



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
ABBOTSFORD PREPARATORY SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Abbotsford Preparatory School

At the time of this inspection the attached 'Little Gems' Nursery was in the process of registering with Ofsted, and a separate report for the registered setting is published on the Ofsted website.

Full Name of School	<b>Abbotsford Preparatory School</b>
DfE Number	<b>358/6012</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY473053</b>
Address	<b>Abbotsford Preparatory School 211 Flixton Road Urmston Manchester M41 5PR</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0161 748 3261</b>
Fax Number	<b>0161 746 7961</b>
Email Address	<b>secretary@abbotsfordprepschool.co.uk</b>
Head	<b>Mrs Pamela Shiels</b>
Proprietor	<b>Mr Ali Khan</b>
Age Range	<b>0 to 11</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>175</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (94 boys; 81 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>21</b> 5-11: <b>102</b> 3-5 (EYFS): <b>52</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>175</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Pauline Fox</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>20 May 2014 to 23 May 2014</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in May 2009.

The Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) is the body approved by the Secretary of State for the purpose of inspecting schools belonging to the Independent Schools Council (ISC) Associations and reporting on compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website [www.legislation.gov.uk](http://www.legislation.gov.uk). Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

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

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

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 in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

Both Ofsted and ISI inspect and report on the Independent School Standards Regulations. However, they apply different frameworks and have different criteria for judging school quality that are suited to the different types of schools they inspect. Both use a four point scale when making judgements of quality but, whilst the ISI terminology reflects quality judgements that are at least equivalent to those used by Ofsted, they also reflect the differences in approach. ISI reports do not provide a single overarching judgement for the school but instead give a clear judgement on each aspect of the school's work at the beginning of each section. **These headline statements must include one of the ISI descriptors 'excellent', 'good', 'sound' or 'unsatisfactory', and where Achievement is 'exceptional' that term may be used for the top grade.** Elsewhere in the report, inspectors may use a range of different adjectives to make judgements.

## **INSPECTION EVIDENCE**

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with the proprietor, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited the facilities for sick or injured pupils. The responses of parents and pupils to pre-inspection questionnaires were analysed, and the inspectors examined regulatory documentation made available by the school.

### **Inspectors**

Mr Paul Brewster

Mrs Pamela Simmonds

Mrs Jenny Clayphan

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

# CONTENTS

	Page
<b>1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(a) Main findings</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>(b) Action points</b>	<b>3</b>
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
<b>3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS</b>	<b>4</b>
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>8</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	9
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	9
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>11</b>
(a) The quality of governance	11
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	11

## **1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

- 1.1 Abbotsford Preparatory School was founded in Urmston in 1908 as Caius House School, and moved to its present site in 1997. In June 2013 it became part of Alpha Schools North, a company wholly owned by its proprietor. The proprietor and his team manage financial and strategic matters, with the day-to-day management of the school being the responsibility of the head.
- 1.2 Abbotsford is a co-educational school for children from 3 to 11 years with an attached day Nursery, known as 'Little Gems', which caters for children aged from four months to four years old. Older children within the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) are in the Pre-school and Reception classes, which are part of the main school, and which are included in this report. Pupils are of a wide range of abilities with the majority being above the national average. The admission policy is not academically selective. Pupils are admitted as places are available into year groups throughout the age range.
- 1.3 The school's main aims are to provide a sound education and a rich, varied and balanced curriculum in a happy, respectful and caring environment where high ethical standards prevail. Through this framework, it strives to enable pupils to realise their potential by using their initiative, trying their best and learning to work both independently and co-operatively.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, 'Little Gems' has been established, new playground equipment installed and a programme of refurbishment has been completed within the main school. More specialist teachers are now employed and all children from 18 months learn a modern foreign language.
- 1.5 At the time of the inspection, 175 pupils were enrolled in the school, including 35 children in the 'Little Gems' Nursery, a total of 94 boys and 81 girls. Nine pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), none of whom require additional support. Of the 14 pupils the school has identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 10 receive specialist learning support. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Most pupils are from local professional or business families.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

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

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

- 2.1 The school successfully achieves its aim to help pupils to realise their potential by providing a good education with a rich, varied and balanced curriculum in a happy, respectful and caring environment within which high ethical standards prevail.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' achievements is excellent, and pupils have excellent aptitudes for learning. Pupils are articulate, confident and well organised and are able to work well individually or with others. In the Pre-school and reception classes of the EYFS within the main school, children's progress and learning are good. In Years 1 to 6, pupils of all abilities achieve at a high level and make rapid progress. The broad curriculum incorporates all required areas of learning, and pupils benefit from the wide range of stimulating extra-curricular activities. The recommendation in the previous inspection, to develop leadership of the curriculum, and in particular to identify further staff training needs, has been fulfilled. Teaching overall is excellent, and planning, assessment and pupil tracking arrangements are thorough. However, the standard of teaching is not always consistent across all age groups and aspects of the curriculum. For example, in the EYFS, some teaching does not provide enough opportunity for children to undertake sufficiently independent activities.
- 2.3 The quality of the pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school, including pupils in EYFS. Pastoral care is excellent. Pupils feel valued and well cared for, and they greatly enjoy and appreciate being part of the school. Children in the EYFS are prepared very well for their transitions between the various stages of their education. Relationships between pupils and staff are warm, genuine and respectful, in line with the school's active promotion of kindness, courtesy and consideration. The pupils' behaviour is outstanding at all levels. The school council is successful in enabling pupils to express their opinions, and their work has made a discernible impact on the work of the school. Safeguarding arrangements, including safer recruitment, are secure, and the arrangements for health and safety are excellent, enabling pupils to be safe. All staff receive training in child protection arrangements and the school has excellent links with local agencies.
- 2.4 Governance is good. The governance arrangements provide good oversight of the school, including the EYFS, in line with its aims. Regular visits to the school, together with financial and business oversight provide effective support for the school's leadership. Additional support for guidance on regulatory compliance is planned to strengthen governance of the school. The quality of leadership and management is excellent, consultative and supportive, and it has been highly effective in driving improvement since the previous inspection. Links with parents and carers are also excellent.

## **2.(b) Action points**

### **(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements**

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

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

2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Strengthen the monitoring of teaching across all age groups, including EYFS, to promote a consistently excellent standard in all lessons.
2. In Years 1 to 6, further improve pupils' independent learning and thinking skills.
3. In the EYFS, provide more stimulating activities that enable children to investigate independently.



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

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 From the EYFS onwards, children and pupils are very well educated. The school is highly successful in meeting its aim to provide an educational environment that will enable all children to grow physically, emotionally and intellectually.
- 3.3 Standards within the main school part of the EYFS are high. Almost all children meet the Early Learning Goals at the end of Reception and many exceed them. Children in Pre-school and Reception take delight in their phonic knowledge to write simple sentences, and show confidence and accuracy when counting backwards, or when measuring a variety of items. They listen well, for example showing good knowledge of Tudor kings and queens. Children show the ability to reason, for example when thinking about choices in the light of the story of the Prodigal Son. The children have positive attitudes to learning and are confident when taking turns or asking questions.
- 3.4 Pupils demonstrate very well-developed skills in reading, speaking and listening. Writing skills are excellent, with older pupils able to write with imagination, deploying a wide range of vocabulary. Pupils' writing has been published by a national publishing company. The standard of numeracy is also high throughout the school, and pupils have good information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Pupils in Year 6 have recently applied their numeracy and ICT skills very effectively in setting up a business to design, make and market their own products for sale at the Christmas Fair. Achievements in physical pursuits are good, and pupils' good achievement in art is evident from the attractive displays around the school. Standards in music are good. The pupils' opportunities for independent research are provided through homework and projects. However, these skills are less well developed as they are limited during the school day.
- 3.5 By the time pupils leave the school, a high percentage of them achieve standards which are well above the national average, and many of them are successful in gaining places in competitive entry to local selective schools.
- 3.6 Pupils achieve a high degree of success in extra-curricular activities, including those pupils identified with SEND. All pupils have the opportunity to represent the school in sports competitions. Teams have been particularly successful winning local tournaments and representing the local district at the Manchester games. The gymnastics, tag rugby and hockey teams won their events at the games, and members of the gymnastics team won a number of individual gold medals. Individual pupils have been chosen to play for Lancashire Cricket Club and Liverpool Football Club. Over half of the pupils aged 7 to 11 learn musical instruments, and individual musicians, the choir and the recorder group perform in assemblies and at presentation evenings. Every pupil takes part in an ambitious musical drama production each year which combines drama, music and dance and these are of a high standard. Several talented pupils have been chosen to take part in professional theatre productions at a local opera house and the English Youth Ballet.
- 3.7 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but on the evidence from lesson observations, work scrutiny, standardised measures of progress and interviews it is judged to be excellent.

Pupils, including those who are able, gifted or talented, make substantial progress. Those with SEND or EAL benefit from effective individual support where necessary, making rapid progress and achieving well. Throughout the school, pupils have positive attitudes to their work and learning. In lessons they demonstrate high levels of focus and perseverance. This is also evident in their participation in extra-curricular activities, which they pursue with enthusiasm. During lessons, they listen well and work productively as individuals or in groups or pairs.

- 3.8 In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire all parents indicated that they were pleased with their child's progress.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.

3.10 The carefully-devised programmes for the EYFS encourage all children to make close relationships with adults and other children. The setting has high expectations of them, for example when children in Reception learn French, or when they are encouraged to try new things. Activities are often imaginative, and opportunities for children to learn with adult support are always good and sometimes outstanding. Children develop strong and trusting relations with their key person, becoming confident to work in groups or independently. Staff encourage all children to eat healthily, behave safely and to develop good habits of hygiene. The setting has good learning resources that are used well. Both Pre-school and reception classes use the well-equipped outside area. Staff work closely with parents, involving them in their child's learning. The setting also enjoys a close partnership with external agencies, who give valuable support when required. Children are prepared well for the next stage of learning, with those in Reception spending time in the Year 1 classroom in the term before they move. Similarly, the Pre-school classroom hosts visits by children moving up from the Nursery. Parents report high levels of satisfaction with the provision in the EYFS.

3.11 The curriculum from Year 1 onwards contains the required areas of learning, enabling pupils to develop a wide range of skills and interests and preparing them well for the next stage in their education. It is suitable for all pupils' ages and abilities and strongly supports the school's aim to offer a full and varied curriculum that is both challenging to the able child and supportive of the less able. Pupils throughout the school are offered all the National Curriculum subjects, practice in reasoning tests, French for pupils in all years and Spanish in Years 5 and 6. Pupils' personal development is enhanced through the comprehensive personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. Aspects of the curriculum are presented using cross-curricular themes. A recently introduced guided reading scheme provides extra support for the development of literacy skills.

3.12 Pupils benefit from the expertise of specialist teachers in music, swimming and games. A computer room provides individual access for pupils in scheduled ICT lessons. ICT is used occasionally in other subject areas and for project work, but its use is limited by the availability of suitable equipment. The recent acquisition of tablet computers, together with an improvement to the school's wireless internet provision is designed to expand this provision. Younger pupils benefit from guided reading and story time in the reasonably well-stocked library, situated in a dedicated room.

- 3.13 Curriculum planning for each year group is comprehensive and schemes of work are thorough. An efficient rolling programme monitors the effectiveness of the curriculum and identifies issues for further development. The learning support department provides effective assistance for pupils with SEND and individual lessons are provided as needs are identified. The development of clubs to challenge the more able pupils is a key focus for the school. For example, a creative writing club has been introduced to strengthen writing skills and an art club provides extra challenge for talented artists.
- 3.14 Pupils benefit from an excellent extra-curricular programme including a wide range of clubs, activities and educational visits. Clubs offered include music, sport, gardening, cookery and drama. For sporting activities the school adopts an inclusive approach, with all children from Year 1 to Year 6 representing the school during the year. Pupils benefit from an excellent programme of trips to local museums and theatres. Individual tuition is offered in a range of musical instruments. Special events, to enhance aspects of the curriculum, take place regularly, such as the recent whole school participation in World Book Day.
- 3.15 Pupils gain a good understanding of their local community and are able help those less fortunate than themselves. They support a wide range of charities.

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

- 3.16 The teaching throughout the school is excellent.
- 3.17 At all levels, including the EYFS, teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' progress and supporting the aim of the school to educate and develop all children in a happy, caring community that places individuals at its heart and allows everyone to succeed. Pupils benefit from the thorough monitoring of progress which enables teachers to tailor their teaching to individual needs in most lessons.
- 3.18 Within the two EYFS classes, teaching provides learning opportunities that are always good and sometimes outstanding. Teaching is characterised by the use of skilful questions and interesting information to enthuse the children. Effective planning to meet the needs of all children, including the able and those with SEND, draws upon detailed assessment. Leaders monitor the quality of assessment and planning to ensure consistency. As a result, in adult-led work, children almost always work at appropriate levels, although in a very small number of cases, opportunities for independent learning are not always exploited thoroughly. The use of specialists to teach the older children in French, music and dance is valuable in enriching their experiences.
- 3.19 Teachers exhibit thorough subject knowledge and adopt a variety of strategies to foster a love of learning in their pupils which enable them to make significant progress. This was observed across the curriculum and particularly in the teaching of English and mathematics. In most lessons, planning for individual needs and careful management of time ensures that pupils maintain their focus and make good progress throughout the lesson. In a small number of less successful lessons, planning for individual needs is less effective or poor time management leads to pupils losing concentration and they make less progress. In all age groups, teachers know their pupils well and ensure that pupils develop in a supportive learning environment, within which success is celebrated.
- 3.20 The school has adopted a highly effective system for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress as they move through the school, based on national levels of attainment.

Pupils are set individual targets and, in discussion, they confirmed that they know what they need to do to improve and that they are well supported by their teachers.

- 3.21 Marking is thorough, accurate and frequent and gives positive reinforcement to pupils, as well as helpful advice on how to improve. Work is assessed regularly and the data is used to make lesson planning more effective. In observed lessons, assessment was used effectively to help pupils think more carefully about the quality of their work. Teachers give valuable oral feedback while pupils are working on assignments in class.
- 3.22 Teachers use well-equipped classrooms, including interactive whiteboards extremely well. For example, in a Year 4 ICT lesson on coding the teacher showed a video clip about the work of computer scientists. Teachers also enable pupils to gain a breadth of knowledge about a topic by linking subject areas, such as in a recent week on 'Our World', which gave pupils a good understanding of life in countries other than their own.
- 3.23 As pupils move up the school, teachers encourage pupils to work more independently and to use investigational techniques when exploring topics such as radiators and insulators in science or life in Tudor times in history. In most lessons, the more able, gifted and talented pupils are offered additional tasks to provide them with suitable challenge.
- 3.24 All teaching staff have copies of detailed individual educational plans for pupils identified with SEND or EAL and take this into account in their planning and teaching. Teaching assistants are used effectively by teachers to provide helpful additional support for individual pupils. The school maintains close links with the local authority to ensure that the required provision for pupils with a statement of special educational needs is implemented effectively.

## **4. THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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

- 4.1 The quality of pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 Children in the Pre-school and Reception classes of the EYFS show excellent personal and emotional development. Their behaviour is exemplary as a result of the consistently high expectations of adults and children feel happy and supported by them.
- 4.3 The pupils are self-confident and show respect for themselves and for one another. Pupils' spiritual awareness is good. They are aware of the non-material aspects of life as a result of discussions of the beliefs of the main religions in religious education (RE) lessons and through assemblies, during which they sing songs, say prayers and have a story with a moral. Pupils are self-aware and they gain confidence and maturity through the many opportunities they have to join in class discussions, speak and perform in school assemblies and take part in drama productions.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral awareness is excellent. Their behaviour is exemplary, and they have a mature sense of right and wrong which is nurtured by a caring family atmosphere within the school and through discussions in PSHE lessons. For example, in a Year 4 lesson pupils were mature and insightful in their discussion of ways to deal with feelings of guilt. In talking to inspectors pupils demonstrated the moral and ethical values passed onto them by teachers through formal and informal means, such as lessons, assemblies and personal discussion.
- 4.5 Pupils' social development is excellent and they willingly accept responsibility as prefects, house captains, school council representatives, playground leaders and class monitors. They are proud to contribute to the society of the school. Each pupil is allocated to one of four houses. The house system encourages healthy competition and pupils eagerly compete for house points which are awarded for good work and behaviour. Pupils are aware of those in need and are involved in many events to raise money for charities. Older pupils also gain a good understanding of the world outside school as they have the opportunity to listen to the news and talk about current affairs.
- 4.6 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. They learn to understand and respect other faiths and cultures during RE lessons and by visiting places of worship such as the local synagogue and mosque. This was illustrated during the inspection when Year 1 discussed the various celebrations which involve light. Pupils are taught about British traditions and culture and also enjoy celebrations in school such as Diwali, Eid, Chinese New Year and Christmas. Harmonious relationships between pupils from different cultures and faiths are evident in the school.
- 4.7 Pupils develop personal independence as they move through the school. This is aided in Years 3 to 6 by annual residential trips to an adventure training centre, where pupils experience activities such as rock climbing and canoeing. By the time they leave school at the age of 11, pupils exhibit an excellent standard of personal development and are confident, articulate young people.
- 4.8 Pupil responses in the pre-inspection questionnaire were overwhelmingly positive with no concerns raised.

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

- 4.9 The contribution of the arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.10 Pastoral care systems across the school, including the EYFS, are clear and robust. Staff know the pupils extremely well and relationships between them and the pupils are warm with high levels of mutual respect. Relationships between pupils are harmonious and in interviews newer pupils reported that they had settled quickly and were very happy at Abbotsford.
- 4.11 The school promotes healthy eating habits among the pupils by encouraging them to eat fruit at break and providing nourishing well-balanced meals at lunchtime. The exciting and popular activities programme, together with the sports lessons within the main curriculum, ensure that pupils benefit from regular exercise. Children in the EYFS make good use of the outside areas and learn to assess risk when climbing on the large pieces of apparatus.
- 4.12 The school has robust policies and procedures to promote good behaviour and guard against bullying. However, in response to the questionnaire, a few parents indicated that cases of bullying had not been dealt with to their complete satisfaction. Scrutiny of documentation relating to disciplinary matters indicates that all incidents are carefully investigated and appropriate action is taken. In interviews, pupils reported that they are very happy and felt safe in school, and that they have lessons on cyber bullying. In PSHE lessons they have also discussed how to quickly resolve any bullying problem that might arise.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with SEND. Teachers have high levels of awareness and individual education plans are effective. They are updated regularly and pupils continue to have them for only as long as is necessary.
- 4.14 Effective systems are in place for the school to seek the views of pupils. A school council, with two pupils from each year group, meets fortnightly and presents ideas for school improvement. For example, one idea was to install mirrors in the girls' toilets, and this has now been done. Suggestion boxes are consulted regularly for fresh ideas and pupils receive a personal response to each suggestion.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is excellent.
- 4.16 The well-being of pupils is fundamental to the aims of the school, and procedures for ensuring this are strong. Staff are committed to keeping pupils safe and are deeply caring in their everyday contacts with them. Safeguarding procedures are robust and are implemented effectively at all levels, including the EYFS, where staff show a shared commitment to the well-being of the children at all times. The school's child protection policy is up-to-date and in line with regulatory requirements. The designated person for child protection has had appropriate specialist training and all staff receive necessary training. Some data on staff recruitment checks was recorded incorrectly in the central single register, but this was corrected before the end of the inspection.
- 4.17 Health and safety procedures are well organised, and buildings and premises are maintained to a high standard. All necessary measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are in place across the school. Equipment is checked regularly

and a fire assessment risk is undertaken annually. Staff receive regular training on fire procedures and drills take place regularly. There is good provision for those who are unwell or who are injured at school. All staff have been trained in first aid and the use of allergic reaction injection pens and asthma inhalers, and appropriate provision is made for pupils with SEND.

- 4.18 Admission and attendance registers are maintained correctly and are stored suitably.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Acquired by the Alpha Schools Northern Ltd (ASNL) in 2013, the school benefits from regular support visits from the proprietor and the senior director. The governance arrangements, whilst still embryonic, provide good oversight of the school in line with its aims. For example, the governors' involvement in the work of the EYFS is good and still evolving. The parent company effectively discharges its responsibility for financial planning and investment in staff and learning resources. The process of monitoring through regular visits to the school enables excellent communication with senior management, helping the company to gain a good understanding of the way the school works. Good development planning is in place, providing the potential for future improvement.
- 5.3 Some gaps identified in the recording of required recruitment checks in the single central register were rectified during the inspection, and a robust safe recruitment practice is now fully established. A number of omissions within the safeguarding policy were also identified and rectified during the inspection. Although an annual review of school policies and procedures enables ASNL to satisfactorily discharge its responsibilities for child protection, welfare, and health and safety, the relative infrequency of the monitoring of policies means that changes in regulations are not promptly taken into account.
- 5.4 The school has responded well to previous inspection recommendations and implemented improvements.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 Leadership and management are highly successful in promoting the aims and ethos of the school which is reflected in the quality of pupils' education and in the excellent standard of their personal development and care. Policies are thorough and carefully implemented throughout the school, and measures to safeguard pupils are appropriate. Good self-evaluation procedures are in place and are mostly effective in providing a basis for improvement planning.
- 5.7 The leadership team has achieved a great deal over the past few years and a strong collaborative ethos exists across the school. The school has become increasingly successful in achieving its aims. The leadership team works hard, is effective and is quick to listen and respond to the ideas of colleagues. Comprehensive systems for monitoring lesson planning and assessment are in place, although in the EYFS, not all teachers have observed others teaching in order to ensure that practices are common across the setting. However, the team in the EYFS meets regularly to plan work and discuss the progress of individual children. In the main school, subject focus weeks enable subject co-ordinators to observe lessons and scrutinise pupil work, although the system is not yet sufficiently robust to ensure that teaching is of a consistently high standard.



- 5.8 Senior leaders provide effective induction and guidance for new staff, who feel well supported. An effective performance management system for all staff takes place on a six monthly basis. Staff at all levels, including the EYFS, are able to pursue further professional development in order to promote high-quality practice, and share their experiences with colleagues where relevant. All staff receive regular update training in safeguarding and health and safety. Safer recruitment arrangements are in place and are rigorously implemented. The staff handbook provides clear guidance for staff. Most parents are satisfied with the school's leadership and management. The school's facilities are well maintained, allowing pupils to enjoy a pleasant and safe environment.
- 5.9 Links with parents, carers and guardians are excellent. Responses to the parents' questionnaire revealed high levels of satisfaction with almost all aspects of the work of the school, and in particular with the family atmosphere that is such a feature of its life and work. In the EYFS, this reflects the high quality of the key person system, and the regular contact and sharing of information between home and school. Parents feel that their children are very well cared for, and they appreciate the range of the curricular and extra-curricular programmes. Homework diaries provide an effective means for daily contact between class teacher and parents. Termly calendars are provided for parents, enabling them to plan ahead.
- 5.10 The school maintains a constructive relationship with parents, in accordance with its aims and its published procedures. However, in response to the parents' questionnaire, a small minority of parents felt that their concerns had not been handled well. Inspection evidence shows that the concerns of parents are handled sensitively and with considerable care. Close links with parents ensure that most concerns are resolved informally and quickly. An appropriate complaints policy is available at the school and via the website. The detailed website and the school's prospectus provide all parents of either current or prospective pupils with detailed information about the school including all the required material.
- 5.11 Parents receive clear and useful reports about their children's work and progress. Meetings to discuss pupil progress are held two or three times a year, and these are supported by special curriculum evenings, a settling in evening for new parents and invitations to parents to attend a full range of pupils' events, such as assemblies. An excellent weekly newsletter supports an effective school website in providing regular information for parents. The school operates an 'open door' policy, enabling parents to see teachers when they wish.
- 5.12 Parents have good opportunities to be actively involved in the work and progress of their children. The parents' association is extremely effective in running events and fundraising for resources, strengthening the family feel of the school and widening opportunities for pupils.

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