



**ISI** Independent  
Schools  
Inspectorate

**Focused Compliance and Educational Quality Inspection Report**

**The Gower School**

**November 2022**

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## School's Details

|  |   |     |                       |     |
|--|---|-----|-----------------------|-----|
| <b>School</b>                          | The Gower School  |     |                       |     |
| <b>DfE number</b>                      | 206/6381  |     |                       |     |
| <b>Early Years registration number</b> | EY 131690   |     |                       |     |
| <b>Address</b>                         | <p>The Gower School Nursery<br/> 18 North Road<br/> Islington<br/> London<br/> N7 9EY</p> <p>The Gower School Primary<br/> 10 Cynthia Street<br/> Barnsbury<br/> London<br/> N1 9JF</p> |     |                       |     |
| <b>Telephone number</b>                | 020 77002445  |     |                       |     |
| <b>Email address</b>                   | info@thegowerschool.co.uk   |     |                       |     |
| <b>Principal</b>                       | Miss Emma Gowers  |     |                       |     |
| <b>Proprietor</b>                      | Miss Emma Gowers  |     |                       |     |
| <b>Age range</b>                       | 3 months to 11 years  |     |                       |     |
| <b>Number of pupils on roll</b>        | 266   |     |                       |     |
|  | <b>Nursery School</b>   | 110 | <b>Primary School</b> | 156 |
| <b>Inspection dates</b>                | 15 to 17 November 2022  |     |                       |     |

## **1. Background Information**

### **About the school**

- 1.1 The Gower School is an independent co-educational nursery and primary school. It occupies three sites in the London borough of Islington. The nursery school, which opened in 2000, occupies two buildings at the North Road site and the primary school, which opened in 2007, educates children from Reception until Year 6 at a site about a mile and a half away. The school has been accredited as a Montessori school since 2008. It is a private limited company run by a sole proprietor who is also the principal of the school. Since the previous inspection, additional teaching spaces have been developed on the primary school site and refurbishment of many areas has been undertaken, including the establishment of a science room and the addition of a new hall.

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

- 1.2 The school aims to enable its pupils to be happy, confident learners who are thoughtful, considerate and self-motivated so that they can achieve their potential.

### **About the pupils**

- 1.3 Pupils come from mainly professional families who live locally. The school's own assessment indicates that the ability of the pupils is above average compared with those who take the same tests nationally. The school has identified 29 pupils as having special educational needs and or disabilities (SEND) which include speech and language delay, sensory processing and other difficulties. All receive support from their class and subject teachers. No pupil has an education, health and care plan. English is an additional language for 21 pupils in the nursery and 30 pupils in the primary school. They are supported by their classroom teachers. The school identifies eight pupils as being more able in some areas of learning and the curriculum is modified for them.

## 2. Regulatory Compliance Inspection

### Preface

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is approved by the Secretary of State to inspect schools which are, or whose heads are, in membership of the associations which form the Independent Schools Council (ISC) and report on the extent to which they meet the Independent School Standards ('the standards') in the Schedule to the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014. Inspections of schools with early years settings not requiring registration also report whether the school complies with key provisions of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) statutory framework, and for registered settings the full range of the Early Years Foundation Stage provisions is considered. Additionally, inspections report 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. Inspections also comment on the progress made to meet any compliance action points set out in the school's most recent statutory inspection.

ISI inspections are 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 FOCUSED 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 standards have been inspected in detail. These are the standards on safeguarding; measures to guard against bullying; arrangements for pupils' health and safety; arrangements to check the suitability of staff; the provision of information; 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.

Additionally, this visit serves as a material change visit to assess the school's proposal to increase pupil numbers to 350.

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 standards 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 The school's own framework for assessment confirms that teaching enables pupils to make good progress in the context of Part 1 paragraph 3(a).
- 2.3 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.
- 2.4 Pupils receive relationships education. The school has consulted parents and published a written statement of its policy which has regard to the relevant statutory guidance.
- 2.5 The standards relating to the quality of education [paragraphs 1–4] are met.**

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

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

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

- 2.8 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.
- 2.9 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**

- 2.10 The school makes appropriate checks to ensure the suitability of staff, supply staff and proprietors, and a register is kept as required.
- 2.11 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**

- 2.12 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.

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

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

2.14 A range of information is published, provided or made available to parents, inspectors and the Department for Education. This includes 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 with education, health and care plans or English as an additional language. It also includes 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.

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

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

2.16 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.

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

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

2.18 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.

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

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

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

- 3.1 The overall effectiveness of the early years provision is outstanding.
- 3.2 Leadership and management have excellent procedures in place for ongoing self-evaluation and continuous professional development which impact positively on outcomes for the children. Staff take responsibility for the evaluation of their own practice and identify areas for additional training to improve their effectiveness.
- 3.3 Safeguarding in the setting is extremely effective; staff share responsibility and follow guidance consistently and correctly to ensure safety, wellbeing and learning development are all catered for and well monitored to protect children.
- 3.4 Children make excellent progress from their varied starting points and are thoroughly prepared for the transition to the next stage of their education by being fully engaged in the Montessori work cycle. This gives children, including those who may have additional needs, excellent opportunities to explore the prepared environment and engage with materials of their own choosing, doing things they love whilst cultivating basic life skills, making their own decisions, and developing independence.
- 3.5 In response to the recommendation from the previous inspection, leaders have created imaginative and effective outdoor areas to further promote the children's exploratory play, as well as using nearby parks effectively for studies in a woodland environment.
- 3.6 Staff demonstrate excellent levels of care, warmth and happiness across the setting and plan many stimulating activities to motivate, challenge and excite babies and children. As they grow older, children develop an outstanding level of independence and resilience. In conversation with inspectors, parents said their children are well cared for and nurtured by staff who care about their offspring's development and wellbeing.

#### **Quality of education**

- 3.7 The quality of education is outstanding.
- 3.8 Leaders and managers ensure that outcomes for children are the best that they can be, centred around the Montessori philosophy. This includes ensuring that the well-planned curriculum is effectively implemented, and its learning outcomes assessed to ensure that intentions for each individual child in communication, personal and social and physical development are met. Leaders monitor the curriculum and spend time in classrooms observing the children's learning, thus ensuring teaching is sufficiently challenging for each child.
- 3.9 Practitioners offer children a highly meaningful learning environment that includes activities relevant to the children's own interests and life experiences as well as their prior learning, in all areas of the EYFS curriculum. Staff know their key children extremely well and consistently plan motivating, exciting, and stimulating activities in which children are keen to participate. Children observed were highly engaged and focused on their activities sustaining excellent levels of concentration for their age. For example, In the baby room, young children explored outside areas with confidence and assurance, digging in the sand, riding on toys, mark making and investigating bugs. Children's interests are followed carefully. For example, when a child picked up the watering can, the adult helped them fill it with water and enabled them to water the plants. Whilst there is a strong focus on the prime areas in each room, children are able to investigate and explore in all seven areas of learning.
- 3.10 All staff have high expectations of what each child can achieve and a strong understanding of which skills they are developing for their future learning. Staff listen carefully to and appropriately question children to support and extend their learning. They are skilled at identifying the next steps in the learning process to help secure this knowledge and understanding. Children are given a wealth of



opportunities to take part in self-educating practical play. They ask and answer questions, make choices and try out diverse ways of doing things until they discover what works and how. For example, they showed great resilience when opening and closing doors using different types of bolts, locks, and hinges. Through the programme of activities children develop lifelong skills in all areas using real life tools; for example, pouring drinks, serving snacks, setting the table, and carrying porcelain bowls.

- 3.11 The development of language and communication is outstanding, and children demonstrate high levels of interaction and engagement. Staff continually encourage, question and model different forms of communication from baby signing to short word communication. Opportunities for children to explore and investigate different forms of technology to support their early language development are not fully utilised. Children listen attentively and are encouraged to participate, for example, engaging joyfully in nursery rhyme and story time. Children follow directions and make decisions with a high level of independence for their age. For example, a toddler was able to get himself a tissue, wipe his nose and put it in the dustbin when asked by a staff member.
- 3.12 Children are well prepared for each stage of their development as they move through the setting. This is facilitated by visits from their next key person, visits to their new room and key person meetings to transfer a full knowledge of the children.

### **Behaviour and attitudes**

- 3.13 Behaviour and attitudes are outstanding.
- 3.14 High quality resources, a challenging investigative curriculum and adults who show a thoughtful understanding of children's developmental needs as well as high expectations, enable children to demonstrate creativity, exploration, and active learning. Children were absorbed and motivated whilst actively involved in making smoothies with their friends; this was an excellent way of encouraging confidence to try new experiences.
- 3.15 Tactile experiences such as cornflour in water, modelling clay and sand, and the fascination with the animals hiding within these mixtures, motivate children highly effectively through sensory stimulation to investigate, explore and discover textures, smell, and colour, both individually and collaboratively.
- 3.16 In the outdoor areas, efficient and creative use of space enables children to make their own choices and think critically about what they are doing. For example, they readily worked on the potential hazards of getting up and down the stairs to the outdoor garden. They understood the importance of holding the handrail and an adult's hand and were given constant guidance and reassurance.
- 3.17 Children work extremely well together demonstrating high levels of co-operation, turn taking and sharing of their toys. They listen respectfully to both their peer group and staff and demonstrate feelings appropriate for their age. For example, when two toddlers were getting a little cross with each other a member of staff demonstrated a sad face and the children responded to this putting on their own sad face before being guided to treat each other with gentle hands.
- 3.18 Parents are encouraged to have their children attend regularly, which contributes to the children's feelings of safety and security and children very happily join the setting each morning. Staff's communication with parents is highly positive through drop off, pick up, parent consultations and daily entries into the online learning platform, which also gives parents ideas and ways to help support and extend their children's learning and development at home.

### **Personal development**

- 3.19 The personal development of children is outstanding.
- 3.20 Leaders, managers, and staff collectively deliver excellent levels of care to the children which promotes every child's emotional security. There is a tangible welcoming feel and as a result children form secure attachments with their key person. Children are encouraged to seek assurance from all staff.

- 3.21 The setting is highly effective in meeting the EYFS statutory requirements for children's safeguarding, welfare, learning and development. Detailed policies and procedures are consistently implemented and understood. All staff are clear about their safeguarding responsibilities and parents can identify the systems in place.
- 3.22 Staff provide excellent supported opportunities for risk taking, for example, climbing activities, and carrying cutlery and crockery. These encourage children to try new things with a growing confidence and independence. Children are challenged in their play and encouraged to make their own decisions.
- 3.23 Children have a healthy diet with fruit continually available through the day, well balanced meals and opportunities and encouragement to try new foods. At breakfast, the children chose whether they wanted to pour their own milk. Everything is explained and children are given opportunities to respond, choose and make decisions for themselves. Manners are excellent. The setting caters well for those with allergies and has a clear system in place for this. Staff are extremely consistent and clear with the messages to the children, giving them opportunities to make decisions to support a healthy lifestyle; for example, offering babies the opportunity to investigate a toothbrush whilst being appropriately supervised.
- 3.24 Staff adeptly recognise children's individual needs and promote the development of each child's character through the experiences the setting provides, recognising their uniqueness. Family origins are celebrated, and children learn how to contribute positively to the community by bringing in traditional snacks from home to share with their friends.
- 3.25 Children who have joined recently are extremely well settled both emotionally and developmentally because of a thorough induction process. Staff have a strong grasp of all the characters in their individual rooms and relationships observed between staff and children are remarkably close, nurturing and happy.

### **Leadership and management**

- 3.26 Leadership and management are outstanding.
- 3.27 Leaders and managers' vision for the EYFS is inspired by their ambition and high expectations for the children. Their knowledge and insight of how to support, motivate and encourage staff is excellent. As a result, staff are confident, reflective and have a thorough understanding of policies and procedures. They are fully aware of their statutory responsibilities relating to safeguarding and the Equality Act 2010. All areas of safeguarding are strong and processes in place are highly effective in safeguarding all children. Safer recruitment practices are exemplary.
- 3.28 Parents are provided with a wide range of information about the EYFS curriculum and initiatives. They particularly value the daily feedback and advice on the school's digital platform, showing what their child has done during the session, what and how much they have eaten, and their general wellbeing and development. Ideas are given how parents and carers can further support their children at home.
- 3.29 Staff are extremely well supported through regular professional development meetings. The supervision programme in place each term is highly effective in supporting staff. Leadership of the setting has an open-door policy and communicates with staff, who are very appreciative of the support.
- 3.30 The leadership ensures that systems are in place to ensure the needs of all children are met. All staff demonstrate a strong understanding of all children's needs across the setting. Highly effective support is in place for children with SEN and EAL and progress monitored in liaison with parents. The setting has excellent links with outside agencies and access specialist help such as speech therapy and early years' specialists when required.

### **Compliance with statutory requirements**

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

### **Recommendation for further improvement**

The school is advised to make the following improvement to its provision for children in the early years.

- Provide opportunities for children to explore and investigate different forms of technology to support early language development.

## **4. Recommendation with regard to material change request**

### **Summary of findings**

- 4.1 The arrangements for safeguarding of pupils are secure with there being a positive safeguarding culture within the school. The safeguarding policy is posted on the school website. The school premises and accommodation are of an appropriate size for the proposed increase in numbers. There has been much development of both of the school sites over recent years with additional teaching rooms being added to the primary school site. The premises are suitably maintained, and the school pays due regard to all health and safety measures, including for fire, and any associated risk assessments. There are sufficient toilets and washing facilities located throughout the three school buildings. Pupils are properly supervised at all times, including when moving between the school buildings and local parks, which are used for both recreation and learning. Leadership and management ensure that all pre-employment checks on staff, supply staff and the proprietor are carried out. Leadership and management ensure that the school meets its statutory responsibilities for both the EYFS and the remainder of the school.

### **Recommendation**

- 4.2 It is recommended that the school's request for the material change be approved. The school's proposal is for a small number of additional pupils to be added to each group across the age ranges and the information above fully supports this.

## 5. 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.

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

Where the school's own names differ from those used nationally, the details are given in the table below:

| <i>School name</i> | <i>National Curriculum name</i> |
|--------------------|---------------------------------|
| Form 1             | Year 1                          |
| Form 2             | Year 2                          |
| Form 3             | Year 3                          |
| Form 4             | Year 4                          |
| Form 5             | Year 5                          |
| Form 6             | Year 6                          |

### Key findings

5.1 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

- Pupils of all ages have an excellent skills base which they readily apply to their learning, founded in the Montessori philosophy which provides a golden thread of continuity.
- Pupils of all abilities make rapid progress through a supportive environment that meets their specific needs.
- Pupils have notably strong levels of achievement in both mathematics and English, preparing them well for the point of transfer to their chosen secondary school.
- Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are decidedly positive and they demonstrate a desire to always give of their best.

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

- Pupils display a natural self-confidence and have a deep understanding about themselves.
- Pupils have an excellent sense of morality, and this is displayed in the high quality of their friendships and their behaviour around the school.
- Pupils are excellent social citizens, contributing positively to a school environment where they feel happy and safe.
- Pupils' sense of diversity and inclusion is outstanding; they openly celebrate and champion differences and individuality.

## Recommendation

5.3 The school is advised to make the following improvement.

- Ensure pupils' acquisition of skills and knowledge in information and communication technology (ICT) and its application, is improved by increasing the pace of curriculum delivery to suit pupils' future needs and interests.

## The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements

5.4 The quality of the pupils' academic and other achievements is excellent.

5.5 Pupils achieve highly in a wide range of areas of learning. They talk with confidence about how well they achieve in school and how they feel that they make good progress. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, every parent who responded felt that the range of subjects available is suitable for their children and that teaching enables their children to make good progress. This view is supported by inspection evidence, particularly through scrutiny of pupils' work and during observations of lessons. Attainment, for older pupils, is notably strong in mathematics and English. Pupils gain entry to a range of secondary schools where places may be highly competitive. Pupils are resilient, resourceful, and work well collaboratively and on their own to produce excellent results every day and over time. Pupils of all ages and abilities, including those with SEND and/or EAL, make good and often rapid progress. School leaders and managers ensure that individual needs are met by providing a broad and balanced curriculum, excellent resources, and knowledgeable and engaging teaching. This ensures that the aims of the school are fully met.

5.6 Pupils' excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding are evident across all parts of the school. They are keen to embrace challenge and develop their knowledge beyond the curriculum. Strong teaching, detailed planning, excellent support, and an admirable pupil work ethic all make a positive contribution in this area. From the very youngest pupils there is a clear progression in numeracy, science, writing and literacy skills, which build in a spiral fashion across the years. Pupils regularly exceed ambitious end of year targets, illustrating a whole school approach to excellence. Excellent subject knowledge and the development of skills is developed through Montessori grounding in the Nursery and throughout the EYFS and lower school. Cross-curricular topics are studied throughout the school, and these allow learning from a range of subjects which complement each other and add to depth of study. For example, in the older pupils' study of world wars, they learnt songs of those periods, role played key events, studied propaganda posters in art and wrote both factually and creatively. Pupils display high levels of creative flair and talent as shown in the high quality of their artwork, their musical prowess when learning instruments and playing in ensembles, and in the quality of their engagement in drama.

5.7 Pupils have excellent communication skills. From an early age they are excellent oral communicators who listen attentively to their peers and adults alike, ask questions, make decisions, and share ideas. The pupils feel that they have a voice and that their opinions are listened to and are valued. Consequently, there is a strong listening culture and respect for the values and opinions of others. Pupils take pride in the presentation of their written work. Very young children make excellent progress from emerging mark making skills in Nursery to formal letter formation in Reception and are encouraged to write in full sentences by the time they reach Form 1. From this point, pupils develop high-quality writing for a range of different purposes. Form 6 pupils show a mastery of the English language, well beyond their years, in their poetry writing on chosen topics. This was exemplified in extracts from work on Coco Chanel such as, 'Piercing hazel eyes sat on her delicate features; her scarlet-red lips, as bright as a ripe strawberry in summer that produces tasty delights.' Pupils are avid and competent readers and regularly enjoy quiet reading sessions, fully utilising the well-stocked library. They relish the opportunity to develop their awareness of authors from different cultural backgrounds and increase their knowledge of diversity whilst widening vocabulary within a contextual experience.

- 5.8 Pupils demonstrate excellent mathematical skills for their age and ability. From the EYFS, they establish a secure knowledge of mathematical concepts and can apply their knowledge to problem solving opportunities. They use numbers and shapes to consolidate their understanding and confidently use these skills to aid their everyday work cycles and when learning outdoors. In discussions with inspectors, Form 4 explained, with great enthusiasm, that their pursuit of the much-prized numeracy badges was 'awesome'. Pupils are highly motivated to achieve in this area and often gain badges for subject competence that is above age-related expectations. Pupils say how much they enjoy mathematics lessons and how being taught a variety of methods to resolve problems helps them to overcome previous difficulties. School leaders ensure that pupils are challenged appropriately, and this individualised approach to learning allows pupils to work at their own pace with excellent results. The cross-curricular approach enables pupils to apply their numeracy skills effectively to other subject areas and in everyday life.
- 5.9 Pupils display strong skills in ICT and are competent users of all things technological. They are successful when learning coding from an early age and are fluent touch typists by the time they reach Form 6. Pupils of all ages often choose to use technology to present their thoughts and ideas, particularly when working on projects at home. In school, older pupils showed their expertise when writing presentations about themselves, successfully embedding videos and games to engage the reader. Skills in ICT were developed and adapted for their use during lockdown. When questioned, some pupils said they would like to use ICT more, being aware that they have not yet used these tools to their full potential to enhance their learning. Pupils identify the fact that they will need ICT skills more and more in their next schools and in their post school lives. Inspection evidence supports this view and identifies that the school could improve pupil outcomes by strengthening arrangements.
- 5.10 Pupils demonstrate outstanding ability and a high level of maturity in the way in which they study. They make decisions as to how they work and what works for them, for example working independently, with support or collaboratively, which they do efficiently and with relish. These skills are fostered from the youngest age through the rigorous application of the Montessori philosophy to learning. Through carefully created optional activities, the very youngest children have the opportunity to develop a positive work ethic. As they mature, and pupils move into primary, they demonstrate that they can gather and use information from an increasingly wide range of sources. They show excellent independence in being able to research and can solve problems using higher order thinking skills. For example, in debating society, pupils create and assign roles for a three-a-side debate. They establish a point, giving evidence, as well as making rebuttals and counter arguments or interjecting with a point of information. High order thinking was evident in lessons such as personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) when pupils were given hypothetical questions to consider around areas such as bullying. Teachers tease out hypotheses from pupils well and challenge them. Pupils spoke highly of the support and challenge they receive from teachers. In the questionnaire, almost all parents felt that the school equips their children with the team working, collaborative and research skills they need in later life.
- 5.11 Pupils are most successful in a wide range of areas, some of which are part of the school's extensive extra-curricular programme. They achieve highly in music examinations across a wide variety of instruments as well as gaining notable success in drama and public speaking examinations. Sporting successes are many, including equestrian endeavours and girls' football. Pupils are also successful in both regional and national swimming competitions. Attainment is excellent with pupils moving on to an extensive range of senior schools of their choice, often carrying awards and scholarships in music, drama and sport, as well as for academic achievement.
- 5.12 Pupils' attitudes towards their learning are excellent. They love their school and have great fun whilst they learn, but they also take their work seriously and appreciate how they benefit from all the resources and teaching it gives them. Pupils create an atmosphere of kind, caring and inclusive working in the classroom and are very positive about their individual and collective experiences. Pupils come to lessons well prepared, are attentive and take an active part in all activities. They are highly

reflective learners as seen by self-evaluations in their books and in pertinent decisive peer evaluations during lessons. They gain much from analysing their work and taking the initiative to improve their standard. They are highly supportive of each other and work readily in groups. Pupils demonstrate robust approaches to their studies. They are clearly motivated to learn and are positive because they feel that the school recognises their endeavours.

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

- 5.13 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 5.14 Pupils have excellent self-understanding because of the high level of care and tutor support they receive. Without any self-importance, pupils develop a high level of confidence in their own abilities and are proud of their achievements and keen to share them. Pupils understand they have a safe place in school where they can get to know themselves. They are confident to ask for help should it be required. From a very early age pupils are actively encouraged to challenge themselves and move outside their comfort zone, to take risks and develop independence. Through the embedded Montessori philosophical approach to learning, pupils from Reception to Form 2 develop excellent levels of self-confidence. They are not afraid of being wrong and consider a failure as a learning opportunity. Pupils react positively to challenges and occasional setbacks, and thus develop strong resilience. To this end the school is most successful in achieving its aims under the direction of leaders and managers who ensure that the personal wellbeing of all pupils is given the highest priority.
- 5.15 Pupils are confident in their decision making and are prepared to attempt challenging tasks within a safe, supportive environment. They are able to consider options evaluatively and are willing to take risks in their learning. For example, in the outside learning environment children in the EYFS made wise decisions and were fully engaged in erecting their tent independently using rubber hammers correctly to achieve an effective end result. Pupils of all ages confidently make decisions about how they approach their learning. They select whether to work collaboratively or independently, where to sit, on a low table, high table, or regular tables, or whether to stand and write. Pupils demonstrate an extremely mature approach to their learning, deciding for themselves how to work productively and what works best for them. Younger pupils in the primary school, for example, made decisions as soon as they arrived in the classroom as to which topic on the list of tasks they would tackle first, where they would like to work and whether to work alone or with a friend. Older pupils were confident that they would make the correct choice of working partner, who would not necessarily be their best friend, but the person with whom they would collaborate best on the task in hand.
- 5.16 Pupils' spiritual awareness is well developed. Leaders and managers have ensured that the embedded, Montessori Peace Curriculum, with its focus on spirituality, morality, social and emotional development, has been highly effective in developing this deeper aspect of personal development. All pupils in primary respond enthusiastically to initiatives such as the 'THUNK' of the week which provides the opportunity to engage in philosophical debate, which they do expertly. Pupils are thoughtful and are deeply respectful of other viewpoints and beliefs. Their appreciation of art, music, drama, and the creative subjects is outstanding as shown by the care they put into their work and the enthusiasm with which they participate. Pupils are always open to those specific moments that create a special inner feeling. For example, pupils in Form 4 let out a collective 'Wow' when they walked into the new corridor and classroom for the first time. Older pupils spoke to inspectors of the poignancy and sombre, reflective mood experienced when the head boy and girl laid wreaths at a local Remembrance Day parade.
- 5.17 Pupils show an excellent awareness of school rules and the importance of good behaviour at school. They know what to do if any wrong behaviour occurs, understanding that they could try and resolve issues themselves but could also seek adult help if required. They praise their teachers highly for being kind and gentle when dealing with problems. They are highly confident in articulating their acceptance of responsibility for their own behaviour and understanding the importance of treating others how



they would wish to be treated themselves. Children in the EYFS follow class rules beautifully with an excellent understanding of what is expected of them. For example, preparing for outside garden time putting shoes on, using their inside voices, using walking feet, sitting on the carpet when ready, and lining up to walk across to the garden. Primary school pupils are highly motivated by the effective use of 'super star' classroom behaviour charts. Behaviour observed, within class and around the school, was exemplary. This reflects how the pupils responded to the questionnaire, as they all felt that they are expected to behave well. The pupils show a high level of respect for and behave very well towards each other. They have a well-developed sense of what is right and wrong and a very strong sense of justice.

- 5.18 Pupils demonstrate a high level of social awareness. They are very supportive of each other and are unanimous in saying that pupils in the school are kind to each other. During observations pupils moved seamlessly from task to fun and back with ease, showing excellent self-control. Pupils collaborate in a positive, constructive, and supportive way. They work effectively with others, inside and outside of the classroom. This atmosphere of mutual respect, support and kindness pervades the whole school community, engendered by school leaders and managers. Being kind and considerate is highly valued and pupils clearly thrive in an environment where relationships are important, and goals are shared. For example, in school council, pupils of all year groups collaborate to fulfil a common aim or in the planning of a major charity event. Pupils talk confidently about a desire to help other children and not just their friends. The high staff to pupil ratios mean that staff are able to take the time to interact extremely effectively with the pupils, modelling respect and support and showing a positive interest in all that the pupils are doing. Older pupils instinctively support those further down the school and this is an excellent conduit for high levels of social development.
- 5.19 Pupils are excellent in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities within class and around the school. They take their responsibilities seriously whether that be as a paper passer in Form 3, clearing up the books and papers at the end of the lesson, or as special helpers in the EYFS. Pupils in Year 6 explained that through their active involvement in the school council they are able to have an influence on the choice of menus for lunch and which charities they would support in their fund-raising activities. Currently they are donating books and toys for kindness bags which will be donated to children in care who live in the local area. In discussions, pupils of all ages speak of how they see the importance of their role as positive contributors to the lives of others. Older pupils respond with enthusiasm when representing the school as major officials.
- 5.20 Pupils' respect for diversity and cultural understanding is excellent. They identify the school's culture of mutual respect as a key driver in this area. Consequently, they are highly respectful of their peers, teachers and visitors. They are inclusive, demonstrating emotional intelligence, tolerance and sensitivity towards others. They are appreciative of the diversity within their own and wider community, taking every opportunity to learn about, share and celebrate each other's culture and traditions. Pupils identify that the school is a very caring community where everyone is accepted and included. From a very young age, they have an excellent and positive understanding of the differences between people of contrasting backgrounds, faiths and cultures. Pupils respond with empathy and understanding and do not accept discrimination in any form. They have at times been saddened by unkind acts that they have learned about through studies of historical events, such as the holocaust, and compared these to the different attitudes they encounter today in their school.
- 5.21 Pupils have a strong understanding of how to stay safe whether this be physically or emotionally. They are confident in their knowledge of health and safety hazards. This was exemplified when children in the EYFS talked about their promises before their session in the outdoor woodland environment. This included wearing reflective clothing, crossing the road sensibly and crossing hands across their chests when seeing dogs off the lead. In the questionnaire, every pupil who responded felt that the school is a safe place to be. In discussions, older pupils spoke of the importance of physical activity. Pupils of all ages understand the importance of a healthy diet, and this is supported through the school's vegetarian philosophy. The mental wellbeing of pupils is supported very effectively through the PSHEE

curriculum and caring and supportive staff. The school is proud to be a *'telling school'*, and from the youngest age pupils are encouraged to identify and talk about their feelings through the highly effective use of support strategies such as the worry monsters, calm books and peace tables. Inspection evidence supports the views of the pupils in the questionnaire, where every pupil who responded felt that the school encourages them to be healthy.

## 6. Inspection Evidence

- 6.1 The inspectors observed lessons, had discussions with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended form times and an assembly. Inspectors visited the facilities for the youngest pupils, together with the learning support and educational resource areas. Inspectors considered the responses of parents, staff and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires. The inspectors examined curriculum and other documentation made available by the school.

### Inspectors

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Mr Graham Gorton    | Reporting inspector  |
| Mrs Naomi Fowke     | Compliance team inspector and team inspector (Former proprietor, ISA school) |
| Mrs Di Durrant      | Team inspector (Former deputy head, SofH school)                             |
| Mrs Jane Huntington | Team inspector (Former head, ISA school)                                     |
| Mrs Allison Skipper | Co-ordinating inspector for early years (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school)      |
| Mrs Joanne Kay      | Team inspector for early years (Teacher, IAPS school)                        |