



# **INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**VINEHALL SCHOOL**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**



## 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 February 2008.

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](http://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 31<sup>st</sup> 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.

Under Government arrangements, the inspection of boarding became an integrated part of ISI inspections from 1 September 2011. This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Boarding inspections were previously carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills. The relevant Ofsted report refers to an inspection in June 2011 and can be found at [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) under Children's social care/Boarding school.

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. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also 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 where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** 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 governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the boarding house and the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

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Mrs Loraine Cavanagh	Team Inspector (Former Head, IAPS school)
Mr Tim Cannell	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Vinehall School is a preparatory school for boys and girls situated in the Sussex countryside. It is housed in a Victorian stately home in extensive grounds, with a number of additional buildings added subsequently. The school has charitable status and is run by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school's aims are to provide an excellent all-round education both academically and through extra-curricular activities; to develop in each child independence, commitment and enthusiasm; to foster a spirit of mutual respect and kindness and encourage everyone to do their best for the community, and to encourage every child to participate fully in life and to learn about themselves and their place in the world.
- 1.3 The school was established in 1938 for a small number of children from the local community. It now educates boys and girls aged from two to thirteen years, and offers boarding facilities for older pupils, and Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision in its Nursery, Kindergarten and Reception classes. Since the previous inspection, a new headmaster has been appointed, who took up his post in January 2011. A new housemistress and assistant housemaster took up their posts in September 2011.
- 1.4 Currently there are 278 pupils on roll, 149 boys and 129 girls. Fifty pupils board, on either a full or a flexible basis. Forty-one children learn in the EYFS. Standardised test results indicate that the ability profile of the pupils is above the national average. Most day pupils and boarders come from white British backgrounds. A number of boarders come from overseas.
- 1.5 No pupil currently has a statement of special educational need. Eighty pupils have been identified by the school as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Nine pupils have been identified as having English as an additional language (EAL), and six receive support for this.
- 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 in its Early Years Foundation Stage provision and the National Curriculum (NC) equivalence are shown in the following tables.

### ***Early Years Foundation Stage Setting***

School	NC name
Nursery	Pre-Nursery
Kindergarten	Nursery
Reception	Reception

## **2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL**

### **2.(a) Main findings**

- 2.1 Vinehall School is extremely successful in meeting its aims. Pupils' achievement is excellent, and they reach high standards of attainment in their academic work and their extra-curricular activities, especially the performing arts and sport. Pupils are confident and articulate, and have excellent literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) skills. They make rapid progress across the school, because of the excellent quality of teaching, and the extensive breadth and depth of the curriculum. Teachers' enthusiasm for their subjects and their wide subject knowledge inspire and motivate pupils, and lessons are full of pace and challenge. In the best lessons the individual needs of pupils are particularly well met, thanks to careful use of assessment, though systems for tracking pupils' progress are not yet embedded throughout the school. There are some excellent examples of best practice in marking, making clear to pupils how well they have done and what they need to do to improve, but this is not consistent in all classes.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Thanks to the excellent relationships and the warm, caring atmosphere, pupils thrive and develop faith in their abilities. They are very considerate of others and keen to make their contribution to the school community. Pupils are exceptionally well looked after and arrangements for safeguarding their welfare are exemplary. Boarding provision is excellent and boarders are exceptionally well cared for. Children make an outstanding start to their education in the EYFS.
- 2.3 The quality of governance and of leadership and management is excellent. Governors have a very clear overview of the school's strengths and areas for development, and meet all their statutory requirements in full. Thanks to the high quality of school self-evaluation and development planning, the school is well poised to move forward, focused on the right priorities for improvement. The school has responded positively to the recommendations of its previous inspections. Parents are very happy with the school and what it offers their children. They are particularly happy with the wealth of curricular and extra-curricular opportunities available to their children, and the quality and quantity of information available to themselves.

## **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.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.
- 2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

### **(ii) Recommendations for further improvement**

- 2.7 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
  - 1. Introduce the planned new whole-school systems for assessment, tracking and target setting in order to increase the level of personalised support for pupils.
  - 2. Disseminate the best practice in marking across the whole school so that all pupils are fully aware of how to improve their work.
  - 3. Increase opportunities for the use of a range of ICT in the EYFS, in line with the pre-prep development plan.

### **3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS**

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

- 3.1 Overall achievement is excellent throughout the school.
- 3.2 The pupils reach high standards in their academic work and in their extra-curricular activities. This is fully in keeping with the school's aims of providing an excellent all-round education both academically and through extra-curricular pursuits.
- 3.3 Pupils have an extremely wide range of knowledge for their age in all subjects of the curriculum. They are able to make links across the curriculum, use their skills in different situations and recall quickly what they have previously learned. Their literacy, numeracy, and ICT skills are excellent. Pupils are able to write at length in history, geography and religious studies, for example, as well as in English. They apply their speaking and listening skills confidently in French and Latin, and use their mathematical knowledge in science and geography where needed.
- 3.4 The pupils' attainment cannot be directly compared with average performances in national tests. However, evidence from the scrutiny of pupils' books and from work seen in lessons indicates that it is high compared with national age-related expectations from the EYFS onwards. The school gives pupils and parents careful guidance on their choice of subsequent schools. This has meant that, for the last three years, all pupils have gained places at their first choice of senior school. Many achieve scholarships in a range of fields including academic, music, drama, sport and art. They make excellent progress overall compared with others of similar ability nationally. Pupils with SEND and EAL make similarly high progress to their peers, because of the quality of their specialist support.
- 3.5 Pupils' achievements outside the classroom are excellent, and their achievement in the performing arts in particular is a strength of the school. Every year group puts on an annual production, and the leavers' production is a highlight of the school calendar. The school's choir and musical ensembles, particularly the string quartets, perform regularly in public and at music events in Hastings, Eastbourne and Brighton. In sport, pupils play rugby, cricket and netball at club and county level, and reach national standards in swimming and gymnastics.
- 3.6 Pupils have excellent attitudes to learning. They are lively, enthusiastic and interested learners, who apply themselves diligently to their tasks, persevere no matter how challenging their work is, and produce large quantities of neatly presented work. Most behave in an exemplary fashion in lessons, so that no teaching time is wasted. They have confidence in their abilities, and are not afraid to put forward their ideas. They show themselves to be very capable of working co-operatively with others, and of working independently when given the opportunity.

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

- 3.7 The quality of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 The curriculum provides ample opportunity for pupils of all abilities and needs and is consistently offering the required opportunities in line with the school's aims. The curriculum is enriched by opportunities in Latin from Year 4, and in carpentry and design technology. Music and drama are strengths of the school. The broad curriculum and long school day provide the pupils with an extensive range of experiences across linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social

and creative education. As a result the pupils develop the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to make progress. It is further enhanced by the extra-curricular breadth, which allows the pupils to foster further talents and develop even greater self-awareness.

- 3.9 The curriculum is appropriate for the different abilities and ages of the pupils. The curriculum support for those pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent. Clear targets are set through pupils' individual education plans. Whilst their needs are met effectively in one-to-one lessons, there is some inconsistency in the quality of support in other lessons. In the best lessons tasks tailored to meet different pupils' needs were evident across the whole ability range. The school has identified in its development plan the need to create greater independence in the pupils' learning across Years 3 and 4 through a more themed, cross curricular approach.
- 3.10 The school plans work very effectively and departments are thorough with well organised subject handbooks and schemes of work. The teachers' lesson planning and subject knowledge are particularly good, and they make very good use of the excellent facilities and resources available to them. An effective and comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme supports the school's aims and ethos. The different departments of the school meet to plan effective handovers and this ensures a smooth transition between stages of education. The school takes clear pride in preparing pupils well and supporting parents in their choice of senior schools.
- 3.11 The wide range of extra-curricular activities encourages the pupils to extend their interest, skills and knowledge in many sporting and creative ways. The pupils enjoy a range of clubs across such areas as sport, art, carpentry, gym and cookery. An excellent range of visits and trips further extend the pupils horizons and knowledge of the world around them, as well as the use of the extensive school grounds in subjects such as art and science. Recently, the parents were also encouraged to join activities such as mountain biking in the grounds. Sport, art, performing arts and music contribute extremely effectively to the pupil's performance and personal development. The pupils participate in sport every day at the prep school and achieve high standards across the main team sports. They also achieve very high standards in swimming and gymnastics, competing in national competitions.
- 3.12 The school encourages close links with the community, inviting other local schools to use the excellent facilities, as well as the pupils performing and learning within the local surrounding area. Visiting authors and musicians also perform within the school and to the local community. The choir performs in local residential homes and a local hospice, and enjoy themed instrumental and choral days at a variety of senior schools. Many trips in this country and abroad, as well as long standing support of charities locally and internationally, further broaden the pupils' social and spiritual awareness.

### **3.(c) The contribution of teaching**

- 3.13 The overall quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.14 Teaching fully supports the school's aims to provide an excellent all-round education for each pupil. Teaching is frequently reflective, inspiring and imaginative, and pupils are enthusiastic and responsive, and stimulated to achieve their best.
- 3.15 The many high quality lessons are characterised by a brisk pace and careful management of time. Teachers have appropriately high expectations of pupils of all

abilities, including the most able, and pupils make excellent progress in line with the school's aims. Strong teaching is reflected in the high levels of progress and achievement. Teachers' careful planning is designed to foster pupils' interest and enthusiasm. Lessons build well on pupils' previous attainment and their particular needs. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subjects they teach. This enables the pupils to successfully develop their learning skills.

- 3.16 Teaching exploits an imaginative range of approaches to promote learning. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson the children excitedly observed chocolate turning to liquid in the heat of their hands. Teachers know their pupils well and employ effective questioning techniques to match their abilities. High quality teaching guides the tangible sense of purposeful enjoyment of the lessons. Praise and encouragement are given consistently. Excellent rapport and strong positive relationships between teachers and pupils ensure that pupils feel well supported and able to seek advice. The pupils fully endorse the judgement that their teachers help them to learn, and provide individual help.
- 3.17 Teachers identify pupils' specific needs, and reflect these in planning, but tasks that match particular abilities within a class are not always fully implemented within classroom lessons. However, comprehensive individual support is provided to higher and lower achievers. In addition, the careful deployment of additional staff ensures that pupils are given a consistent and effective level of support during class time. Careful attention is given by the special needs co-ordinators to drawing up individual education plans, and assessments enable the support staff to set clear targets and to monitor each pupil's progress over time. Pupils with EAL are given excellent support by dedicated specialist staff, and as a result, make excellent progress. Opportunities for promoting pupils' independent thinking and learning are evident in the best lessons.
- 3.18 Teaching is supported by a very good range of quality resources that are used to good effect to engage the pupils and increase their enjoyment of learning. Interactive whiteboards support teaching in all classrooms and where they are used imaginatively they help to stimulate and develop the pupils' interest and enthusiasm. The libraries are well stocked and used widely by pupils.
- 3.19 Most marking is encouraging and supportive to pupils, and at its best, identifies clear steps for improvement through evaluative comment. However, marking is not consistently applied across the age range and sometimes lacks appropriate indicators of how work can be improved further. Teaching is well supported by the range of assessments made by teachers, and through nationally-recognised tests. The school has recently introduced a tracking system to identify where improvement or extra support is required. Teachers have a full understanding of the required levels pupils must achieve in order to gain places or scholarships at their school of choice.

## **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 pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' personal development reflects the school's aims, and is apparent in every area of school life. Spiritual development is a strong feature. Confident and self-aware, pupils appreciate the non-material aspects of life, and are emotionally mature for their age.
- 4.3 Moral development is excellent. Pupils have an extremely well developed sense of right and wrong. Respecting their peers and adults, they have a secure grasp of the codes of good conduct expected of them. They are proud of their school, understanding its rules as well as the moral and ethical values which are reflected in the many excellent wall displays and codes of conduct, such as the golden rules in the pre-prep. Weekly PSHE lessons and thoughtful assemblies offer opportunities for pupils of all ages to explore moral issues. In the inspection questionnaire, pupils expressed their strong satisfaction with all aspects of school life.
- 4.4 The pupils develop extremely well socially and this is a major strength. They are able to accept responsibility and show initiative, contributing much to the school and the world beyond. A thriving school council, prefects' meetings and other committees allow pupils to have a say in the life of their school. Fund raising for good causes, such as the charity Rwanda Aid encourages the pupils to think of those less fortunate than themselves. Various reward systems celebrate both academic and personal achievement. Merit badges are worn with great pride by the pupils, whilst the school's system of recording personal achievement in all areas underlines the school's aim to value the individual but at the same time to foster contributions to the community and the wider world. The pupils are responsible and are encouraged to think of others with kindness and consideration. The prefects help to monitor this and discuss potential issues with the headmaster in weekly meetings. Class monitors and prefects carry out their duties conscientiously, responding well to the high expectations of the staff. Care and kindness towards others is demonstrated in buddy systems and the 'Lenten Friends' scheme where children and staff carry out small acts of kindness to others with the aim of building new friendships.
- 4.5 Pupils understand and respect other faiths and cultures. Lessons and activities underline this, promoting tolerance and interest in cultures and traditions, which are different from their own. Building on the success of the previous inspection, the school has incorporated more parental involvement in cultural events and activities at the school, inviting parents to talk about their own beliefs and cultures; and events such as the recent Thanksgiving Dinner, organised for the American parents and pupils, have been a great success. The many interesting wall displays of pupils' work in classrooms and around the school reflect the wide range of cultural interests and activities, geographical, historical, religious, social and political.

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

- 4.6 The quality of pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.7 The staff offer outstanding support to the pupils. In all stages of the school the pupils' development is paramount and appropriate strategies are in place to support them.
- 4.8 Relationships are very positive between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves. In addition, the policies and procedures in place for managing and monitoring pupils' behaviour and dealing with pastoral concerns are thorough and comprehensive. Thus pupils feel confident that any concerns or worries they may have, will be dealt with promptly and sympathetically by the school. Pupils are aware of the different ways by which they can raise any concerns, including, talking directly with a member of staff or by putting a note in the 'worry box'. The school has an excellent anti-bullying policy, which is fully implemented and effective in its outcomes so that pupils feel safe and secure.
- 4.9 Because of the excellent relationships that exist between all members of the school community, pupils are confident and well motivated. The system of awarding 'good copies' and credits are ways in which the school positively promotes good work and good behaviour and are particularly liked by the younger children.
- 4.10 The pupils are involved in both a school council and a food committee with each class electing representatives. Issues are also raised and discussed on a regular basis during PSHE lessons at the start of each term. The pupils themselves find these committees to be a useful tool in expressing their views and feel that the school have responded positively to a number of ideas that they have suggested.
- 4.11 Pupils are encouraged to be healthy through balanced and healthy meals, as well as regular games sessions and opportunities to enjoy make the most of the grounds. During the inspection the pupils were seen to be having fun in the snow, making snowmen and tobogganing. Keeping healthy is well promoted, and the school grows its own produce, belonging to the Soil Association accreditation scheme. The school has a structured plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- 4.12 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.13 The school's arrangements take full regard of official guidance. All staff receive appropriate and regular training on the safeguarding of children. Those with particular responsibility in this area undertake additional training. A named governor is also trained and has responsibility for safeguarding procedures throughout the school.
- 4.14 Health and safety policies and systems for monitoring practice in all areas of welfare, health and safety are excellent and can be seen to work in day to day practice, for example in relation to social media. Admission and attendance registers are properly maintained and recorded.
- 4.15 There are suitable arrangements for identifying and reducing the risks from fire and other hazards. Risk assessments are undertaken regularly throughout the school

and for all appropriate activities. Excellent medical support is provided for all pupils who are ill, with a well-staffed medical room and a team of matrons, one of whom is available at all times. Medical records are maintained in an exemplary fashion. The school meets all regulatory requirements.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.16 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.17 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The highly positive opportunities that boarders experience enable them to develop impressive inter-personal skills both with staff and their peers. Boarders appreciate differing cultural and ethnic needs, which results in an outstanding sense of mutual respect within the house. The boarders' confidence and independence are strongly nurtured through the boarding routines. The range of clubs and activities provided are greatly enjoyed by boarders, who speak passionately about the excellent balance of boarding life. Media resources and ICT encourage boarders to take an interest in the world outside school. Senior boarders watch the news each evening ensuring that they keep up to date with current affairs; they understand that this knowledge enhances their interview skills for their next phase of education.
- 4.18 Boarders realise the benefits of taking on roles of responsibility such as reveille, which involves helping out with boarding routines. They know that these duties help them to develop essential skills for future life. All senior boarders have opportunity to be a dormitory monitor and greatly enjoy the requirements of the role. These responsibilities are effectively overseen by staff, ensuring that monitors have a balanced and fair approach. House meetings enable pupils to contribute their views and identify areas for improvement. Boarders feel that their opinions are greatly valued by the leadership team and play a part in the boarding development.
- 4.19 Boarders are very happy, feeling extremely safe and very well supported by staff. They know who they can approach for personal guidance and help, including nominated adults outside school. In addition, all boarders are assigned a tutor for academic and pastoral support. Boarders keenly stress that disagreements are quickly sorted out and that incidences of bullying are rare. The clear procedure for behavioural management is highly effective and clearly understood by all.
- 4.20 The quality of provision and care for boarders is excellent. Boarders receive impressive support from staff and this has a significant impact on their outcomes. Pupils new to boarding are provided with excellent information manuals, and all are assigned an experienced boarder as a boarding guardian; both strategies are highly effective in helping them to settle in.
- 4.21 The boarders' health and medical well-being is assured by well-staffed facilities and comprehensive procedures, including those for medication. Boarders are encouraged to eat healthily and individual dietary needs are extremely well provided for. Meals are varied, nutritionally well-balanced and enjoyable. After early supper, boarders enjoy snacks and drinks during the evening. Wednesday 'Film Night', complete with popcorn, is a particular favourite amongst boarders.
- 4.22 An exciting recreational programme is planned for boarders at weekends. These include visits to local attractions and well-planned activities using the school's exceptionally good facilities. During the evenings boarders have specific routines and engaging resources to occupy them. There is an appropriate balance of free time and study time.

- 4.23 The extremely spacious accommodation for boarders is comfortable, secure and of a good standard, with every effort made to ensure that the environment is homely and welcoming. Dormitories and washrooms are particularly well maintained, clean and regularly refurbished. There is ample storage space for boarders' personal effects, including locked provision, and valuables are kept safely in the boarding office. Arrangements for boarders' laundry needs are highly impressive and matrons take great pride in ensuring that boarders look smart in their uniforms.
- 4.24 Provision for boarders to communicate with their families is excellent. Boarders have access to landlines, email and their mobile phones during free time. Families are welcomed into the school and visit regularly for sports matches, plays and seasonal events. Senior boarding staff keep in regular touch with families, ensuring that key information is shared.
- 4.25 Excellent policies and procedures are in place to ensure that boarders' are safeguarded meticulously well. Comprehensive systems and checks are in place, and followed, when recruiting and vetting new staff. Staff have a thorough understanding of their responsibilities through training relating to safeguarding and are well supported by designated people. Strong support links with the local authority ensure that the pupils' welfare is at the forefront of everyday practice. Boarders know that their concerns or worries will be very well supported. There is a culture of exceptionally good behaviour in the house and there are suitable procedures to counteract bullying. Pupils say that they are well cared for. There is an appropriate approach to health and safety matters. Risk assessments are extremely thorough for both on-site activities and out-of-school visits; boarders are encouraged to become risk conscious. These processes, together with regular fire drills ensure that boarders' safety is given the highest priority. Staff supervise boarders very well and efficient systems are in place to ensure that their whereabouts is known to staff at all times. The action to be taken should a boarder go missing is clearly established.
- 4.26 The highly effective leadership and management for boarding have a significant impact on all aspects of the provision and successfully meet the boarding aims. Pupils and parents are very well informed about all aspects of boarding life through the comprehensive policy information on the website and highly detailed boarding manuals. Boarding is an important part of school and extremely good links exist between the academic life of the school and the boarding community, with members of the teaching staff regularly undertaking boarding duties. All staff are well qualified, suitably experienced and receive excellent induction and training opportunities to support their boarding input. Staff demonstrate a highly dedicated level of commitment towards the needs of boarders. Senior boarding staff have excellent vision for improvement and ensure that priorities feed into the whole school's development plan.
- 4.27 The views of boarders and their parents are strongly embraced by the school. In their responses to the questionnaires parents expressed very high levels of satisfaction with the large majority of boarding provision. Specific strengths identified include pupils' enjoyment of boarding life and the quality of care that staff provide. Inspectors concur with these extremely positive views. A very small minority of parents raised concerns over the quality of the accommodation and recreational activities, but inspectors found no evidence to support this. Since previous inspection, recommendations regarding administering first aid and clarifying job descriptions have been promptly addressed and new leaders have continued to improve on the high quality provision recognised in the report at that time.

## **5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

### **5.(a) The quality of governance**

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 The school is able to meet its aims very successfully. Prudent financial management has enabled the school to maintain the high quality and extensive range of its provision throughout the economic downturn, and finances are effectively targeted at appropriate priorities. Good levels of well-trained and qualified staff have been sustained. The school is well resourced, specialist facilities are of a very high standard, and accommodation is well maintained.
- 5.3 Governors have a clear insight into the work of the school, and provide excellent support and challenge in their monitoring role. Committee structures run smoothly, and governors' business is properly conducted. They discharge their statutory responsibilities highly effectively, ensuring that all regulations are fully met. Safeguarding procedures in particular are exemplary, and governors ensure that procedures are being followed in practice.

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

- 5.4 The quality of leadership and management is excellent.
- 5.5 The school is very successful in meeting its aims of producing well-rounded individuals who excel academically and in their extra-curricular pursuits, who play a full part in school life, and who show kindness and consideration to others. Staff at all levels are excellent role models for pupils, and relationships between staff and pupils are outstandingly supportive.
- 5.6 The quality of the school's policies and procedures is exceptional. As a result, all regulations are fully met. The school's single central record of appointments is a model of good practice.
- 5.7 School self-evaluation is accurate and realistic. In the period since the appointment of the new headmaster, the school's leadership has undertaken a thorough review, identifying the school's key strengths and those areas capable of improvement. This has resulted in a clear vision for school improvement and the right educational priorities for the future. The school development plan is well formulated, succinct and easy to manage as a working document. Current work to improve progress is focusing on refining systems for assessment, tracking and target setting for pupils.
- 5.8 Staff with leadership responsibilities fulfil their roles with enthusiasm and commitment. They have a clear understanding of what is required of them. Subject leaders in the prep and the pre-prep schools liaise closely to ensure continuity for pupils as they move between the sections of the school. The school gives staff good opportunities to improve their skills and further their careers. Good systems are being developed to enable subject leaders to play a greater part in the performance management of the staff in their departments. Improvement since the previous inspection has been good, and all recommendations have been fully tackled or form part of continuing development plans.

- 5.9 Links with the parents are excellent. They are very supportive of the school and appreciate the wide range of information available to them through for example: email, home/school booklets and through regular use of newsletters from both the headmaster and the head of the pre-prep. All required information is provided to parents of pupils or those of prospective pupils. Parents sign children's weekly prep school diaries. The welcome pack and parents handbook provided on entry to the school is much appreciated. Assessment cards for effort are sent out every half term from the prep school to notify parents of progress. Depending upon the year group, one or two parents meetings are held each year and full reports on their children's achievement and progress are sent out at least twice a year. Staff at all levels make themselves available for discussions with parents, and senior staff are in evidence at the beginning and end of the school day. A small minority of parents raised concerns over individual matters. However, evidence available at the time of the inspection did not indicate that these concerns were widespread.
- 5.10 Parents are given many opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. There is an excellent Friends of Vinehall Association run by a committee principally for social and fundraising events; parents are rightly proud of their fundraising efforts for the school. Class representatives cascade information from the Friends, including arrangements in bad weather.
- 5.11 Parents are regularly invited to class assemblies and also attend other events such as a leavers' concert and service, informal concerts and prize giving. A recently introduced initiative is a 'Puzzle It Out' session which parents run at drop off time for pre- prep pupils. This is proving popular with both parents and children.

## **6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE**

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

- 6.1 The overall effectiveness of the setting is outstanding.
- 6.2 The excellent relationships between staff and children, and meticulous organisation ensure that the setting meets its aims to provide a nurturing family environment which promotes the development of the children's confidence and self-esteem.
- 6.3 Excellent teaching in a welcoming and stimulating environment ensures that all children achieve very good standards in their learning and development, and that their needs are met. Children's welfare is effectively promoted and safeguarding procedures are in place. The setting has the capacity for sustaining high standards.

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

- 6.4 Leadership and management are outstanding.
- 6.5 Recommendations raised at the previous inspection have been fully implemented. A named governor plays an active role in maintaining contact with the setting. Safeguarding of pupils, rooted in meticulous policies, is of high quality, with a designated child protection person, and appropriate checking systems and training. A similarly thorough approach ensured that equality is promoted and diversity respected. Realistic self-evaluation provides the basis for a clear vision for future developments, which are set out clearly in an improvement plan.
- 6.6 Resources are used very effectively to promote children's learning. ICT has been identified in the pre-prep development plan as an area for improvement, in order to improve the range of equipment used across the setting.
- 6.7 Partnerships with parents and outside agencies are a real strength. Staff effectively involve parents in their children's learning through constant contact. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents indicated overwhelmingly that they value the work of the school, particularly the pastoral care, links with parents and children's achievement.

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

- 6.8 The quality of the provision is outstanding.
- 6.9 Children benefit from a broad curriculum which is enriched by specialist French, music, ballet and swimming. Continuous daily assessment is recorded into their profiles which guides future planning.
- 6.10 There is an excellent balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities in all four classes. The high quality of open-ended questioning and free-flow activities allow children to develop their critical thinking and independence. Specialist help is available to help with any concerns from the staff about individuals, and children's welfare needs are very sympathetically supported. Children are encouraged to

develop independence in their personal care, to eat healthily and to wash their hands when appropriate.

- 6.11 The setting is included in whole school events such as arts week and the Olympic project, helping the children to be interested in the world around them and promoting smooth transition to Year 1.

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

- 6.12 Outcomes for children are outstanding.
- 6.13 All children, including those with SEND and EAL make very good progress towards the Early Learning Goals in relation to their different starting points. The practical approach to literacy and numeracy means that children at all levels are learning to read well and use numbers confidently. Reception children were seen using number squares up to 100 and making addition sums of their own.
- 6.14 Children in all four classes have excellent relationships with staff, and make good progress developing skills for the future. They play co-operatively, are friendly towards all their classmates and understand how to stay safe. The children learn about the importance of a healthy diet and the benefits of exercise through topics such as 'myself'. They make the most of the many opportunities to choose their own activities and are being well prepared for the next stage of their education.

#### **Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

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

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