previous inspection.
- 2.3 The quality of governance in the school is good, and the governing body fully supports the ethos and success of the school. Governors are well informed, they effectively support the VLT and they fulfil the legal requirements of governance successfully. The quality of the leadership and management of the school is good, with some significant strengths. The VLT is successful in realising the aims of the school and in the discharge of its responsibilities in both prep and senior schools. Thoughtful self-evaluation, planning and monitoring have resulted in improvements in many areas of the school since the previous inspection. The school has maintained good relationships with its parents, including those with children in the EYFS, noted in the previous report, and parents are highly supportive of many key areas of the school's work.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Continue to strengthen the strategies used across the school to identify the best practice in teaching, in order to ensure consistently high standards of marking, and to ensure that all lessons offer high levels of challenge and opportunities for independent learning.
2. Ensure that the ways in which work is matched to individuals' needs, and the necessary next steps, are recorded in detail on activity plans in all age groups in the EYFS.
3. Encourage a consistent approach to facilitating independence in all aspects of the children's learning in the EYFS.
4. Improve liaison between age groups to promote consistency in the implementation of the EYFS curriculum.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims and their overall achievements are good. In lessons and in their written work, pupils show good knowledge and understanding. Pupils of all ages speak, listen, read and write competently. They listen well and show respect for others' contributions. Reading skills are good, and many pupils benefit from participating in the accelerated reading scheme. Pupils write well, and some excellent work is displayed in classrooms. They learn to think for themselves and all benefit from many opportunities to use their creativity: Year 8 pupils worked enthusiastically and with developing skills designing and making model cars in a design and technology lesson. Mathematical skills are applied well from an early age. Pupils use ICT equipment and software with confidence. Specialised software gives access to exciting resources in mathematics, science and geography which challenge pupils. Pupils appreciated the help specific study skills lessons gave them. In a small number of lessons the learning of older pupils was limited because they were not given opportunities to learn actively or independently.
- 3.2 At the age of 11, between 30 and 40 per cent of pupils gain places at highly selective maintained grammar or independent schools. In sport, prep football, cricket, cross-country and netball teams all achieve well at local and county levels. In the senior school teams and individuals have been successful in football, golf, athletics and tennis at national level. In music examinations, the pupils have achieved a 100 per cent pass rate. Pupils are increasingly successful in a national mathematics challenge.
- 3.3 The standards of attainment overall are good. Results in national tests at the age of 7 have been above the national average for maintained primary schools. At the age of 11, results in national tests have been slightly below the national average for maintained primary schools. In light of the many joiners and leavers during Years 3 to 6, these results represent a broadly satisfactory achievement. At GCSE, over the last three years for which national data is currently available, 2007 to 2009, results have been above the national standard in maintained schools. In 2010, 34.8 per cent of entries achieved grades A or A*, and 78 per cent gained five or more A* to C grades (including maths and English).
- 3.4 Overall, pupils make good progress in relation to their ability. Results in national tests at the age of 7 are good in relation to standards at entry, and progress is above average for pupils of similar ability. For the one-fifth of the cohort who progress through the whole of the prep school, the results at the age of 11 also show good progress. A nationally standardised test used to measure progress from Year 7 to GCSE shows that pupils make excellent progress, putting the school's value added score in the top 5 per cent of those in the country. The school's tracking and monitoring systems show that all pupils, including those with LDD or statements of SEN, make at least good progress.
- 3.5 The pupils have positive attitudes to learning and involvement in activities. They are eager to participate, are confident in individual, pair and group work, and they take pride in their high standards of presentation.

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

- 3.6 Across the school the curriculum is excellent, meeting the aim to give all pupils every opportunity to discover their talents and to celebrate their successes in all areas. The breadth, balance and planning of the curriculum have improved significantly since the previous inspection.
- 3.7 The curriculum is appropriate for pupils of all abilities, including those with LDD or statements of SEN, and in both the prep and senior schools, it includes a programme offering challenge to the gifted and talented. The curriculum covers all the requisite areas of learning. In the prep school, reading, writing and mathematics are treated as significant core skills. Through the Forest School programme, pupils in the prep school learn to understand their environment and develop new skills in exciting outdoor activities, ranging from cooking to mud painting and making collages. Excellent programmes of personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) for all ages extend the curriculum to cover many areas of personal development.
- 3.8 In the senior school, all pupils benefit from a well-planned curriculum. Challenge for the more able includes the choice of two languages, and three science subjects lead to core and additional science at GCSE, which gives a good scientific grounding for all. Banding and setting are used very effectively in the senior school to provide appropriate support and challenge for pupils of different abilities, and a wide range of options is offered for GCSE, enabling pupils to make choices appropriate to their interests and abilities. The senior school enrichment programme includes a very wide range of activities within the school day that extend pupils' interests, and allows time for revision groups for those in examination years.
- 3.9 Pupils enjoy the extra-curricular programme, which offers a wide choice of activities. A very high percentage of pupils in the prep school sign up to one or more of the after-school or lunchtime clubs and learn new skills. The range of activities varies from ICT, music and drama to karate, French and netball. In a 'Fun Fit' dance session the pupils, including those with dyspraxia, were enthusiastically and energetically improving their co-ordination. Pupils take part in a great variety of educational visits, and their experience has been valuably extended by links with schools in Sweden, Austria and Germany. Outside the formal curriculum, pupils in the senior school enjoy and value a range of optional activities such as sport, music and drama. House competitions in music, football and netball encourage involvement as well as celebrating success and perseverance. Pupils of all ages take part in fund raising activities, enthusiastically supporting local, national and international charities. Christmas performances are greatly enjoyed at a local retirement home.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.10 Teaching is good overall, with many excellent features. As such, it is successful in supporting the aims and inclusive ethos of the school. Teachers know their pupils well and relationships are marked by mutual respect, creating an environment conducive to learning.
- 3.11 Teachers are knowledgeable in their own subject areas. Long- and medium-term planning is excellent and well supported by whole-school policies. In both schools, teachers are well informed about the pupils' progress through the tracking systems

that collect detailed data from national tests and internal monitoring. Lesson planning is of high quality, resulting in excellent pace and variety of tasks for pupils of all abilities. Clear learning objectives are set out at the beginning of lessons, and question and answer sessions or self-evaluation tasks are used at the end of lessons to encourage pupils to be responsible for their own learning. The best teaching uses questioning skilfully and includes discussion to ensure that pupils think for themselves. Pupils respond enthusiastically to lessons which have a lively pace and use a variety of resource material. A small number of lessons, although well planned, in practice depended too much on teacher input and resulted in passive rather than independent thinking and learning.

- 3.12 Teachers are well informed by the learning support staff and well supported in their planning for pupils of different abilities and needs. The provision for pupils with LDD or statements of SEN has been considerably extended and improved since the previous inspection. Pupils' specific needs are efficiently identified and careful monitoring shows them making good and in some cases excellent progress. The provision for gifted and talented pupils is developing steadily. Thorough systems are in place to identify able pupils as early as those entering Year 1 from the EYFS, and the curriculum is being successfully developed to stretch and challenge these pupils both within and outside their usual lessons.
- 3.13 Good resources support interesting teaching and wall displays show excellent work. Interactive whiteboards are well used to make lessons exciting, by providing film, pictures and text, and a variety of commercial software. Marking is generally informative and sets helpful targets for improvement. Pupils said that they understand the marking and that it helps them to progress. Occasionally, marking that was not of this rigorous nature limited pupils' ability to improve. Individual academic mentoring for all pupils from Year 9 onwards is supported by thorough monitoring by both class teachers and form tutors. The mentoring results in careful target setting with pupils and helps to ensure that all achieve the best possible grades.
- 3.14 Overall, since the previous inspection, standards of teaching have improved across the school. The use of tracking data is much improved in the prep school and the lack of challenge for able pupils has been tackled.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The excellent quality of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness reflects the happy, caring, respectful relationships and strong sense of community in the school. The school successfully achieves its aim to develop personal qualities, abilities and values to prepare the pupils to make the most of their own lives and to contribute to society. This area has improved since the previous inspection.
- 4.2 The spiritual development of pupils is excellent. Pupils of all ages are self-confident, and older pupils are able to discuss the religious beliefs of faiths other than their own with respect and understanding. They benefit from a rich experience of prayer: pupils in a prep school class all contributed thoughtfully to the end-of-day prayers, including members of the school, their families and the world outside the school in their thoughts.
- 4.3 The pupils' moral development is excellent; they acquire a clear understanding of right and wrong. This learning is supported at all stages by carefully planned programmes of PSHCE that are taught with confidence and skill. Throughout these programmes pupils learn successfully to place moral issues into real contexts and develop the skills to reason and justify their opinions and decisions.
- 4.4 Social development is strong. Behaviour is excellent and pupils show a natural willingness to assume responsibility for the care of others which is exercised with fairness and concern. The mixed-age tutor groups in the senior school are highly successful, with older pupils helping much younger 'buddies'. Year 7 pupils claimed that older cohorts in their tutor group "look out for us". Many pupils are given positions of responsibility which they cherish, ranging from prefects and head boy and head girl in Year 6 to prayer or register monitors in Year 4. All show levels of concern for younger children that belie their own young age. Challenges such as the Year 8 eco-project to increase the amount of recycling in school have increased awareness in the school of environmental issues. The school councils are well thought of: members of Year 6 are very appreciative of the new netball posts and footballs that have been purchased. In the senior school, each year group is involved in fund raising events for charity as part of the PSHCE programme. Charitable activity in both schools includes supporting schools in Rwanda through the Birmingham Catholic Primary Partnership.
- 4.5 The school's multi-cultural community is well respected by all and plays a fundamental part in the promotion of appreciation of the many different faiths. Pupils are respectful of each other's cultures and beliefs, and feel confident to discuss their differences knowing that their peers will listen with interest. The school is a living example of a very happy multi-cultural society.

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

- 4.6 The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent and fully support the aims of the school, and have improved since the previous inspection. Staff are skilled, knowledgeable and committed to the welfare of all pupils in their care. They are well supported by a very successful structure of policies and procedures implemented throughout the school. Teachers know their pupils extremely well and deal with them in a caring and relaxed manner, ensuring that they receive appropriate support and guidance, and this contributes significantly to the family atmosphere throughout the school.
- 4.7 The quality of relationships between staff and pupils, and amongst pupils, is also excellent. Pupils treat each other well and respectfully, and are friendly and courteous towards staff and visitors in lessons and around the school. In both their responses to the pupil pre-inspection questionnaire and in discussion, pupils of all ages said they feel that they can turn to adults for assistance and support, and feel that teachers are genuinely concerned with their well-being. Pupils also said that little bullying takes place and that they are confident it would be effectively dealt with. Many commented on how safe and secure they feel in school. A number of pupils explained that this contrasted sharply with negative experiences they had elsewhere.
- 4.8 The school has effective policies and procedures to promote good behaviour, to guard against harassment and bullying, and to deal constructively with any unacceptable behaviour. The Catholic ethos of the school, with its emphasis on gospel values, strengthens good relationships in all areas of school life, encouraging pupils to be aware of the needs of others. In PSHCE work about bullying, pupils learn both to think about how to behave and also how to get help if they need it.
- 4.9 The school's safeguarding policy meets requirements and is implemented successfully, with all staff receiving appropriate training. All necessary measures have been taken to reduce risk from fire and other hazards. Arrangements to ensure health and safety are excellent and highly effective, including comfortable provision for pupils who are ill and for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The school has an appropriate plan in place to improve provision and educational access for pupils with disabilities.
- 4.10 Pupils are encouraged to learn to eat healthily; a menu which includes healthy choices is offered in the dining room. In the prep school, posters about healthy eating produced by the pupils are on display in corridors. Pupils of all ages take adequate exercise, both in and out of doors, in lessons and free time; many pupils enjoy their participation in sporting activities. The admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and correctly stored for the required period of the previous three years.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good, effectively supporting the school to achieve its aims. The governing body maintains as part of its vision for the school the strong focus on the Catholic faith which is so much part of the ethos and success of the school. The members of the governing body, many of them parents of pupils in the school, representing a number of cultures and faiths, have a wide range of professional expertise including educational backgrounds, which they use to the benefit of the school. Working in conjunction with the staff, committees of the governing body support the work of the school in specific areas. The finance and general purposes committee successfully oversees financial planning and has provided careful investment to support the work of the school. The health and safety committee ensures full involvement with all health and safety matters. The reports from these committees and a full report from the head at each meeting of the governors ensure that the governing body has an effective insight into and oversight of the school.
- 5.2 A number of other factors contribute to the careful and well-informed governance, including close contact with the day-to-day life of the school. The chair of governors is a regular and frequent visitor to the school; he also receives the school daily staff bulletin, which contains news of events, achievements and day-to-day issues, and is on hand to support the head both formally and informally. Other governors have links with specific areas of the school, including safeguarding, the provision for gifted and talented pupils in both the senior and prep school, the EYFS and safe recruitment procedures. Such links enable governors to monitor, both formally and informally, these areas of the work of the school. Some governors attend the pre-term whole-staff meeting, school events and celebrations, and even form a committee to judge the 'Learning -to-Learn' presentations made by pupils to whom they therefore become known. Staff commented that they appreciate the presence of governors at these various functions.
- 5.3 The governing council successfully fulfils the legal duties of governance, including an annual review and report for child protection, welfare, health and safety requirements and investment in high quality staff. It is through this investment in staff, combined with the careful investment in development of the buildings, site and resources, that the governors fulfil their responsibilities for educational standards.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The quality of the leadership and management of the school is good, with some significant strengths and areas of excellence. The VLT is successful in realising the aims of the school and in the discharge of its responsibilities in both prep and senior schools. A strong management structure with well-established and successfully implemented systems and clearly defined roles has enabled the new members of the team to fit into their posts in a very short time, without the management losing impetus in its drive for improvement, or losing sight of the focus of its responsibility for policy implementation and for the safeguarding of pupils. A regular pattern of meetings, clear and daily communication with staff, careful monitoring, self-evaluation and reflection contributes to the improving educational standards and support for the excellent pastoral care staff give to pupils.
- 5.5 In both the prep and senior schools, the VLT has a clear vision of the quality of education that the school aims to provide. Its reflective approach to self-evaluation has resulted in the successful identification of the priorities for the school, set out in the school vision plan. Backed by department development plans which include budget planning, the plan provides the framework within which improvement takes place. The VLT and middle managers, such as heads of faculty and heads of department in the senior school and subject co-ordinators in the prep school, are all involved in monitoring standards and in identifying best practice, using a wide variety of strategies. This has resulted in high standards of planning and generally good or excellent marking, supporting pupils' learning effectively. In a small number of lessons, opportunities are missed to fully engage pupils in their work or in marking to identify how pupils could improve their work.
- 5.6 In all areas of the school, the management has been successful in recruiting staff of high quality, and through careful induction, a well-focused staff performance review scheme and excellent communication have successfully motivated staff. All staff take part in training provided in school, in particular for safeguarding and health and safety, which fulfils the requirements in these areas. Many have developed skills needed for particular aspects of their work on training courses provided by outside agencies and go on to provide training for their colleagues, helping them to develop the necessary skills to meet the needs of all pupils. The school has thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of staff (including volunteers), supply staff and governors.

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

- 5.7 The school has maintained the good quality of links with its parents, including those with children in the EYFS, noted in the previous report. The school successfully meets its aims to keep parents informed regularly about the progress of their children and to be available to talk to parents about any concern they have as soon as it arises. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents expressed a high level of support for the attitudes and views promoted by the school and their satisfaction with the range of subjects, experiences and extra-curricular activities offered, and the high standards of behaviour achieved. They feel that information is easily available and that it is easy to communicate with the school, that responses from the school are timely and that concerns are well handled. The school keeps appropriate records of parental concerns which show that these are dealt with promptly and in accordance with the school policy.
- 5.8 A small number of parents' concerns were expressed over the information given about their children's progress, help for pupils with LDD or statements of SEN, and the levels of work set to be done at home. During the inspection no evidence was found to support these concerns. The school sends regular and highly informative reports to parents and holds parents' meetings. The website has up-to-date information, including detailed material for parents. Daily information is sent to the parents of EYFS children, and pupil planners are used each day for all older pupils, both to record homework and for dialogue with parents if needed. Homework is set according to clear and sensible timetables, and form teachers work with their groups to monitor how well pupils are keeping on top of their work. They offer helpful advice and support when needed, encouraging older pupils to take responsibility for their learning. The inspection found that excellent work is done with pupils with LDD or statements of SEN, with high quality support for their difficulties, careful monitoring of progress and communication with parents.
- 5.9 There are many ways in which parents can be involved in the life of the school, including invitations to assemblies and award ceremonies, and the events organised by The Friends of Priory, including November 5th celebrations.
- 5.10 In their comments a number of prep school parents wrote favourably about communication with the school including the good dialogue in homework diaries, regular official updates and lots of informal feedback from the teachers at the beginning and end of the day. A number of senior school parents commented on the accessibility of teachers and the excellent use of text messaging to communicate with parents. Parents of pupils of all ages commented on the high quality of pastoral care, which they see as a strength of the school.

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

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. Children benefit from a nurturing and caring environment, both in the provision for those under the age of three and for the older children, which fosters academic and social skills. Consideration for the individual needs of the child is evident in practice. Comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children also contribute to their well-being. Positive relationships exist with parents who, in the pre-inspection questionnaires, showed an appreciation of and satisfaction with the provision and their children's progress. There is a proactive approach to continuing improvement and development.

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

6.2 The leadership and management of the setting are good overall, with outstanding features. All records, policies and procedures necessary for the efficient management of the setting, safety, and safeguarding of children of all ages are in place and implemented well. Staff are appropriately qualified and deployed. The quality of self-evaluation is excellent and managers have a clear vision for the development of the setting. A willingness to refine and improve practice is evidenced by staff training, the implementation of the Forest School programme and the recent successful bid for a grant to improve the outdoor facilities. Excellent relationships exist with parents and outside agencies. Pre-inspection questionnaires were extremely supportive of the management of the setting, and the caring and nurturing environment provided by staff. Resources are generally used effectively to promote learning; this was particularly strong in the work with those under the age of three.

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

6.3 Overall, the quality of provision is good, with some examples of outstanding practice. Observation and assessment are used well to guide practice. However, the matching of work to children's needs and their future steps in learning are not always recorded in enough detail, through written activity plans for all age groups. There is also some inconsistency in the implementation of the EYFS curriculum. Opportunities for learning holistically through play are good for those in the younger age groups but are not always available for older children. Forest School offers valuable opportunities for children to problem solve and explore. This is not fully supported by the provision offered within the classrooms. A high priority is given to the children's safety, health and well-being. Children are taught about good health and this is embedded in practice. Lunch and snack times are sociable occasions when good, healthy food is on offer. Some opportunities are provided for children to be independent in serving food and helping in routines. However, this is not always consistently applied. Children show care and concern for each other and this is nurtured and developed in a setting in which they are valued.

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

- 6.4 The outcomes for children are good overall, both for those under the age of three and those who are older. Children make very good progress in the Early Learning Goals from a wide range of starting points and capabilities. Their skills in communication, language and literacy, numeracy and ICT are developing well. Excellent relationships exist between staff and children, and the key worker system is effectively used to develop these. Children of all ages display a wide range of interests and enjoy choosing their own activities when the opportunity is provided. Children play well together and independently at all levels. They are articulate and confident in their communication with peers and adults. They thrive in a calm and caring environment which fosters good manners and concern for others from the earliest years. There is a strong awareness of the importance of hygiene and safety practices. A range of opportunities exists to develop an understanding of the importance of physical activity through the daily routines of the setting. Children of all ages are well behaved and friendly, and show respect for each other's differences.

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.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

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

Inspectors

Mrs Gwen Caddock	Reporting Inspector
Mr Peter Mulhern	Assistant Head, IAPS school
Mr Steven Jandrell	Headmaster, ISA school
Mr Andrew Day	Headmaster, independent special school
Mrs Louise Robinson	Head, GSA school
Ms Jane Short	Early Years Lead Inspector
Mrs Anne Robinson	Early Years Team Inspector (Deputy Head, ISA school)