



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

THETFORD GRAMMAR SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Full Name of School	Thetford Grammar School
DfE Number	926/6128
Registered Charity Number	311263
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Head	Mr Gareth Price
Chair of Governors	Dr James Altham
Age Range	3½ to 18
Total Number of Pupils	307
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (170 boys; 137 girls)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 7 5-11: 46 11-18: 254
Head of EYFS Setting	Ms Kelly Dennis
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	31 Jan 2012 to 03 Feb 2012

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in January 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State 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, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed through the following link: www.legislation.gov.uk. Search for Independent School Standards Regulations and enter date 2010, to find Schedule 1, Parts 1-7.

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

- (i) The Equality Act 2010 (including race, gender, special educational needs and disability).
- (ii) The School Standards and Framework Act 1998, banning 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, although inspectors 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.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The grades used by ISI and Ofsted are different to reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and for Achievement the descriptor 'exceptional' is available in addition.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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 Marion Gibbs

Mr Gerry Holden

Mrs Catherine Sams

Mr Andrew Selkirk

Miss Jacqueline Scotney

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Headmaster, SHMIS school)

Team Inspector (Vice-Principal, GSA school)

Team Inspector
(Director of Pastoral Care, SHMIS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	7
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	9
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	9
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	10
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	11
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	12
(a) The quality of governance	12
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	12

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Thetford Grammar School is an independent co-educational day school situated in the centre of the town of Thetford, in Norfolk. The school was originally founded in the 10th century; it was a state grammar school for much of the 20th century but became independent in 1981. It is housed in a range of buildings, some of which date back to Tudor times. The school aims to be an inclusive family community that develops the whole child, focusing on the creative growth of every individual, including academic, physical, emotional, cultural and social. It has reviewed and simplified its aims since the previous inspection and has summarised its philosophy as 'Together we learn'. The school is a charitable trust with its own governing body.
- 1.2 The school has 307 pupils on roll, 170 boys and 137 girls, aged from 3½ to 18. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is situated within the Goldcrest pre-preparatory department of the junior school. The junior school has 7 children in the EYFS and 46 pupils in Years 1 to 6. The senior school has 210 pupils in Years 7 to 11 and 44 pupils in the sixth form. The pupils come from a wide geographic area, encompassing three counties, and from both maintained and independent schools. Those aged 11 to 16 are selected through formal entrance tests, while the junior school assesses candidates more informally at a 'taster' day. The ability profile of the school is above the national average overall, with a wider range in the junior school. The vast majority of the pupils are of white British heritage.
- 1.3 The school has identified 50 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and provides specialist learning support to 23 of these. Three pupils have been diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome or autism, and most of the others with SEND have varying degrees of dyslexia. Three pupils have statements of special educational needs. No pupils have English as an additional language.
- 1.4 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school fulfils its aims; it is an inclusive family community which develops the whole pupil and ensures that all are known as individuals. The pupils are articulate and confident. They develop their creativity, and the ability to work independently and to think logically and analytically. Results in both GCSE and A-level examinations have regularly been above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. Appropriate specialist support enables pupils with SEND to make good progress and achieve well. Pupils also achieve high standards in debating, sports, music, drama and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Curricular and extra-curricular provision has been extended since the previous inspection; more music and drama lessons are timetabled within the school day and new A-level subjects have been introduced. Additional information and communication technology (ICT) equipment is available and most staff and pupils use it competently to support teaching and learning. The overall quality of teaching has improved; it is now good and a significant minority of outstanding lessons were seen. Inconsistencies in marking remain, although the best practice is rigorous and constructive, and encourages the pupils to evaluate their own progress. The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is excellent.
- 2.2 Pupils' personal development is good. They have a very positive attitude to learning and work well individually and with one another. They develop into caring and responsible young people. Relationships are strong between pupils from different sections of the school and older pupils enjoy helping younger ones. Pupils of all ages are willing and eager to accept positions of responsibility and carry them out well. The sixth-form pupils show excellent levels of leadership and maturity. Pastoral care is good overall and it has some excellent features. New systems are operating well. Pupils throughout the school feel well supported and guided. Pupils are very aware of the needs of those who are less fortunate and engage in many charitable fund-raising activities. All necessary measures are in place to ensure their safeguarding and well-being. However, the food provided at morning break and lunchtimes does not encourage healthy eating.
- 2.3 Governance has been reviewed and strengthened since the previous inspection, and is good, providing a more effective oversight. Leadership and management at all levels have improved, and are now good, and new roles and responsibilities have been introduced, but the monitoring of teaching and learning is still insufficiently rigorous. Much work has been carried out to improve curriculum planning and the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress. However, this process is still developing; an overview of each pupil's achievements and progress over time is still not readily available. Most parents who responded to the questionnaire are satisfied with the school's provision and the information that they receive.

2.(b) Action points**(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

(The range of the Independent School Standards Regulations is available through the link described in the Preface)

- 2.4 The school meets 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. Monitor teaching and learning regularly and rigorously throughout the school, ensuring that good practice is shared and action is taken to remedy any weaknesses.
 2. Ensure that a comprehensive overview of pupils' assessment data is accessible to staff, enabling them to support pupils in making the best possible progress.
 3. In the EYFS, develop the partnership with parents further by ensuring that they contribute to the record of their children's learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

3.(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' overall achievements and of their learning, attitudes and basic skills is good.
- 3.2 Pupils are well educated in accordance with the school's aims. They are articulate and confident in speaking and listen well to one another. Pupils of all ages produce high quality creative writing, including imaginative poetry, and most read fluently and with enjoyment. They are able to think logically and analytically when tackling problem-solving activities in subjects such as mathematics, science and geography or when learning to write computer code. The use of 'thinking hats' in some lessons has encouraged the development of higher order thinking and analytical skills. Most pupils can apply their mathematical skills effectively and they use ICT competently from an early age. The pupils work independently at home with specialist computer programs in languages, for example, to consolidate their learning, and they use the internet judiciously for research in many subjects. In science and design and technology lessons, they are confident in undertaking experimental work using specialist equipment. They produce imaginative art and craft work. Since the previous inspection, improved provision for drama, music and the arts has enabled pupils to develop their creativity more successfully. Older pupils, particularly those in the sixth form, use photography innovatively and enjoy experimenting with music technology.
- 3.3 In the EYFS, the children make significant progress because their individual needs are very well met by highly reflective staff who know them extremely well. They achieve well. The children demonstrate well-developed skills in literacy and numeracy; for example, they confidently use their knowledge of sounds to spell the weather conditions at registration and use counting-on skills whilst role playing outdoors. Their physical development is excellent and the children have a deep understanding of what happens to their bodies when they exercise. Attractive displays illustrate a variety of creative skills, including excellent collaborative work involving the whole pre-preparatory department. The children work extremely well together in lessons, and negotiate and solve problems effectively during child-initiated activities. They approach learning with abundant enthusiasm.
- 3.4 Pupils in the junior school make very good progress, responding well to challenging work that is carefully matched to their differing needs and ability levels. Skilful teaching and excellent use of resources inspire the most able pupils to achieve very high standards relative to their age and ability. Pupils in the senior school make good progress overall.
- 3.5 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2008 to 2010. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results at both GCSE and A level have been above the national average for maintained schools, and similar to the national average for maintained selective schools. At GCSE, almost all the pupils achieved five or more grades A* to C, including English and mathematics. At A level, more than two-thirds of the grades awarded were A*, A or B. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability, as shown by standardised measures of progress and from inspection evidence. Carefully targeted and appropriate specialist support enables pupils with SEND to make good progress; in 2011 they all achieved five or more GCSE grades A* to C, including

English and mathematics. A number of pupils who receive individual learning support improve to such an extent that they no longer require it. The most able pupils take public examinations early and, with some support from staff, study additional subjects independently and gain high grades in these.

- 3.6 Debating is a strength: the school won the local English-Speaking Union shield in 2010, and sixth formers have represented Britain at the Model European Parliament for the past three years. Individuals achieve high standards in speech and drama and music examinations, and in The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Sports teams have had notable success in rugby, hockey and netball, regularly reaching county finals.
- 3.7 Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning and work well individually and together. Committed and eager to succeed, many develop good independent learning habits and enjoy undertaking research. Junior school pupils showed great excitement when Year 6 enjoyed a special Second World War day; pupils from different year groups engaged in animated discussion over lunch and were eager to compare their knowledge of the conflict. The more able older pupils relish investigative tasks and the opportunities to undertake extended coursework essays. Most sixth formers progress to their chosen university course, often at competitive institutions.

3.(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision

- 3.8 Curricular and extra-curricular provision are good.
- 3.9 The curriculum throughout the junior and senior schools is broad and goes beyond the required areas of learning. It enables pupils to progress appropriately and to reach good standards. Visiting speakers and regular trips, both local and further afield, enhance the curriculum. In the EYFS the quality of the provision is excellent. The curriculum follows the EYFS framework, and the variety of activities, including some specialist teaching, ensures that the children are helped to learn well. Most pupils and parents who responded to the questionnaires expressed satisfaction with the curricular and extra-curricular provision and agreed that appropriate support was provided for individual needs.
- 3.10 The junior school benefits from the use of subject specialists, some of whom are also teachers in the senior school, for example in music, physical education and art. This benefits curriculum planning and aids progression between the sections of the school. French is taught from the earliest years to all pupils, with the exception of a few pupils with significant learning difficulties. German is added, with similar exemptions, in Year 8. Almost all pupils study one modern foreign language at GCSE level and some choose to take two. Latin and Greek are available in 'twilight' sessions to pupils of all ages in the senior school. Separate science teaching begins in Year 9 and pupils opt to study separate sciences or the double award at GCSE level. Appropriate specialist lessons in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) are provided until the end of Year 9; older pupils have relevant presentations by outside speakers and discuss PSHCE topics in tutor time.
- 3.11 Year 12 pupils follow an AS-level general studies course, which adds breadth to their course of study. They benefit from a wide and increasing choice of subjects and individual programmes are created to suit their talents and ambitions, including the provision of different modules within subjects. A-level psychology has been introduced recently as a distance learning programme with in-house tutorial support.

- 3.12 The curriculum meets the school's aims in its provision for the academic choices of every individual. The pupils are allowed a free choice of GCSE and A-level options, guided in these choices only with reference to their ability. The timetable is then constructed to accommodate them. Consequently, a significant number of subjects are taught in two or three very small groups, some of these in 'twilight' sessions. This precludes the involvement of staff in extra-curricular activities, and lessons have to be cancelled when staff meetings and other after-school events occur.
- 3.13 A curriculum review has been ongoing since the previous inspection. Information and communication technology provision has been increased for Years 8 and 9, and music and drama now have more classes within the school day. Throughout the school, departmental planning and schemes of work have improved significantly.
- 3.14 In the junior school, pupils are arranged into appropriate ability groups within the class for different subjects, and appropriate work and resources are carefully prepared for each group. Pupils in the senior school are set by ability in mathematics from Year 8 and in several other subjects from Year 9. Limited evidence was seen of extension work or the provision of additional support by class teachers in the senior school. However, the provision of additional specialist learning support for all ages has improved since the previous inspection. It is of very good quality and much appreciated by the pupils. Individual and small group lessons are provided, and appropriate individual education plans are meticulously prepared and monitored. A suitable programme of extra-curricular enrichment activities for the most able is being developed.
- 3.15 Most extra-curricular activities take place at lunchtime, as many pupils live far from the school. They include a variety of sports, music, art and crafts, electronics, debating, film club and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. At the time of the inspection, an ambitious production of the musical *We Will Rock You* was in the final stages of preparation, providing an excellent vehicle for the many different talents of pupils in drama, music and technical support. The school has strong links with the local community; pupils participate in events organised by the local Chamber of Commerce, including public speaking and business challenges. Musicians perform at local occasions, such as the mayor making, and entertain the elderly. Pupils offer active support to local charities, for example providing regular food parcels for those in need.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.16 Teaching is good overall.
- 3.17 The overall quality of teaching supports the school's aims and has improved since the previous inspection. The large majority of lessons seen throughout the school were good and a significant minority for all age groups were outstanding. The teaching in the junior school, including the EYFS, was most often outstanding. Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and generally set work that gives suitable challenge to the majority of pupils. Most lessons are well planned and enable progress for all pupils. The teaching meets the requirements set out for those pupils who have statements of special educational needs. In response to the questionnaire, most pupils indicated that their teachers help them to learn and give them individual help when needed.
- 3.18 In the EYFS, frequent, reflective observations to track attainment and progress are now embedded in practice. In the small class size, individuals receive high levels of appropriate adult support. Their learning is enhanced by the excellent use of a notable range of outdoor and indoor resources that have had a significant impact on the provision for child-initiated activity. The adults in the setting meet the needs of the children very well; they have created an effective balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities that enables the children to develop at their own pace. This, combined with thorough observation, provides good opportunities for individual interests to be followed.
- 3.19 In the junior school, much care is taken to prepare different tasks to encourage all pupils to achieve at an appropriate level, but the work set in lessons in the senior school is not always sufficiently tailored to the needs of individuals or to the range of abilities within the group. All teachers are aware of those with SEND and the most able, but only some teaching adjusts provision significantly to take account of these pupils. At its best, the teaching fosters interest, application, good behaviour and independence of thought. In some lessons observed, teaching provided very good opportunities for pupils to approach topics using different methods so that they reached full understanding. The less successful teaching, as at the time of the previous inspection, had a slow pace, and offered insufficient challenge to pupils and opportunities for them to work independently and develop their own thinking. Such lessons remain dominated by teachers' exposition and provide little chance for pupils to engage in discussion or investigation; pupils can therefore become disengaged. Throughout the school the learning resources, including ICT, have improved since the previous inspection and most teachers use these effectively to enhance the pupils' experiences. Well-qualified specialist teachers visit the school and offer effective individual support for specific learning difficulties, such as speech and language development.
- 3.20 At its best, marking throughout the school is diagnostic, encouraging, thorough and frequent, and enables pupils to make progress. Examples were found in the senior school, however, of perfunctory practice and there was no evidence of an agreed approach across departments, or within some departments. Inconsistency was also found in assessment and target setting. Excellent practice in some departments includes clear feedback on progress, with signposts for improvement and regular self-assessment which encourage the pupils to take appropriate responsibility for their own learning. These departments have also developed their own effective systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress. However, other departments have developed very little in this area since the previous inspection. A computerised

management information system is beginning to enable pupils' achievements and progress to be recorded and monitored centrally, but progress in developing an overview has been slow.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good.
- 4.2 Throughout the school, pupils show high levels of confidence and self-esteem which result from the excellent relationships and extensive opportunities provided, in particular through the extra-curricular programme. The strong relationships between pupils from different sections of the school and the way in which they support and co-operate with one another reflect well the school's aim of being an inclusive family community.
- 4.3 In the EYFS, the children's excellent personal development is enriched through opportunities to work and play with older pupils. They feel safe and are well prepared for the next stage of their learning. They are learning to share and to make appropriate choices. The children are aware of healthy foods through class topic work and enjoy healthy break-time snacks provided by their parents. They manage their personal hygiene very well, for example by requesting tissues to blow their noses. Their behaviour is very good; they demonstrate respect for their peers and adults in their discussions and actions.
- 4.4 Pupils develop a good understanding of philosophical and spiritual issues. They are able to discuss these sensitively in history and English lessons, and demonstrate a mature response to ethical issues in religious studies. Pupils have a clear understanding of right and wrong, and are well behaved. They show respect for one another's moral opinions and viewpoints, for example in debating and in PSHCE discussions. The pupils themselves wrote the codes of conduct for the junior and senior schools.
- 4.5 Pupils of all ages are willing and eager to accept positions of responsibility and carry them out well. Older pupils value their roles in assisting the younger pupils, such as working alongside form teachers at form time, helping with reading, supporting the after-school art club, checking homework diaries with Year 11 and assisting with playground duties in the junior school. Year 12 pupils are trained as peer mentors. The younger pupils recognise the importance of these roles and aspire to them. The sixth-form pupils show excellent levels of leadership and maturity in their roles as prefects, head girl and boy, and house captains. They confidently lead house assemblies, take junior school assembly, and report on sports and extra-curricular events in whole-school assemblies.
- 4.6 Pupils are actively involved in the junior and senior school councils, which meet very regularly and contribute well to the development of the school. They have been responsible for some changes; for example, their requests for additional extra-curricular activities and equipment have been implemented. The pupils' questionnaire responses indicated a relatively low level of satisfaction with the school's reaction to pupils' suggestions. The inspectors found that this referred specifically to requests that were not practical or possible, such as the installation of a hot drinks vending machine.
- 4.7 Pupils are very aware of the needs of those who are less fortunate and each form engages in charitable fund-raising activities, many of which are innovative. Pupils are involved in local, national and international charities, and are well informed about these and about public services and institutions. They develop good political and

economic understanding through subjects such as history, geography, business studies and PSHCE, and through links with the local business forum.

- 4.8 Pupils have respect for other faiths and cultures, and learn about them in lessons and through direct contact. They enjoy their exchange visits and trips to other countries such as France, Germany, the United States of America and the Czech Republic, and are stimulated by attendance at the Model European Parliament. Many have forged strong links with overseas partners and have benefited considerably from these. Pupils also develop their cultural awareness through initiatives such as the 'artist of the month', and through trips to various cultural sites and institutions.

4.(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care

- 4.9 The arrangements for pastoral care are good.
- 4.10 Pastoral care is good overall and it has some excellent features. Pupils throughout the school feel well supported and guided. Staff make great efforts to ensure that pupils are treated as individuals, in accordance with the school's aims. The children in the EYFS are helped to develop effectively; the staff actively promote the children's well-being, ensuring that they feel safe and secure.
- 4.11 Pupils of all ages know to whom they can turn for support. They are confident in approaching their form tutors and teachers, older pupils and the highest levels of senior management. Since the previous inspection the appointment of two heads of years, for Years 7 to 9 and Years 10 and 11, has strengthened the pastoral system, with evident benefits for pupils. Form tutors maintain good records about their pupils which are carefully monitored by the heads of years.
- 4.12 Relationships between pupils of all ages are very positive. Many examples of positive and constructive working relations between staff and pupils were seen. Behaviour is very good around the school. Pupils reported that unkind behaviour towards others is rare. The school's policies and systems are successful in promoting good effort and co-operation; for example, the slips recording any poor behaviour or work in the senior school are understood by the pupils and are seen as being fair, and this provides a clearer overview to staff of any pupils who may be causing concern. The responses to parents' and pupils' questionnaires indicated some concerns about the handling of bullying incidents and the fairness of sanctions and rewards, with reference to a small number of cases where significant issues about the nature of the transgression and the sanctions had not been fully understood. No evidence for a wider concern was found and the pupils spoken to by inspectors felt that any such incidents are addressed swiftly. The school endeavours to seek pupils' opinions through the school councils and occasional surveys.
- 4.13 Effective extra academic assistance is regularly available. Pupils are encouraged to seek help either at the formal subject 'clinics' or individually outside class, and truly appreciate this commitment by staff. The school has a formal three-year plan to improve educational access for all pupils with SEND. More resource has been beneficially dedicated to this since the previous inspection and the pupils value highly their one-to-one and small group support. The inclusive EYFS setting works well with outside agencies to provide for children with additional needs.
- 4.14 Appropriate education about the importance of healthy eating is included within the curriculum throughout the school. However, this is not put into practice. At morning

break and lunchtimes, the balance of provision is not conducive to the development of healthy eating habits. Nonetheless, pupils enjoy a high level of enthusiastic participation in exercise and games within lessons, during extra-curricular activities and at break-times.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.16 The school has a comprehensive health and safety policy. Appropriate and thorough risk assessments are in place for all areas of the school and are undertaken for all educational visits and activities. Clear incident and accident records are kept, and potential hazards are identified and dealt with promptly. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risk from fire and regular practices are held; an appropriate record is kept of the dates, time taken and any issues arising. The school's safeguarding arrangements are in line with requirements, and all staff receive appropriate child protection training to ensure the welfare and safeguarding of all pupils, including children in the EYFS.
- 4.17 The school has appropriate provision for pupils who are ill or injured, or have special educational needs and/or disabilities. Medical facilities are satisfactory and the school has a large number of staff trained in first aid, including paediatric first aid in the EYFS. Children who are unwell are looked after sympathetically and good medical records are kept, including for the administration of medicines. Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing body has been reviewed and strengthened in response to the recommendations of the previous inspection. The education committee's terms of reference have been appropriately revised and new governors, including those with specialist educational expertise, have been recruited. The governing body now takes a more active approach to its role in carrying out effectively its responsibilities for child protection, welfare, and health and safety throughout the school, and discussion of these has become a regular agenda item at its meetings. Governors now undertake a rigorous biennial appraisal of all members of the senior management team and seek the views of a variety of staff.
- 5.3 Governors have been allocated specific areas of responsibility in line with their expertise, for example for the junior school, including the development of the EYFS, where their involvement is effective. A number of them visit the school at regular intervals, meeting with the appropriate staff. Efforts have been made to provide more opportunities for all staff to meet with the governors, both formally and informally. The governors also keep themselves well informed about the workings of the school through strong links with the senior management team and presentations from staff at governors' meetings. They now have an effective oversight of the school, ensuring that it fulfils its aims and maintains high academic standards. They pay close attention to financial planning and the provision of accommodation and learning resources.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is good.
- 5.5 Leadership and management are effective overall in ensuring that the aims of the school are met through its educational direction, and that pupils achieve well academically and develop into suitably safeguarded, caring and responsible young people. The 'open door' policy of the senior management is much appreciated by both staff and pupils. Leadership and management in the EYFS are excellent. The setting has successfully met the recommendations of the previous inspection through the extensive development of outdoor areas and by acquiring appropriate additional resources. Policies and procedures are consistently applied, for example to eliminate discrimination and promote equality. The leadership and management have the capacity to sustain the EYFS setting's current high standards.
- 5.6 Since the previous inspection, management roles and responsibilities throughout the school have been reviewed, and new posts have been created and filled at both middle and senior management level. Clear job descriptions and lines of accountability have been established, although in some cases these are not yet being fully implemented. In the junior school, additional management time has been provided, as recommended at the previous inspection; this proved beneficial, but it has not been possible to sustain. The new senior school structure for pastoral care, involving heads of years, has quickly become successfully embedded.

Communication between form tutors, teaching staff and heads of years is good and pupils feel very well supported.

- 5.7 Much work has also been done to improve curriculum planning and the tracking and monitoring of pupils' progress. However, this is still work in progress. Schemes of work have been updated in many areas, but as yet, few departments in the senior school have prepared different tasks or resources to support those with SEND or the most able within the class. Departmental heads complete a detailed annual audit of their area of responsibility, which is discussed with senior management. However, the monitoring of teaching and learning, including the monitoring of the marking and assessment of pupils' work, remains insufficient. The last staff appraisals were completed in summer 2010. A new appraisal system has now been devised and recently presented to the staff; it includes a significant role for heads of departments alongside senior managers, both in lesson observation and work scrutiny. The cycle was about to commence at the time of the inspection. The whole-school three-year development plan has well-considered and appropriate targets, success criteria and timescales. It was drawn up in consultation with the staff and governors, and its progress is updated annually.
- 5.8 The acquisition of a computerised management information system since the previous inspection is beginning to enable pupils' achievement and progress to be recorded and monitored centrally so that an overview can be formed. However, progress in developing this overarching system has been slow. Individual departments have continued to develop their own effective systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress within their subject area, and tutors make very good use of internal assessments and target grades for the older pupils.
- 5.9 Much care is given to the recruitment of well-qualified, high quality staff throughout the school and they are appropriately trained in their roles in safeguarding, welfare, health and safety. The school has thorough arrangements for checking the suitability of staff, including volunteers, and supply staff and governors, and its staff records and central register of appointments are appropriately detailed and meticulously maintained. Arrangements for the induction and support of newly qualified teachers and staff new to the school are excellent. All staff are encouraged to undertake relevant professional development and the effectiveness of such training is evaluated.
- 5.10 Parents speak highly of the relationships that they have with the EYFS setting. They are able to view freely the informative records of their children's progress, although currently they do not themselves contribute to these records. Links with the children's wider family are fostered through 'grandparent and special people mornings', which are much appreciated by the families.
- 5.11 A very large majority of parents responding to the questionnaire agreed that the school is well managed and that information about the school and its policies is readily available. The school produces an informative weekly newsletter. Almost all parents were satisfied with the reports about their children's work and progress. Inspectors found these reports to be detailed and useful, with clear targets for improvement. Most parents felt that the school handles their concerns well, although a few did not agree that the school provides a timely response to their questions. Examination of the informal complaints file and discussions during the inspection showed that the school responds promptly to such concerns. The school handles any parental complaints with care and follows its published procedures. Appropriate records are kept.

5.12 The active parent-staff association involves parents from all sections of the school and organises very successful social and fund-raising events as well as regular support with refreshments for matches and concerts.

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