



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

FOREST PREPARATORY SCHOOL

INTERIM INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Forest Preparatory School

The senior school was inspected at the same time and a separate report published.

Full Name of School/College	Forest Preparatory School		
DfE Number	320/6000		
Registered Charity Number	312677		
Address	Forest Preparatory School College Place Snaresbrook London E17 3PY		
Telephone Number	020 8520 1744		
Fax Number	020 8520 3656		
Email Address	prep@forest.org.uk		
Head	Mrs Elizabeth Garner		
Chair of Governors	Mr John Matthews		
Age Range	4 to 11		
Total Number of Pupils	271		
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (136 boys; 135 girls;)		
Numbers by Age	3-5(EYFS):	32	5-11: 239
EYFS Gender	Mixed		
Inspection dates	29 Nov 2011 to 30 Nov 2011		

PREFACE

This report is according to the *Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) schedule for INTERIM inspections*. The inspection is a two-day visit with a focus on compliance with regulatory requirements. ISI inspections occur every three years and have two formats, interim and standard, which usually occur in an alternating pattern. The school's next inspection will therefore follow the standard schedule, which includes two visits totalling five days and places greater emphasis on the quality of education and care in addition to reporting on regulatory compliance. The school's previous inspection was in October 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to 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 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.

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills	2
The quality of the pupils' personal development	3
The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management	4
3 ACTION POINTS	5
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	5
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	5
4 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
(b) The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
(c) The quality of the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	6
(d) Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	7
INSPECTION EVIDENCE	8

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Forest School is a co-educational day school for pupils aged four to eighteen, founded in 1834. It is a registered charity, governed by a governing council. The school comprises three schools on a single site: a boys school, a girls school and a preparatory school, together with a leisure centre. The preparatory school comprises the 'Pre-Prep' for pupils aged four to seven, (the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) plus Years 1 and 2), and the 'Prep', for pupils aged seven to eleven in Years 3 to 6. The Pre-Prep opened in 2001. It has doubled its pupil numbers since the previous inspection. The head of the preparatory school is responsible to the Warden of Forest School, but has considerable autonomy.
- 1.2 The school aims to promote pupils' academic achievement and their all-round personal development and to celebrate individual success, integrating the values of excellence, diversity, community and heritage into all aspects of school life.
- 1.3 Currently, 271 pupils are on roll. Thirty-two of these are aged four to five years and in the EYFS. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 (the 'Prep'), are taught in single-sex classes within a co-educational framework of recreation and activities. Specialist teachers contribute to provision for art, music, physical education, foreign languages, design technology and drama.
- 1.4 Most pupils are drawn from a wide local area. A large proportion of pupils come from a variety of ethnic minority groups. There are no pupils at an early stage of speaking English or for whom English is not the principal language spoken.
- 1.5 Entry to the preparatory school is by the school's own assessment at the ages of four or seven. The ability profile of the school is above average. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs, but the school identifies 16 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). On leaving Year 6, most pupils continue their education in the senior Boys' or Girls' School.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

The quality of the pupils' achievements and their learning, attitudes and basic skills

- 2.1 The pupils' excellent overall achievement reflects the school's great success in meeting its aim to promote pupils' all-round development. High standards are achieved, including in the EYFS. The pupils achieve a number of competitive scholarships for academic achievement and music. A few take these up in selective senior schools elsewhere, but most take them up in the school's senior sections.
- 2.2 The pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are excellent. They are highly articulate and speak confidently, listening carefully to each other. They express themselves exceptionally well in writing. They apply mathematical skills competently across the curriculum, showing well developed abilities to think cogently and logically. Their well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills enhance their learning. Scientific, art and music skills are all well developed. They achieve high standards in sports, with some gaining selective coaching places with a local professional football club.
- 2.3 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to performance against a fixed national average, but on the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. The pupils make good progress overall in relation to pupils of similar ability; for some, progress is excellent. This is borne out in lessons and in pupils' written work. Discussions, checks on marking and planning, and observation of a sample of lessons showed that teaching is outstanding, making a very strong contribution to pupils' all-round achievements. The provision for pupils with SEND is well organised so that these pupils progress well through a carefully targeted approach in the classroom. More-able pupils benefit from a range of extension work and a carefully managed programme that ensures inclusion of these pupils in activities with older pupils where appropriate, for instance, in sports teams.
- 2.4 This progress is made possible by a first-class curriculum and a substantial amount of excellent teaching. Exciting linguistic opportunities cover four modern foreign languages including Mandarin. Pupils greatly enjoy, and do well in, the 'something for everyone' vast range of extra-curricular activities, ranging from juggling to Guatemalan plate-making. Through these activities, they develop significant personal, creative, physical, aesthetic and creative skills.
- 2.5 The excellent site amenities and access to specialist staff enrich pupils' experiences and achievement, for instance in music and swimming. Curricular planning is good overall but the current timetabling for the specialist facilities and lessons means that Pre-Prep pupils have tightly-packed mornings and sometimes have to move frequently from one location to another on the extensive site. While this does not compromise progress, and great benefit derives from use of the facilities and tuition, the timing means that sometimes academic classroom learning is shortened at times when pupils are at their most receptive.
- 2.6 Teachers know their pupils well and use the excellent resources thoroughly. Most lessons are carefully planned and conducted at a brisk pace. Excellent classroom management ensures that pupils remain engaged and are helped to learn, cultivating highly positive attitudes. Consequently, pupils apply themselves very conscientiously to their work. They co-operate very well with each other both

informally and when working in groups. Assessment is of high quality; the use of information from checks on pupils' progress mean that lessons are very well focused to the different abilities in the class.

The quality of the pupils' personal development

- 2.7 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent, fulfilling the school aims to promote pupils' all-round personal development. Pupils are confident and friendly, with highly-developed feelings of their own worth and of respect for others. They have an exceptional sense of the spiritual, for example showing a delight in the natural world around them. They have a very strong moral understanding of right and wrong, and an excellent appreciation of social responsibility. They are thoroughly concerned for each other's feelings and welfare, and are keen to take on responsibility, helping to look after younger pupils, or as school councillors. They are enthusiastic and generous in their fundraising for local and national charities. Relationships between pupils are excellent. They are courteous and well mannered; supportive of each other and increasingly self-assured and positive in their attitudes to the world around them. Their excellent cultural awareness is evident in their tolerance and understanding of each other's views and customs.
- 2.8 The pupils' successful personal development is founded on excellent pastoral care. The direct role of form teachers is strongly supported by the commitment of all staff to the welfare and progress of each pupil. Policies for safeguarding pupils, for promoting good behaviour and for the prevention of bullying are comprehensive and implemented thoroughly. The school's approach to bullying is based on prevention. Procedures are well known to staff and thorough training is regularly undertaken. A recent anti-bullying week was given additional impetus by a questionnaire seeking pupils' opinions and experiences. Their views matched those in their pre-inspection questionnaire: that pupils feel valued and secure members of the school family, and say that there is always someone they can turn to. In the pre-inspection questionnaire responses, strong support for the school was evident. Pupils fully appreciate the range of opportunities and support provided for them. A small minority questioned whether staff are even-handed towards pupils, especially in the way rewards and sanctions are applied. The school had already recognised this concern and recently implemented a new policy to ensure a more consistent approach.
- 2.9 The 'wraparound' care provides a welcoming start to the day, and is a valued additional facility after school that supplements the school day effectively. Excellent health and safety measures are conscientiously implemented, and procedures for dealing with the risk of fire and other dangers are well-established. The two school matrons and a well-equipped medical room support the provision of first aid. Pupils appreciate the high-quality food provided by a good variety of healthy menus. Admissions and daily registrations are properly recorded and retained. Comprehensive plans ensure continual improvements in access to the school's facilities for pupils and others with SEND.

The effectiveness of governance, leadership and management

- 2.10 Governance is excellent and ensures that the values of excellence, diversity, community and heritage are integrated into all aspects of school life in fulfilment of the school's aims. The governing council provides effective direction of the school and good direct oversight of such matters as health and safety, child protection and special educational needs. They ensure that all statutory requirements are met, and that reviews of the school's safeguarding arrangements, and their implementation, are conducted as required. A detailed development plan, covering all aspects of the education offered by the school, is regularly reviewed and renewed in the light of current priorities. The expertise of the council member who is very experienced in the education for the preparatory school age range is of particular benefit to the council and to the school. The council monitors the work of the school satisfactorily through reports and information about pupils' successes, and carries out some monitoring visits. The Academic Committee has been formed to ensure a more thorough and formal approach to this aspect of governors' responsibilities.
- 2.11 Leadership and management are excellent. Delegation from the Warden to the school works exceptionally well and communication systems are first-class. Very well organised management procedures, including systems to check pupils' progress, ensure that achievement is excellent and equality of opportunity is provided. Thorough appraisal and evaluation of teaching and learning, with subject leaders fully involved, helps to maintain and improve standards, as well as supporting the professional development of staff. Thorough checks are carried out on the suitability of all staff. The spacious site provides excellent facilities to support learning, with preparatory school pupils benefiting from the joint use of many of the facilities, such as the swimming pools and the theatre.
- 2.12 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. In their pre-inspection questionnaires, there was strong support for the school, especially the worthwhile attitudes and views promoted, the extra curricular activities, the encouragement they felt to be involved, and the ease and effectiveness of communication enjoyed with the school including excellent provision of information. Inspection findings endorse these views. Parents confirm that a comprehensive complaints procedure is readily available. Records show that any concerns have been dealt with promptly and effectively. A very small minority of pre-inspection questionnaire responses expressed concern focused on provision for SEND pupils, homework, information about their child's progress and the management of the school. The inspection findings are that pupils with SEND are provided with high levels of care and support, homework demands are generally reasonable, information on pupils' progress is specific and detailed, and management of the school is excellent.

3. ACTION POINTS

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

- 3.1 The school meets all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 3.2 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Ensure that balance is achieved in the mornings, between moving around the site and form-room based lessons, for Pre-Prep pupils including those in the EYFS.
 2. Ensure that planning for individuals and observation and assessment records clearly identify children's next steps in learning in the EYFS

4. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

4.1 This is an outstanding setting that fulfils its aims extremely well to ensure children's individual needs are met. High-quality teaching nurtures and directs children, encouraging independent thinking and promoting confidence and an eagerness to learn. Consequently, children enjoy their learning and make excellent progress. Children are safeguarded and cared for extremely well. Strong partnerships, with parents and outside agencies, ensure children's needs are fully met. Sustained improvement of the setting is achieved by constant and reflective self-review.

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

4.2 Outstanding leadership and management ensure that policies to keep children safe, promote equality and eliminate discrimination are thoroughly implemented. Practitioners fully understand their responsibilities for child protection and have ready access to continuing professional development. Excellent partnerships with parents and outside agencies contribute significantly to children's learning and development. Pre-inspection questionnaire responses show parents are overwhelmingly supportive of the setting. High quality, imaginative resources, including site-wide facilities, provide a stimulating learning environment indoors and outside. Leaders have a clear vision of the way forward. The development plan shows accurate self-evaluation and a clear, shared vision for action.

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

4.3 Provision is outstanding overall. Excellent relationships and small classes enable staff to plan exciting activities. Children have excellent opportunities for independent learning, creative exploration and specialist teaching, and the use of main school facilities further enhances children's experiences, although timing of its use is sometimes challenging. Planning for learning indoors is detailed and covers all learning areas exceptionally well. Good use is made of the outside areas. Observations and assessments identify children's individual needs and their next steps in learning, but these are not always recorded in teachers' planning. Promotion of children's welfare is excellent overall and the key person scheme ensures that their everyday needs are met efficiently. Behaviour is managed extremely well.

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

- 4.4 Outcomes are outstanding. Children make excellent progress, are inquisitive, self-motivated and respond enthusiastically to challenges. They communicate fluently, enjoy books and express their thoughts and feelings with developing confidence. They are confident to experiment with writing, and are able to use their developing mathematical ideas and methods to solve practical problems, for instance during role-play in the class 'café'. They enjoy demonstrating their ability to use computer programs including deft manipulation of the mouse. They show respect, kindness and consideration for others and readily share ideas, anxieties and triumphs. Children display an excellent knowledge of how to keep safe and healthy. They understand that exercise, healthy eating and personal hygiene are essential for a healthy lifestyle.

Section 3 includes what the Early Years Foundation Stage should do to improve its provision.

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed a sample of 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. 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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