



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

GIDEA PARK COLLEGE

STANDARD INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Gidea Park College

Full Name of School	Gidea Park College
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Head	Mrs Susan-Jayne Gooding
Proprietors	Mrs Nicola Molyneux and Mrs Anne Parkinson-Curd
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	194
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (88 boys; 106 girls;)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 60 5-11: 134
Inspection dates	24 May 2011 to 25 May 2011 22 Jun 2011 to 24 Jun 2011

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the STANDARD *ISI schedule*. The inspection consists of two parts: an INITIAL two-day inspection of regulatory requirements followed by a three-day FINAL (team) inspection of the school's broader educational provision. The school had an accreditation inspection in May 2007.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Government for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010*. The range of these Regulations is as follows.

- (a) Quality of education provided (curriculum)
- (b) Quality of education provided (teaching)
- (c) Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils
- (d) Welfare, health and safety of pupils
- (e) Suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors
- (f) Premises and accommodation
- (g) Provision of information
- (h) Manner in which complaints are to be handled

*These Standards Regulations replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003.

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

- (i) The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA).
- (ii) Race, gender and sexual discrimination legislation.
- (iii) Corporal punishment.

The inspection was also carried out under the arrangements of the ISC Associations for the maintenance and improvement of the quality of their membership.

ISI is also approved to inspect the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), which was introduced in September 2008 and applies to all children in England from birth to 31st August following their fifth birthday. This report evaluates the extent to which the setting fulfils the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and follows the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 as subsequently amended.

The inspection of the school is from an educational perspective and provides limited inspection of other aspects, though inspectors will comment on any significant hazards or problems they encounter which have an adverse impact on children. The inspection does not include:

- (i) an exhaustive health and safety audit
- (ii) an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features
- (iii) an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures
- (iv) an in-depth investigation of the school's compliance with employment law.

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Gidea Park College is a day school for pupils aged from two and a half to eleven years of age. It was founded in 1926 by the grandfather of the present proprietors who have formed the governing body since 1997. The school is housed in a Georgian building set in its own grounds. The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), and Years 1 and 2 are located in separate purpose-built accommodation. The present head has been in post since September 2009.
- 1.2 The school aims to provide a supportive family ethos in a relaxed and friendly way with a defined code of conduct. It seeks to be academically strong, with each individual pupil developing talents and transferring successfully to a senior school that matches their needs. It aims to create a balance between the academic, artistic, pastoral, spiritual and sporting aspects of a pupil's development. In addition, it seeks to create an environment in which individuals are valued, as well as providing a foundation for pupils' personal development within a tolerant, Christian ethos.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection, the school had 194 pupils on roll. Sixty children were in the EYFS, of these, thirty-six attended part-time. Two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), but neither is at an early stage of learning English. Approximately one in three pupils are from a non-European background. Twelve pupils have been identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD). The school welcomes pupils from all backgrounds and abilities and from a wide geographical area. No formal selection procedures take place. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. At the age of eleven, the majority of pupils transfer to maintained grammar schools or independent senior schools in the locality.
- 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 pupils' achievement is good. All pupils, including those in the EYFS and those with LDD and EAL, are successful in their learning and personal development. The school meets its aim to be academically strong, with each individual developing talents and transferring successfully to a senior school which matches their needs. The curriculum is good, supported by a limited range of extra-curricular activities. Opportunities for the pupils to engage in independent work and critical thinking are limited by examination preparation. Results in national tests at the age of eleven, over the last three years for which comparative data are available, have been excellent when compared with the national average for pupils in maintained primary schools. Pupils' progress is good in relation to their ability. The standard of their English and mathematics is significantly high. At 11+, pupils achieve places through competitive entrance examinations to highly selective secondary schools. Pupils have a very positive attitude to their studies and their behaviour is mostly exemplary. Teaching is of good quality and demonstrates thorough subject knowledge. Sometimes, a lack of variety in teaching methods and a heavy reliance on note copying from the board does not allow for the scope of pupils' different learning styles. The best planning provides clear details on teaching methods, lesson objectives and assessment opportunities. This good practice is not consistent across the school.
- 2.2 The pastoral care and welfare, health and safety of the pupils are good. The school is a caring community where pupils are thoughtfully and skilfully looked after by the whole staff, which contributes strongly to their personal development. Pupils are highly considerate towards each other, enjoying high quality relationships between themselves and with staff. Policies for safeguarding pupils' welfare, health and safety are put into practice effectively by all staff. All necessary measures are taken to reduce risks to the school community.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are good. The ethos and aims of the school are overseen effectively by the proprietors and senior management team, who provide helpful support to ensure the school fulfils its aims. However, senior management roles and responsibilities are not sufficiently defined, and time is not available to enable the review of teaching and learning to be undertaken with sufficient rigour. Efficient procedures for the recruitment of staff are established. Links with parents are good. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaires, many parents were positive about the education that their children receive, with which the team concur. Concerns were raised about a few issues, but these were not substantiated. The school is aware of the expectations of its parents and responded quickly to the issues raised over the limited range of extra-curricular activities.

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

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

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

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

1. Provide more opportunities across the curriculum and extra-curricular programme for pupils to develop their independent learning and critical thinking skills.
2. Define the roles and responsibilities of senior managers, and identify the means whereby they have sufficient time to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning across the school.
3. Review the structures of development planning.
4. Ensure consistency and breadth in planning procedures and in teaching methods.
5. In the EYFS, develop the opportunities to improve the cohesiveness of the setting to enhance future planning and children's learning.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 From the EYFS onwards, the quality of the pupils' achievements is good and fulfils the aims of the school. Pupils achieve well across the curriculum. Their knowledge and understanding is strong and they apply academic skills efficiently. The standard of their English and mathematics is significantly high. They write in a variety of different contexts and genres, and the most able reach exceptionally high standards in their extended writing. Pupils are highly articulate in expressing their views; they listen carefully and many are expressive readers. They use their numeracy skills effectively across the curriculum, for example as they design symmetrical models. The pupils' skills in information and communications technology (ICT) are satisfactory. They use them effectively in their ICT lessons, but rarely in other areas of the curriculum. The pupils' physical development is good. Their creative abilities are well developed in art and music, and they design efficiently, for example when they create games to extend their mathematical understanding. Pupils move on to the next stage of their education with confidence. At 11+, pupils achieve places through competitive entrance examinations to highly selective secondary schools. Individuals have achieved success in local art and music examinations.
- 3.2 Results in national tests at the age of eleven in the last three years for which comparative data are available have been excellent when compared with the national average for pupils in maintained primary schools. This level of attainment, as judged also by evidence in books, lessons and discussions with pupils, indicates that the pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils with LDD and EAL make similar good progress as demonstrated by the standards they achieve in mathematics and English.
- 3.3 Pupils organise their work well and express their thoughts clearly in class and successfully in discussions. Their independent learning skills are less well developed as pupils are given limited opportunities to exercise them. Pupils have a very positive attitude to their studies, which has a strong impact on their achievement. They are extremely keen to succeed. They concentrate well in class, and listen to instructions. Their behaviour is mostly exemplary and they co-operate happily and effectively in pairs or groups.

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

- 3.4 The pupils benefit from a good curriculum which supports their achievements well. It gives pupils experience in linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic and creative education. The personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme contributes effectively to the pupils' learning. Children in the EYFS are also provided with a broad and interesting range of experiences. The balance of the curriculum, with its generous provision for core subjects, enables pupils to achieve particularly high standards in English and mathematics. However, opportunities for the pupils to engage in independent work and critical thinking are limited by examination preparation and coaching. For older pupils, the curriculum becomes broader, with the addition of German from Year 5 and Latin during Year 6. Opportunities for physical education are extended from Year 3 with the addition of games and swimming. Practice in verbal reasoning from Year 2 contributes well to the pupils' preparation for entrance examinations.
- 3.5 The good curriculum enables the school to prepare pupils successfully for the next stage of their education. It mostly ensures that pupils are well prepared for the transfer to different year groups, although planning for the transition from the EYFS to Year 1 has not yet been fully formalised. The systems for identifying and supporting pupils who need additional help work well. Pupils with LDD and EAL are supported effectively in lessons as their individual needs are clearly understood. They benefit from the small teaching groups in which teachers and classroom assistants use the best methods to suit their specific learning needs. Pupils also have individual lessons as appropriate. More able pupils are given extension work in the core subjects and verbal reasoning. Curriculum planning is not consistent across subjects and age groups. The best schemes of work show clearly how pupils' knowledge and skills are developed from year to year. They include details on teaching methods, lesson objectives and assessment opportunities. However, much planning is limited.
- 3.6 The pupils have access to a limited extra-curricular programme. Activities, such as the orchestra are well established and designed for a particular age range. They are good and well supported. Few opportunities exist for pupils to enjoy sporting activities outside the curriculum. The school has recognised the importance of widening the scope of extra-curricular activities to help pupils to pursue their talents whilst fostering friendships across the age range in the school. It has plans to extend the programme next year. Over the duration of an academic year, pupils benefit from at least one educational visit. A residential trip for the oldest pupils fosters their independence. They develop an awareness of the needs of others in the community through their fund-raising for local charities and their visit to the town hall which develops their understanding of local government.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.7 The quality of teaching is good and supports the aims of the school whilst contributing well to pupils' achievements. Teachers and classroom assistants understand their pupils' needs and encourage high standards, enabling them to make progress.
- 3.8 In the best examples of teaching, lessons proceed at a brisk pace enhanced by the strong subject knowledge of the teachers. Opportunities are provided for pupils to work collaboratively in small groups which enables them to be more adventurous and to think for themselves. Teaching usually fosters pupils' interests. However, at times too much reliance is placed on the use of one teaching strategy throughout a lesson. A heavy dependence on note copying from the board does not fully reinforce pupils' understanding or allow for the scope of their different learning styles. Teaching uses the effective resources to enhance learning. For example, younger pupils enjoyed the opportunities provided to explore the wildlife garden during an exciting hunt for mini-beasts. The quality of lesson planning varies. Some is comprehensive, but much does not identify lesson objectives, assessment opportunities or methods to extend the learning of pupils, for example through the use of ICT. All teaching encourages pupils to behave extremely responsibly. Across the school, pupils benefit from the practical work opportunities that are provided through the teaching of science.
- 3.9 The marking of pupils' work is mostly good, with comments in exercise books providing helpful advice, praise and encouragement. Pupils understand and appreciate the grades and systems used for assessment, and follow up their teachers' comments. They find the house point and merit system, which acknowledges their achievements and success, enriching. Target-setting and self-assessment enables pupils to take some responsibility for their own progress, but this is not used consistently throughout the school. Individual pupils' progress is monitored carefully by staff using a variety of standardised tests in the core subjects. These results, with assessment tests in other subjects, are regularly analysed and the curriculum and lesson plans are adjusted accordingly.

4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is good, fulfilling the aims of the school to provide a foundation for pupil's personal development within a tolerant Christian ethos. Pupils are confident and articulate and take much pride in their progress. Their spiritual awareness is good. They care about one another, show consideration, are respectful of one another's views and are sensitive towards the feelings of others. They have high levels of self-esteem, encouraged through formal occasions such as speech day at the end of the school year, and in assembly where they enthusiastically celebrate the achievements of all within their school community. They enjoy opportunities for quiet and reflection through prayer in assembly and as they use the memorial garden during their recreation time. Pupils consider spiritual issues carefully, as seen in an assembly when they considered the importance of forgiveness linked to the life of Christ.
- 4.2 Pupils develop a strong moral code and learn to make responsible and reasoned judgments on moral issues. They respect each other and their teachers, and display consideration for all within their community. Pupils are extremely courteous and well-behaved. They have a clear sense of the difference between right and wrong and from a young age, in interviews, pupils explained the importance of rules in any community to ensure safety and good order. They understand that many in the world are less fortunate than they are, and they have opportunities to support local charities such as a nursery for children with special educational needs and the nearby hospice.
- 4.3 The pupils' social development is good. They support each other and recognise how important it is to work together in order to achieve a goal. Year 6 pupils benefit from their considerable responsibilities, which they undertake highly conscientiously. They are always willing to help younger pupils. Such opportunities are restricted for the rest of the school. A team spirit is evident throughout the school as pupils speak with much enthusiasm about gaining house points for their school work, their behaviour and in inter-house competitions. Through the PSHE course, the personal development of pupils is greatly enhanced as they learn about public institutions and services, the wider community and how they should respond in difficult situations.
- 4.4 The cultural development of the pupils is good. The multi-cultural nature of the pupil body enables them to learn from each other. They also extend their understanding of other cultures through aspects of the curriculum such as history and geography. They develop their understanding of the customs, festivals and places of worship of a variety of religions through assemblies, visitors to school, visits out to the local community and to some extent in religious education (RE). Their understanding of western culture is developed appropriately through art, music, and the extra-curricular programme.

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

- 4.5 The arrangements for the welfare, health and safety of pupils are good, and they receive very good pastoral care which strongly supports their personal development and fulfils the aims of the school. All staff throughout the school are closely involved in providing helpful support and guidance to the pupils. Academic and pastoral records are kept appropriately. Class teachers understand their pupils' needs well, and keep a careful oversight of each individual. Staff cluster meetings are held fortnightly to discuss any concerns about pupils. Pupils feel that they are well cared for, and that they have adults to turn to if they have a concern. They are proud of their school; feel safe, and say that it is a happy place. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, promoting a calm atmosphere. The vertical house system, and opportunities provided in clubs such as orchestra, enables pupils to mix and develop relationships across the year groups. Clear policies and procedures are in place to prevent bullying and promote good behaviour. Pupils state that the rare instances of bullying are dealt with effectively, and they clearly understand the procedures that are in place. Although few pupils responded to the pupil pre-inspection questionnaire, in interviews they appreciated the system of sanctions and reward.
- 4.6 The safeguarding of pupils is good; all staff are appropriately trained and understand the policy. The designated child protection officers are correctly trained and know how to carry out their roles. Appropriate measures are taken to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Health and safety procedures are effective, with risk assessments covering all aspects of school life. Visits are carefully planned. Accidents are suitably recorded, and facilities for those who become ill are good. A suitable plan is in place to improve educational access for those with disabilities or special educational needs. Appropriate systems exist for pupils to learn about the importance of healthy eating and exercise. School meals are of good quality. The admission and attendance registers have been accurately maintained and stored.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The proprietorial partnership which works as governance, is good. It effectively oversees the work of the school, and helps secure the school's aims. The proprietors closely monitor the school's stability and sustained development. They have recognised the need to widen the breadth of knowledge which underpins the school's decision-making and the necessity to provide a greater level of support and challenge. Consequently they seek outside advice where appropriate, and have plans to expand roles and responsibilities for governance to ensure that standards, quality and regulatory compliance are maintained.
- 5.2 Proprietors attend regular meetings with the leadership of the school which are well minuted. They are therefore well informed about financial matters and planning for the school's future to support pupils' academic and personal development. They are frequently in touch with the leadership. Recently they have increased their visits to develop more opportunities for contact with staff, pupils and parents to deepen their insight into the school, its achievements and its challenges. Strategic planning has yet to be fully formalised. Proprietors have ensured sufficient financial investment to provide appropriate standards of accommodation, and to ensure that material and human resources are used properly to support the pupils' needs. The standard of accommodation, maintenance and cleanliness is good.
- 5.3 The proprietors place high importance on child protection and the welfare, health and safety of pupils. They have reviewed the policies and procedures for child protection, and discharge their responsibilities effectively in these areas.

5.(b) The quality of leadership and management

- 5.4 The leadership and management of the school are good and ensure that the aims of the school are largely met. Policy implementation and safeguarding responsibilities are effectively discharged.
- 5.5 The leadership, comprising a recently formed senior management team (SMT) has displayed energy and determination in taking the school forward. It is clear in its vision that the school should fulfil its aim to be academically strong, providing an environment in which pupils flourish. It communicates this vision effectively to staff and parents. Suitable policies have been developed and implemented. An effective appraisal system identifies training priorities, and this has been beneficial for the whole community. It is reflected in the good quality of education provided and the personal development of the pupils. The three-year school development plan is usefully based on relevant issues, but formal structures, such as identifying those who should implement change are not yet included. Senior leadership roles and responsibilities are not clearly defined and insufficient time is available to monitor the curriculum, teaching and learning rigorously. No subject leadership exists, so planning is inconsistent.
- 5.6 Across the school, teaching staff are deployed well and contribute significantly to the pupils' learning and welfare. Staff training occurs regularly on topics relevant to the development of the school, including child protection and health and safety. Resources throughout the school provide appropriate levels of support for teaching and learning. The recruitment of staff is successfully managed. The required

staffing checks are carried out, and all information is kept accurately on a centralised record. Non-teaching staff make an important contribution to pupils' personal and academic development through their support roles.

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

- 5.7 Links with parents, carers and guardians are good, constructively fostering the aims of the school. The parents' responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire indicate their strong approval for the school's values, most aspects of the academic education, pastoral care and support given to their children. The inspection findings concur with these views. Many parents expressed dissatisfaction with the programme for extra-curricular activities. The school reacted immediately, and between the two inspection visits they consulted with parents and drew up an improved programme for the following term which will provide greater breadth of activities for the pupils. A few parents are also concerned about the amount of homework, the information they receive on the progress of their child and the quality of help given to pupils who need extra support. They also expressed anxieties about the way in which their concerns were handled and the governance of the school. These issues were investigated during the course of the inspection and found to be un-substantiated.
- 5.8 Parents have good opportunities to be involved in the life and work of the school. They are welcomed into the school to provide valuable help in after school activities and for various events, such as the sports day, speech day, house events and watching inter-house matches. The parents' association provides practical support to the school through the fund-raising events. Information provided for parents about the work and progress of pupils is good. Strong channels of communication exist between school and home, including the use of homework diaries, frequent parents' evenings and regular informal contact with teachers. Regular reports provide information about effort and examination results, but do not consistently provide targets for pupils' future learning.
- 5.9 Relevant documentation about the school is easily available for parents of pupils and prospective pupils including the information pack for new parents. The school produces regular newsletters. The helpful and informative website ensures that parents can review the life of the school at any time. Concerns are handled with care and good records are kept of these. Any worries are dealt with initially by form teachers and if needed referred to the SMT. The complaints policy is clear and conforms to regulatory guidance.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

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

6.1 The overall effectiveness of the EYFS is good. The needs of all children are met so they make good progress in their learning and development. All staff know the children well and create a welcoming environment where each child is valued. Self-evaluation is effective in enabling staff to identify areas for further improvement and development. Since the last inspection, the EYFS has been totally refurbished increasing the educational opportunities for all the children.

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

6.2 Leadership and management are good. Effective policies and procedures are implemented to ensure that discrimination is eliminated and children are safeguarded well. Links with parents and the local authority are strong. Although a clear vision for the school is shared by the whole team, the school has appropriately identified the need to develop the cohesiveness between the two classes to enhance future planning and children's learning. Each child has an equal opportunity to succeed, supported by a wide range and efficient use of resources.

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

6.3 The quality of the provision is good overall with some outstanding features. The welcoming rooms, run effectively by well-qualified and caring staff, enable children to learn and make good progress. Children develop their imaginations through role and creative play and acquire problem-solving skills, as was seen with boat building in Reception. Nursery children were carefully guided to understand that before oranges appear in supermarkets, they are grown on trees in hot places, and a role play project has been developed that links growing, transport and selling of oranges. Staff plan for effective use of the outdoor areas and a good balance exists between child-initiated and adult-led activities. A detailed profile informs staff and parents about each child's progress and the next steps in learning. Children are taught about keeping safe in many contexts and are cared for extremely well. Regular checks of all equipment create a safe environment. Risk assessments are carried out thoroughly.

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

- 6.4 Outcomes for children are at least good, and for some outstanding. From different starting points they all make substantial progress. By the end of Reception, many children achieve high standards in all six areas of learning, exceeding the expectations of the Early Learning Goals. Children enjoy their learning, working industriously both individually and co-operatively. They can order numbers up to ten, and their creative skills can be seen by the animals that they have made for the classroom wall-chart about numbers up to ten. They can also recognize the sounds of most of the alphabet letters. By the end of Reception, most children are reading fluently, writing sentences independently and are able to add and subtract single digit numbers. They develop their physical co-ordination through yoga and dance, and their display of air balloons showed considerable technological skills. Children care for, and respect each other, take turns, share willingly and offer to help. They develop a strong sense of personal safety which can be seen in the careful way they move around the school. Children understand that healthy eating, personal hygiene and physical exercise are prerequisites of a healthy lifestyle. They display exemplary behaviour, are articulate, always give of their best and develop considerable skills for the future.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with one of the proprietors, 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

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Mrs Caroline Birtwell

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Reporting Inspector

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