



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Reports**

**Priory School Edgbaston**

**May 2019**



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## School's Details

<b>School</b>	Priory School Edgbaston			
<b>DfE number</b>	330 6002			
<b>Early Years registration number</b>	EY289773			
<b>Registered charity number</b>	518009			
<b>Address</b>	Sir Harry's Road Edgbaston Birmingham West Midlands B15 2UR			
<b>Telephone number</b>	0121 4404103			
<b>Email address</b>	enquiries@prioryschool.net			
<b>Headmaster</b>	Mr Jonathan Cramb			
<b>Chair of governing council</b>	Ms Heather Somerfield			
<b>Age range</b>	6 months to 18 years			
<b>Number of pupils on roll</b>	482			
	<b>Boys</b>	325	<b>Girls</b>	157
	<b>EYFS</b>	94	<b>Prep</b>	142
	<b>Seniors</b>	223	<b>Sixth Form</b>	23
<b>Inspection dates</b>	30 April to 2 May 2019			

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 The school is an independent Catholic day school for boys and girls aged between 6 months and 18 years, welcoming pupils of all faiths or none. The school was founded as a girls' school in 1936 by the Sisters of the Holy Child Jesus and became fully co-educational in 2011. In 1986 the school became a company limited by public guarantee and a registered charity with a governing council. The school occupies a single site in Edgbaston. It has an early years department, for pupils aged 6 months to 5 years, a prep school for pupils aged 5 to 11 years, and a senior school for pupils aged 11 to 18 years. Since the previous inspection, the school has refurbished many areas and built a new block of classrooms.

### **What the school seeks to do**

- 1.2 The school aims to work in partnership with parents and guardians, to provide a caring community with high standards of teaching and learning, enabling all pupils to achieve success. The school applauds determination, commitment and effort and prepares every pupil to take up their place as active and responsible citizens, who can make informed judgements and strive for high standards in everything they do, in a just and fair manner.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.3 Pupils come from a wide catchment area and a range of social, cultural and economic backgrounds. Nationally standardised test data provided by the school indicates that the ability of pupils throughout the school is broadly above average. The school has identified 39 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), which include dyslexia, dyspraxia and autism, several of whom receive additional specialist help. Three pupils in the school have an education, health and care (EHC) plan. Nine pupils receive support for having English as an additional language (EAL) but 54 are bilingual and fluent in English. Data used by the school have identified 24 pupils as being the most able in the school's population and the curriculum is modified for them and for 20 others with particular talents in sport, music, art and drama.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The registration authority for independent schools is the Department for Education (DfE), which directs inspection according to a specified frequency or at any time where the DfE has particular concerns about a school. The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and reporting on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Accordingly, inspection records whether the school meets each of these standards, which are arranged in eight Parts, each of which is divided into separate paragraphs. The inspection of schools that have early years settings not requiring registration similarly records whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, the inspection reports on the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

All association independent schools will have an inspection within three years from April 2016, in accordance with the Framework and DfE requirements. The inspection may be of COMPLIANCE ONLY or a combined inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY AND COMPLIANCE depending on a number of factors, including findings from their most recent inspection. Schools judged not to meet the standards may also be subject to a progress monitoring visit before their next routine inspection. The progress monitoring visit will judge whether the school has taken the necessary action to meet any un-met standards identified at their previous inspection.

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

**This is a FOCUSED COMPLIANCE INSPECTION which was combined with an inspection of EDUCATIONAL QUALITY, the report of which appears later in this document. The COMPLIANCE inspection reports only on the school's compliance with the standards.** The standards represent minimum requirements and judgements are given either as **met** or as **not met**. All schools are required to meet all the standards applicable to them. Where the minimum requirements are not met, this is clearly indicated in the relevant section of the report and the school is required to take the actions specified. In this focused compliance inspection, key regulations and standards have been inspected in detail. These are the regulations on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety, arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information to parents; the handling of parents' complaints; and other related aspects of leadership and management. The remaining standards and requirements are deemed to continue to be met unless evidence to the contrary has been found.

Inspections do not include matters that are outside of the regulatory framework described above, such as: an exhaustive health and safety audit; compliance with data protection requirements; an in-depth examination of the structural condition of the school, its services or other physical features; contractual arrangements with parents; an investigation of the financial viability of the school or its accounting procedures.

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to specifically in published reports in this document but will have been considered by the team in reaching its judgements.

Links to the full regulations and requirements can be found here: [The Education \(Independent School Standards\) Regulations 2014](#), [Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework](#).

## Key findings

- 2.1 The school meets the standards in the schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, the requirements of the statutory framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, and associated requirements, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

### **PART 1 – Quality of education provided**

- 2.2 In the prep school, the school uses its own framework to determine attainment, instead of the national framework.
- 2.3 At GCSE in the years 2015 to 2017, performance has been above the national average for maintained schools.
- 2.4 In the sixth form, small numbers at A Level make statistical results unreliable.
- 2.5 The curriculum is documented, supported by appropriate plans and schemes of work for the pupils and covers the required breadth of material. The teaching enables pupils to make good progress, encompasses effective behaviour management and is supported by suitable resources. A suitable framework for the assessment of pupils' performance is in place.
- 2.6 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

### **PART 2 – Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils**

- 2.7 Principles and values are actively promoted which facilitate the personal development of pupils as responsible, tolerant, law-abiding citizens.
- 2.8 The standard relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development [paragraph 5] is met.**

### **PART 3 – Welfare, health and safety of pupils**

- 2.9 Arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils by means that pay due regard to current statutory guidance; good behaviour is promoted; bullying is prevented so far as reasonably practicable; health and safety requirements are met, including those relating to fire safety; provision is made for first aid. Pupils are properly supervised; admission and attendance registers are maintained, as required, and there is a strategic approach to risk assessment. A disability access plan is in place.
- 2.10 The standards relating to welfare, health and safety [paragraphs 6–16], the requirement of Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010, and the ban on corporal punishment under section 548 of the Education Act 1996 are met.**

### **PART 4 – Suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors**

- 2.11 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff, and proprietors and a register is kept as required.
- 2.12 The standards relating to the suitability of those in contact with pupils at the school [paragraphs 17–21] are met.**

### **PART 5 – Premises of and accommodation at schools**

- 2.13 Suitable toilet and changing facilities, and showering facilities where required by the standard, and appropriate accommodation for pupils' medical and therapy needs are provided. The premises are maintained to a standard commensurate with health and safety; acoustics and lighting are

appropriate; water provision is adequate. Suitable outdoor space is provided for physical education and outdoor play.

**2.14 The standards relating to the premises and accommodation [paragraphs 22–31] are met.**

## **PART 6 – Provision of information**

2.15 A range of information is variously published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. These include details about the proprietor, the ethos of the school and the curriculum, and of the school's arrangements for admission, behaviour and exclusions, bullying, health and safety, first aid, details of the complaints procedure, and the number of complaints registered under the formal procedure during the preceding school year, and the provision for any pupils with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. They also include particulars of the school's academic performance during the preceding school year, inspection reports and (for parents only) a report at least annually of their own child's progress. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school's website.

**2.16 The standard relating to the provision of information [paragraph 32] is met.**

## **PART 7 – Manner in which complaints are handled**

2.17 Parental complaints, if any, are handled effectively through a three-stage process, (informal, formal and a hearing before a panel of three, one of whom is independent of the school). Each stage has clear time scales, and at the third stage the panel can make findings and recommendations which are communicated to the complainant. Records are kept appropriately, including of any action taken, whether or not a complaint is successful.

**2.18 The standard relating to the handling of complaints [paragraph 33] is met.**

## **PART 8 – Quality of leadership in and management of schools**

2.19 The proprietor ensures that the leadership and management demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the other standards are consistently met and they actively promote the well-being of the pupils.

**2.20 The standard relating to leadership and management of the school [paragraph 34] is met.**

## **The quality and standards of the Early Years Foundation Stage**

### **Overall effectiveness: the quality and standards of the early years provision**

- 2.21 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is good.
- 2.22 Staff ensure that all children, including those with SEND or EAL, make good progress in relation to their starting points and are well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Most children under the age of two meet, and some exceed, the level of development that is typical for their age. The provision meets the needs of all the children who attend and provides a very caring environment in which they thrive and enjoy their learning.
- 2.23 Children's personal and social development is outstanding. The setting ensures children have a positive and enjoyable experience through the development of very good relationships and strong attachments with the adults who care for them. A buddy system, whereby a child receives care and support from another member of staff if their own key worker is absent, further supports the creation of an environment where children feel safe and happy.
- 2.24 The arrangements for children's safeguarding are highly effective. Regular risk assessments of indoor and outdoor learning environments, alongside up-to-date training and comprehensive documentation, ensure children are safe. Any medicines administered or accidents that occur are carefully recorded and parents are informed on the same day. All necessary checks have been undertaken to ensure that staff are suitable to work with children.
- 2.25 High quality outcomes for children are a result of effective leadership and staff who work well together to evaluate provision and identify areas for future development. Since the previous inspection, processes for supporting parents' understanding of how their child is progressing in relation to their age have been strengthened. Arrangements for staff supervision have been developed to ensure staff are well supported in their work with children and families.
- 2.26 Parents speak very highly of the setting and the level of care provided.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management**

- 2.27 The effectiveness of leadership and management is good.
- 2.28 The leadership team share a clear vision for the continued development of the setting. Reflective practice and a commitment to continuous improvement are very evident and this has a positive effect on children's learning and development.
- 2.29 A programme for tracking children's progress has been introduced since the previous inspection. It is used at regular intervals to identify children's level of development in the prime areas of learning and supports the monitoring of achievement across the setting. Leaders involve all staff in evaluating the effectiveness of the provision to ensure the learning environment promotes engagement and interest and all children achieve well.
- 2.30 Parents' views are sought regularly through questionnaires and informal feedback. Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire and comments from interviews with parents during the inspection reveal that parents have an extremely positive view of the setting.
- 2.31 Regular supervision and appraisal systems are in place ensuring staff are well supported and training needs are identified.
- 2.32 Learning programmes provide a well-balanced curriculum designed to give children a range of experiences which will develop confidence and stimulate their interest and enjoyment. Babies were observed absorbed in the investigation of a large tray of cereal. They crunched it, ate it and threw it through the air with great enthusiasm. All key persons monitor children's progress through observation of their needs and interests. The breadth of learning opportunities provided promotes



children's development in the key areas of learning and encourages them to explore both the indoor and outdoor environment. Children with EAL are particularly well supported and regular communication with parents ensures they make good progress in their learning and development.

- 2.33 Equality, diversity and British values of respect and tolerance are embedded into the everyday life of the setting and underpin many areas of provision. The needs and particular interests of each child are recognised and catered for. All children are valued, and children's cultural awareness is deepened through the celebration of the wide range of cultural backgrounds in the setting. Children experience music and food from different cultures and celebrate a significant number of special days and festivals. Children have opportunities to make decisions, consider the feelings of others, explore their own ideas and co-operate with one another, showing kindness when they can.
- 2.34 The effective safeguarding of children is given very high priority. Leadership is very knowledgeable in this regard, and training records are monitored closely to ensure that all staff remain up to date with their training. All members of the management team have specialist, safeguarding training and all staff have paediatric first aid training. Regular risk assessments of both the indoor and outdoor environment ensure children are kept safe.

### **Quality of teaching, learning and assessment**

- 2.35 The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good.
- 2.36 Staff know the children very well and expectations are carefully tailored to each child's needs and level of development. Thoughtful planning ensures that children are provided with a variety of activities and experiences that will help them to make good progress. The quality and range of resources provide good opportunities for children to explore their environment and the daily use of the outside area plays an important role in the development of their physical skills and their general well-being. However, the strict adherence to routines such as the tidying away of resources prior to snack time, sometimes interrupts children's involvement and engagement with activities.
- 2.37 Staff have a good understanding of the age group in terms of meeting children's needs and developing independence. However, opportunities to develop children's communication skills through careful questioning, commentary and the modelling of language are often not exploited. For example, when babies were grasping different small plastic animals placed in the sand tray, opportunities to name them, comment on their attributes or raise questions were not taken.
- 2.38 The assessment of children's development is given high priority. On entry to the setting an initial baseline assessment is undertaken. Parents contribute to this based on the skills their child demonstrates confidently in the home environment. Staff work in close partnership with parents. At the end of each day a feedback form, which gives details of their child's participation in the routines of the setting, is discussed with them. Parents are also given some insight into their child's learning through the use of an interactive learning diary shared between the setting and home. They are invited to a parents' evening twice a year to discuss their child's progress.
- 2.39 Although assessment procedures are in place which track children's progress over time, the use of day to day assessment lacks rigour as there is no planned approach that ensures the learning of all children is commented on at regular intervals in order to clearly identify their next steps.
- 2.40 Teaching reflects a commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity and a recognition of individual needs. Children's cultural awareness is deepened through the celebration of different cultures.
- 2.41 Children behave confidently and with natural curiosity within the learning environment. They are supported in their exploration of their surroundings, and in their investigation of activities and items of interest, so that they acquire the skills and motivation to learn.

**Personal development, behaviour and welfare**

- 2.42 The personal development, behaviour and welfare of children are outstanding.
- 2.43 The setting provides a very nurturing environment where children's excellent relationships with adults are built on strong, secure attachments. This instils confidence in the children and helps to develop their independence.
- 2.44 Warm, caring relationships between staff and children were demonstrated at sleep time, particularly with those who found it hard to settle. Children behave well and show kindness towards one another. They listen attentively to adults and follow simple instructions when tidying up and preparing to go outside.
- 2.45 There is a very good focus on the development of children's independence. They happily and confidently find their way around their environment both indoors and outside investigating any resources that are available.
- 2.46 A positive culture is evident throughout the setting. Staff work well together to create a learning environment in which children are happy to engage in a range of learning experiences. Children exhibited obvious joy when reaching out to catch bubbles floating up into the air and gave gentle shouts of delight when they successfully caught one.
- 2.47 Staff ensure that children are emotionally prepared for transitions into, within and from the setting. Opportunities are created for the children to spend time in what will become their new room and during transition meetings between staff the needs, interests and abilities of each child are carefully recorded.
- 2.48 Practices within the setting contribute to the development of children's understanding of a healthy lifestyle. There is a strong focus on developing good eating habits. Fresh fruit is served daily at snack times and fresh water is always available. All children wash their hands before and after meal times. Children develop an understanding of the importance of fresh air and exercise through daily outdoor time and occasions when they are taken into the grounds for longer walks. They are developing a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe through everyday activities and role play.
- 2.49 The excellent communication within the setting and emphasis on children's emotional and personal development ensures these young children are happy, motivated and enjoy learning.

**Outcomes for children**

- 2.50 Outcomes for children are good.
- 2.51 All children, including those with SEND and EAL, make good progress in their learning and development. Assessments carried out on entry to the setting identify appropriate starting points in response to the individual needs and interests of each child.
- 2.52 Children under two display curiosity and engagement in both their surroundings and the activities available to them. They grasp building blocks and press buttons. They stop and listen to music playing in the room and enjoy having space to move freely in the open air on the school field. All children, including those who are very young, demonstrate high levels of independence when eating, handling and using cutlery and finding their own drinking cup.
- 2.53 Babies make rapid progress in their personal, social and emotional development as a result of the sensitive, nurturing interactions with adults and the stimulating learning environment.
- 2.54 By the end of the EYFS most children meet and some exceed the level of development that is typical for their age.

## **Compliance with statutory requirements**

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

## **Recommendations for further improvement**

In addition to the above action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements to its provision for children in the early years.

- Introduce training to improve practitioners' understanding of how to promote children's development of communication and language skills.
- Review the impact of strict adherence to routines which inhibits children's engagement with activities.
- Monitor assessment processes to ensure they are implemented robustly and consistently.

### 3. Educational Quality Inspection

#### Preface

**The EDUCATIONAL QUALITY inspection reports on the quality of the school's work.** It focuses on the two key outcomes:

- The achievement of the pupils, including their academic development, and
- The personal development of the pupils.

Since the school was last inspected, the framework for inspection has changed. The current inspection framework uses different criteria and arrangements for grading from those used in previous inspection frameworks. The judgements made on this inspection are, therefore, not directly comparable to judgements made on previous inspections.

All independent schools are required to meet the requirements of the Independent School Standards. However, different inspectorates apply different frameworks that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. The ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by the national inspectorate, Ofsted. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement about key outcomes for pupils and information on the quality of the school's work.

**The headline judgements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory'.**

Where necessary, National Curriculum nomenclature is used to refer to year groups in the school.

## Key findings

3.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

- Pupils' attitudes to learning are most positive and they work well both independently and collaboratively.
- Pupils with SEND, those with EAL, and more able pupils, attain well and make good progress facilitated by focused strategies and excellent levels of support.
- Pupils' learning is sometimes restricted through inconsistent marking and feedback in the senior school.
- The development of pupils' study skills is restricted by a lack of opportunity to investigate on their own initiative and take leadership in their learning.
- Pupils' learning, and ability to apply their ICT skills, is restricted through the limited use of subject-specific software across the curriculum.

3.2 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.

- Pupils develop an outstanding level of spiritual development and a strong appreciation of the non-material world.
- Pupils celebrate and embrace their differences and respect and value the cultural diversity within the school.
- Pupils' social awareness is excellent. Pupils in all year groups collaborate well and are highly supportive of each other.
- Pupils display an excellent understanding of the ethos of the school and fully support the high behavioural expectations and standards set by their teachers.

## Recommendations

3.3 The school is advised to make the following improvements:

- Ensure that marking in the senior school consistently provides pupils with effective feedback so that they know how to make further improvements to their work.
- Extend the range of opportunities for pupils to develop a more independent approach, and take leadership, in their learning.
- Extend the use of subject-specific software in order to enhance pupils' learning and provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills across the curriculum.

## The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements

3.4 The quality of pupils' academic and other achievements is good.

3.5 Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well, making good and in some cases rapid progress as a result of small class sizes, highly competent staff and a focus on the individual.

3.6 The school successfully fulfils its aim to provide high standards of teaching and learning and enable all pupils to achieve success. Pupils develop highly positive attitudes to learning and a wide range of skills, all of which prepare them well for life after school. In the years 2015 to 2017, the most recent three years for which comparative data are available, results in GCSE examinations have been above the national average for maintained schools. By the time they leave school, pupils have made good progress overall, including pupils with EAL and those with SEND, who receive excellent levels of support. Most children reach a higher level of development than would be expected typically by the

time they leave Reception. The clear identification of next steps in the learning of each child over the age of three in the Nursery and Reception, contributes to this positive outcome. In their pre-inspection questionnaire responses, most parents and pupils agree that pupils are making good progress and are effectively supported by their teachers.

- 3.7 Pupils' attitudes to learning are extremely positive. They apply themselves with focus and enthusiasm and enjoy the many opportunities provided to work collaboratively in groups and pairs. This is evident from the earliest years, where children in the EYFS work well together and show self-discipline as they take turns to speak and listen to each other. In the sixth form, pupils demonstrate maturity in their willingness to use their initiative and take responsibility for their own learning, keeping notes effectively and presenting work neatly. Pupils recognise that making mistakes is part of the learning process and this is fostered by their teachers who create a positive and supportive atmosphere which instils confidence in pupils. Their active enthusiasm and engagement in all aspects of a lesson reflect the school's values of determination, effort and commitment.
- 3.8 Pupils frequently demonstrate a good level of subject knowledge across the curriculum and the ability to apply their skills effectively to other areas of learning. Pupils of all abilities achieve well, supported by teachers who know their pupils well, and use this knowledge to good effect. In several lessons observed, pupils displayed a depth of understanding including an excellent grasp of technical language specific to the subject area. For example, in a senior school science lesson, pupils showed secure knowledge of the structure of an atom, while detailed prior knowledge of *Romeo & Juliet* was in evidence in a GCSE revision lesson. In the prep school, older pupils confidently demonstrated their grasp of the intricacies of musical notation and showed they have a good understanding of the use of complex grammar in English. Younger children were seen to have particularly well-developed speaking and listening skills, and this undoubtedly contributes to the proficient levels of knowledge and understanding they display in different areas of learning. In many areas of the curriculum, pupils show a clear understanding of where to direct their efforts as a result of extremely effective and personalised target setting. In their questionnaire responses, most pupils felt that feedback and marking help them to improve, however, whilst there are pockets of excellent practice, inspectors found the quality of feedback in the senior school is not consistent across all subjects. Feedback given on pupils' work in the prep school was seen to be most consistent and interactive, with a clear focus on steering learning.
- 3.9 From the earliest age, pupils express their thoughts, opinions and ideas with clarity and enthusiasm, encouraged by their teachers. Throughout the school, many examples of confident exposition were evident in a range of classroom discussions and presentations. More able pupils, who were studying for their GCSE examinations, created complex arguments about the ethics of punishment in the course of a religious studies lesson. Older pupils, working in pairs in the prep school, eloquently recounted what they had learned in the lesson to each other. Pupils do not hesitate to ask questions to enhance their understanding of the subject. They listen respectfully to both their teachers and their peers and show genuine interest in what others have to say. Pupils across the school write skilfully in different styles, frequently producing well-presented, informative and thought-provoking writing. In the EYFS, the stimulating environment promotes considerable conversation, engagement in activities and a desire to articulate ideas, encouraged by their teachers who are excellent role models, speaking clearly and taking time to listen to the thoughts of the children in their care. The rapid progress many pupils with EAL make in the acquisition and development of their communication skills, can be attributed to a highly effective team of skilled support staff. Pupils' ability to present to audiences and work effectively together, is developed through many opportunities outside the formal curriculum, such as public speaking classes, debating club, school productions and enrichment days, which also provide additional challenge to those with particular ability and talents.
- 3.10 Pupils display a strong understanding of mathematical concepts and a clear grasp of numerical skills. The youngest children in Nursery and Reception are given strong foundations in numeracy facts and key vocabulary, and quickly develop confidence in their use and application of numerical skills. Pupils

apply their skills in other curriculum areas, for example science, design technology and business studies, and in enrichment programmes in the senior school, where projects such as 'Dragons' Den' and the '£1000 project' require skilful handling of finances. In a psychology lesson, pupils ably draw conclusions from demographic trends, while sixth formers comment on how their numeracy skills are very much brought to the fore when completing geography coursework.

- 3.11 Pupils have highly competent ICT skills and confidently use tools such as word processing, presentation programmes and internet browsers, in many areas of the curriculum. Less evident is the use of subject-specific software to enhance their learning. In the EYFS, children demonstrate developing skills and capably use a range of ICT resources such as the interactive whiteboard and programmable toys. Programming skills are taught from a young age and pupils talked knowledgeably of the coding work they had done in ICT lessons. Laptops and tablets are useful tools for pupils with SEND and EAL, and pupils with particular skills in ICT are given the opportunity to use their expertise with the computer-driven sound and lighting systems used for dramatic productions and assemblies. Throughout the school, the development of pupils' ICT skills is supported by access to specialist teaching and facilities.
- 3.12 Pupils enjoy opportunities to participate in a broad range of academic and other activities which enhance their talents and skills. Pupils have achieved awards from external organisations in community work, music, drama, languages, science and mathematics. Sporting achievements through ISA and through local clubs are highly valued by the pupils. In the prep school, literacy and numeracy are enhanced by internal poetry competitions or external mathematics challenges, while skills in performance and creative arts are heightened by much success in external speech and drama and instrumental examinations and awards in regional art competitions. However, in discussion with pupils, it was apparent that both senior and prep school pupils would like to see the programme of lunchtime clubs extended.
- 3.13 Pupils develop effective study skills as they move through the school, including in note-making, research and revision strategies, and this was evident in many of their exercise books. In the senior school, the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme includes specific sessions on revision skills, and the advanced research skills needed for higher education are addressed in the sixth form. The opportunity to undertake an extended project qualification allows pupils the chance to do some sustained research over a longer period of time, and independent projects in history, science and geography provide opportunities for younger pupils to work independently. Independence of thought, initiative and a strong desire to extend their learning through discussion, questioning and debate is evident in the best lessons. For example, sharp literary analysis of a Shakespeare text at GCSE was accompanied by independent note-taking during the plenary session, as pupils recognised they could expand on the notes they had previously taken. Younger pupils in the prep school demonstrated their ability to see both sides of an argument as they debated whether homework should be banned and if more CCTV cameras should be installed in the vicinity of the school. Pupils engage well in lessons and strive to deepen their understanding, encouraged by skilful questioning and careful managing of discussion and plenary tasks. However, while many planned opportunities exist for pupils to respond to structured challenges, there are fewer opportunities in their day to day lessons, for pupils to carry out open-ended tasks and to investigate on their own initiative.
- 3.14 Pupils' eagerness to learn and to give of their best, is inspired by skilful and enthusiastic teaching, supported by the high expectations of the school's leadership team and its focus on academic development.

### **The quality of the pupils' personal development**

- 3.15 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 3.16 Pupils develop an outstanding level of spiritual development. The school ethos encourages pupils to explore their spirituality through the teachings of the Catholic faith and by exploring other faiths in

both assemblies and in religious studies lessons. Throughout the year, common 'virtues' are taken as a theme for assemblies and prayer, encouraging reflection on a range of values. All pupils take part in multi-faith week and develop their understanding of different faiths through visits to a wide variety of places of worship. Pupils also develop high quality perceptions of the non-material world through music, art and drama and their access to the beautiful grounds and woodland learning environment. Younger pupils relish the time they spend in the forest and children in the EYFS enjoy the feeling of freedom and space when running out on the field. In discussion, pupils paid testimony to the spiritual and moral core of the school which helps them respect the views of others and appreciate a spiritual dimension to life. The provision of sacred spaces, such as the prayer room and garden, enable pupils to enjoy opportunities for quiet reflection.

- 3.17 Pupils celebrate and embrace their differences, respecting and valuing the cultural diversity within the school from the earliest years. The faith and background of their peers is immaterial to them as they regard one another as valuable individuals with important contributions to make to the life of the school. Pupils spoke compellingly of the school's fostering of this respect for diversity and the swift action taken if bullying or intolerance was even suspected. Pupils develop a firm understanding of British and Catholic values, and a respect for other cultures, through their studies across the curriculum and discussions in assemblies and form time. In their questionnaire responses, a very large majority of pupils and parents felt the school encouraged a respect for, and tolerance of, other people.
- 3.18 Pupils' social awareness is excellent. Across the school, pupils show a genuine care for one another, recognising the importance of being a supportive friend, and understanding the need to be a good role model for those younger than themselves. This is in no small part due to the successful creation of a caring community, epitomised by the mutual respect and warm relationships evident in the classroom. Prep school pupils engage effectively in paired 'turn and talk' activities in lessons and in the earliest years, pupils listen to and comment on one another's contributions to class discussion. Pupils understand the benefits of collaboration and teamwork as they work towards common goals and older pupils speak confidently about how the chance to collaborate helps them learn from their peers and progress in their work.
- 3.19 Pupils from the youngest years onwards demonstrate a strong awareness of right and wrong, both within school and in the outside world. They appreciate that rules and laws are necessary to provide a safe and comfortable environment for all. Pupils respond well to their teachers' high expectations and excellent behaviour comes naturally to them. Pupils are proud of their school and have a strong desire to be responsible and caring members of its community. They understand the school's system of rewards and sanctions and value the contribution this makes to the high standards of behaviour in school. The depth of their understanding was demonstrated by Year 2 and Year 3 pupils in discussion with inspectors as they talked about the effectiveness and acceptability of school rules. Whenever pupils fail to meet the school's high expectations, they appreciate the opportunity to reflect on their behaviour, and demonstrate a willingness to take responsibility for their own behaviour as they consider the reasons for their mistakes and what they need to do to rectify them. In the EYFS, children's sense of right and wrong is strong for their age, and they are developing an understanding of how their actions can impact on others. In their questionnaire responses, most parents and pupils felt that the school actively promotes good behaviour.
- 3.20 Pupils have a good understanding of the importance of making positive decisions in life that will affect their future development. In discussion with inspectors, pupils in the sixth form spoke passionately about the help and guidance they receive from their teachers, whether on subject choices, university applications, career guidance or encouragement to pursue their aspirations, but they also expressed their appreciation of the autonomy they are given to make their own decisions. Pupils are trusted to make sensible decisions demonstrated by the freedom given to a group of older students who create and compile the school magazine with complete editorial control. Great maturity was evident in younger pupils who talked eloquently about the importance of making sensible choices when solving friendship difficulties.



- 3.21 Pupils recognise their growing confidence and resilience as they progress through the school. They attribute this to the encouragement they receive from their teachers and the supportive relationships they enjoy with their peers, as well as the many opportunities they have to take on roles of responsibility. Pupils' personal skills, particularly their confidence to present and perform in front of an audience, has been helped by the introduction of a compulsory programme of speech and drama training up to Year 7. The level of pupils' self-esteem is raised through sensitive teaching in all phases of the school and by the particular attention given to those pupils who require additional support or who are new to the school. Pupils learn to understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and the steps they need to take to improve their learning, helped by the high levels of individual support they receive. Pupils' resilience when faced with challenging work is evident in their 'have a go' attitude and their willingness to learn from their mistakes. They learn perseverance and develop resilience through participation in a spectrum of competitive activities and age specific activities, such as younger pupils' participation in challenging team exercises during a residential course. Children in the EYFS confidently persevere with tasks to achieve their desired outcome and their self-knowledge is enhanced by their teachers' willingness to give them time to think, and to become engrossed in their activities. In discussion, Year 6 pupils expressed their excitement at the prospect of a move to senior school and how they felt confident and well-prepared to take this step. Sixth form pupils feel exceedingly well-supported as they prepare for life after school and are confident that they possess the personal strengths that will help them make that move successfully. In their questionnaire responses, most parents felt that the school helps their child to be confident and independent.
- 3.22 The importance of contributing to the happiness of the school community is recognised by pupils who take this responsibility seriously. Older pupils enjoy opportunities to support younger pupils through peer mentoring and as a 'buddy' in the mixed age tutor groups. Pupils in Year 7 help younger pupils in the prep school to develop their skills in modern foreign languages. Pupils develop a sense of service, responsibility and leadership through a range of planned opportunities, including acting as prefects, house captains, head boys and head girls, and representing the views of their peers at the school council. They are aware of their good fortune and willingly support a range of charities which offer help to those in need in the local community and beyond, often raising funds through pupil-led initiatives. The chamber orchestra and other music groups perform regularly at a local care home. The school's Christian ethos actively promotes pupils' care for others, as demonstrated by the Mini Vinnies' initiative in prep school, where pupils are encouraged to connect the values of their faith with social injustice present in their local community and to find ways in which they can help.
- 3.23 Pupils feel safe in the school environment and describe with surety the steps they need to take to remain safe both in and outside school. In discussion, pupils in both the prep and senior schools, confidently stated that they know how to keep safe online, describing sensible steps they would take to ensure this. Pupils of all ages understand the need to stay healthy and highly value sport and the need for physical exercise. They are aware that a good diet is important to their development and the provision of a wide range of healthy food at lunchtime is appreciated by pupils of all ages. Pupils are aware of the need to protect their mental health and know that help is available if they develop any problems. Prominent displays throughout the school increase pupils' awareness and make clear how to contact the trained mental health ambassadors appointed by the school. Pupils' well-being is supported and enhanced through a range of enrichment activities, including mindfulness sessions and an annual retreat day in the prep school.
- 3.24 A strong leadership team who work together with a dedicated team of staff, contribute to the school's success in achieving its aim to create a caring community and to prepare pupils to become active and responsible citizens.

## 4. Inspection Evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the chair of governors and another member of the governing board, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form meetings and an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils and educational resource areas. The responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

Mrs Joy Gatenby	Reporting inspector
Mr Christopher Burch	Compliance team inspector (Headteacher, HMC school)
Mr Paul Bate	Team inspector (Former headteacher, ISA school)
Mrs Caroline Birtwell	Team inspector (Headteacher, ISA school)
Mr Robin Davies	Team inspector (Assistant director of education, private school group)
Mr Graeme May	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC school)
Mrs Lesley Tyler	Team inspector (Deputy head, HMC / GSA school)
Mrs Kathryn Henry	Early years co-ordinating inspector (Former deputy head, IAPS school)
Miss Jenifer Hillman	Team inspector for EYFS (Headteacher, ISA school)