



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

BEECHWOOD PARK SCHOOL

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

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Beechwood Park School

Full Name of School	Beechwood Park School
DfE Number	919/6045
EYFS Number	EY306116
Registered Charity Number	311068
Telephone Number	01582 840333
Fax Number	01582 842372
Email Address	hmsecretary@beechwoodpark.herts.sch.uk
Headmaster	Mr Patrick Atkinson
Chairman of Governors	Mr Philip Purver
Age Range	2 to 13
Total Number of Pupils	480
Gender of Pupils	Mixed (280 boys; 200 girls)
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): 0 5-11: 360 3-5 (EYFS): 69 11-13: 51
Number of Day Pupils	Total: 480
Number of Boarders	Total: up to 55 flexi-boarders
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Helen Dalkin
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	22 Jan 2013 to 25 Jan 2013

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 January 2010.

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. The range of these Regulations, which replace those first introduced on 1 September 2003, can be viewed on the website 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.

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare. Until September 2011, Boarding inspections were carried out by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), Children's Services and Skills.

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. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'satisfactory' and 'inadequate') as Ofsted reports.**

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, heads of department, and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited boarding houses and 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

Mrs Sara Wiggins	Reporting Inspector
Mrs Catherine Smith	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, IAPS school)
Mrs Karen Williams	Team Inspector (Head, ISA school)
Mrs Julie Bolger	Team Inspector (Head of Pre-Prep, IAPS school)
Mr Ian Raybould	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Michael Westcombe	Team Inspector (Senior Master, IAPS school)
Mr Andrew Nott	Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding
Mrs Marjorie Harris	Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	3
(a) Main findings	3
(b) Action points	4
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	4
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	4
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	5
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	5
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	6
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	8
(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
(d) The quality of boarding	10
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	13
(a) The quality of governance	13
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	13
6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE	16
(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	16
(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being	16
(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision	16
(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision	17

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Beechwood Park School is an independent day and boarding preparatory school for boys and girls from 3 to 13 years of age. The school is a charitable trust and is administered by a board of governors. It has a Christian foundation and admits pupils of all faiths. It was founded on its present site in Markyate, Hertfordshire in 1964 as an all boys' boarding school, becoming co-educational in September 1993. In 2005 Beechwood extended its provision to include children of Nursery age by acquiring the Montessori Nursery at Little Cheverells which is about one mile away from the main school. The historic main school building is a Queen Anne mansion which forms the centre of the school and it is set in fields and parkland designed by Capability Brown.
- 1.2 The school aims to foster and reward excellence in as many areas, academic and non-academic, as possible, and to offer the widest possible range of educational opportunities for its pupils. It seeks to enable each child to reach his or her potential. It aims to cater for pupils' spiritual, intellectual, physical and psychological needs by providing a disciplined, nurturing and challenging environment and to support those who have learning difficulties and those who are gifted and talented. At the time of the inspection, the school had 480 pupils on the roll, comprising 280 boys and 200 girls. In the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) there were 30 part-time and 39 full-time children. There were no children under the age of three at the time of the inspection. In Years 1 to 6 there were 360 pupils and 51 pupils were in Years 7 and 8. The school is divided into four sections: Nursery, Junior (Reception to Year 2), Middle (Years 3 to 5) and Senior (Years 6 to 8). From Year 5, pupils may elect to board either weekly, from Monday to Thursday night inclusive, or on a 'flexi' basis with 55 pupils being able to be accommodated.
- 1.3 The ability profile of the school is above the national average, with a notable proportion of pupils having an ability that is well above average. Pupils generally come from English-speaking, professional and business families located within 15 miles of the school, with about one-ninth having a minority ethnic background. Ninety-nine pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), of whom 41 receive support in school. No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Three pupils have been identified as needing support for learning English as an additional language (EAL). Some pupils leave Beechwood Park at the end of Year 6, the majority of them girls, to continue their education in the maintained sector or to go on to senior independent girls' schools. Pupils who remain until the end of Year 8 mostly transfer to independent day and boarding schools, both locally and in other parts of the country.
- 1.4 National Curriculum (NC) nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school. The year group nomenclature used by the school and its National Curriculum equivalence are shown in the following tables.

Early Years Foundation Stage Setting

School	NC name
Montessori Nursery at Little Cheverells	Nursery (age 2–4)
Reception	Reception (age 4–5)

Preparatory School

School	NC name
First Form	Year 1
Second Form	Year 2
Third Form	Year 3
Fourth Form	Year 4
Fifth Form	Year 5
Sixth Form	Year 6
Seventh Form	Year 7
Top Form	Year 8

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements is excellent. The school fulfils its aim to foster excellence in as many ways, academic and non-academic, as possible. Pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills most effectively, supported by the varied range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences that the school provides. Pupils are organised, show initiative and co-operate exceedingly well. The broad and balanced curriculum is highly effective in covering all the requisite areas of learning, and is suitable for all ages and abilities. Provision for pupils with SEND and EAL is excellent. The school offers an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in the Middle and Senior departments. Good teaching strongly promotes pupils' progress, and together with the curriculum, supports pupils' achievements well, although the wide range of teaching methods seen is not consistently adopted. Assessment information is used effectively to inform staff of setting by ability groups and the next steps in pupils' learning. However, the organisation of the school's extensive data does not easily facilitate the monitoring of pupils' progress as they move through the school. Considerable improvement has been made since the previous inspection in marking, which is now comprehensive and informative, benefiting both pupils and staff.
- 2.2 The quality of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent and is supported by the extremely strong arrangements for pastoral care. A caring atmosphere prevails throughout the school reflecting the school's Christian foundation and fully supporting its aims. The overall quality of welfare, health and safety is good. Training in safeguarding is a priority for the school with all staff, including the designated child protection officer, being appropriately trained. The admission and attendance registers are maintained accurately, and are suitably archived, thus implementing a recommendation from the previous inspection. The quality of boarding is excellent. The school is successful in its aim to prepare the children for life at senior school, give them the opportunity to use the excellent facilities, help them to learn to live with each other and support them in making the best use of their time. Boarders thoroughly enjoy their boarding experience and speak highly of it.
- 2.3 Governance, leadership and management are good overall. The senior management team and middle management work closely and, together with the full staff team, have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and can identify areas that need improvement. However, as identified in the previous inspection, statutory responsibilities have not always been fulfilled in the past with regard to safe recruitment practice, with a few recruitment checks not being undertaken rigorously. Nevertheless, as a result of their monitoring procedures, recruitment processes were, prior to the inspection, reviewed and updated. The good links between the school and parents noted at the time of the previous inspection have been further improved and are now excellent, fully meeting the aims of the school.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

2.4 The school does not meet all the requirements of the Independent School Standards Regulations 2010, and therefore it is required to:

- implement all required recruitment checks on staff before they begin work [Part 4, paragraphs 19(2)(a) and 19 (3), under Suitability of staff and proprietors; and, for the same reason, Part 3, paragraph 7, under Welfare, health and safety].

2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2011.

2.6 See the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage section 6 for the inspection findings in relation to the requirements of the Childcare Act 2006 for children under three.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.7 In addition to the above regulatory action points, the school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Develop a system that presents assessment data in a way which facilitates more effective monitoring of pupils' progress as they move through the school.
2. Ensure that the learning experiences of all pupils are supported by the consistent use of a range of teaching methods.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements is excellent.
- 3.2 The school fulfils its aim to foster excellence in as many ways, academic and non-academic, as possible. Pupils develop their knowledge, understanding and skills most effectively, supported by the varied range of curricular and extra-curricular experiences that the school provides. Throughout the school, pupils demonstrate that their reading ability is advanced for their age. They listen carefully, are highly articulate and express themselves confidently orally and in written work. Pupils display excellent levels of oral and grammatical competence in the languages studied. They show a strong grasp of mathematical concepts which they are able to use appropriately in other areas of the curriculum. They apply logical and independent thought extremely well, for example when using a programming language to create their own web pages; however, opportunities for using their initiative and reasoning skills are not consistent across the curriculum. Pupils' achievements in physical education and games are excellent. Displays around the school celebrate high levels of creativity. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used confidently and imaginatively across the curriculum and extensively in music.
- 3.3 Pupils achieve high standards across a broad range of areas, including musical events and extra-curricular activities. For example, pupils have achieved success in writing, poetry, mathematics and art competitions, they have secured places in the National Youth Choirs of Great Britain and received first place in the national final of the Toyota solar-powered car competition. They have gained high levels of success in graded music and drama examinations and in competitive sports, including participating at county level in cross-country, swimming, cricket, badminton and netball. Pupils with SEND achieve equally well because of the strongly inclusive approach in the school.
- 3.4 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in national tests at the age of eleven have been excellent in relation to the national average for maintained primary schools. Inspection evidence from observations of lessons, scrutiny of work, high levels of awards for selective independent schools and discussions with individual pupils confirms this judgement. This level of attainment indicates that pupils make good progress in relation to pupils of similar ability. Pupils with SEND and EAL make excellent overall progress, as seen in their improved reading and spelling skills because of highly effective support through their individual lessons and the well-considered setting arrangements where pupils are taught in ability groups. More able pupils and those with particular talents make excellent progress in Years 7 and 8, and good progress in other years, where expectations are not always as high.
- 3.5 Pupils' achievements are supported by their excellent attitudes to learning, their exemplary behaviour and care for each other, and the extremely good relationships they enjoy amongst themselves and with staff. Pupils are organised, show initiative and co-operate exceedingly well. They are well motivated, concentrate well and persevere with their work.

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

- 3.6 The quality of the curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.7 The broad and balanced curriculum is highly effective in covering all the requisite areas of learning, and is suitable for all ages and abilities, making a significant contribution to pupils' achievements. It is supported by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, fulfilling the school's aim of offering the widest possible range of educational opportunities for its pupils. Schemes of work, including a personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme, are detailed and support learning, although not all identify the means by which the needs of pupils of different abilities will be met. Pupils' linguistic ability is strongly enhanced by the provision of French from Reception, Latin from Year 5, and the opportunity to study further languages including Russian and Spanish after school. The use of specialist teachers in subjects including art, music, drama and physical education enhances the quality of the learning experience. The curriculum is well planned; close communication between subject leaders and leadership ensures continuity throughout the school with cross-curricular links developing. In addition to the core compulsory curriculum, pupils in Years 7 and 8 select five subjects each year which cover aesthetic and technological aspects of the curriculum. This innovative approach allows pupils to focus on their preferred subjects in greater depth than would otherwise be possible and enables the school to offer subjects such as ceramics and food technology. Pupils in the senior department who are not involved in matches participate in the excellent 'Sport for All' programme which includes orienteering, martial arts and fencing.
- 3.8 Provision for pupils with SEND is excellent. They are identified at an early age and their needs, along with the needs of those with EAL, are made known to teachers, who are involved in the provision of highly effective individual education plans. Able pupils are normally identified in the Junior department; they are catered for according to individual needs, with strategies including placement in a class of older pupils, early access to instrumental tuition and activities including Greek lessons and chess club designed for able pupils, but open to all. Setting by ability from Year 4 onwards helps to meet the needs of the most able, and pupils in the top set are provided with activities which require greater challenge.
- 3.9 The school offers an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, particularly in the Middle and Senior departments, including a large number of language, sporting and music clubs, poetry and gardening. Pupils benefit from trips, residential visits and visitors to the school, which are carefully planned to complement the curriculum, and these support pupils' personal development very well.
- 3.10 The school maintains positive links with the local and wider community including a link to a children's hospice, singing at evensong in churches and participation in a festival of sport with other schools nearby. The pupils also raise money for national charities and have sent second-hand uniforms to pupils at a school in Africa.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.11 The quality of teaching is good.
- 3.12 Effective teaching strongly promotes pupils' progress and supports the aims of the school. Staff and pupils have highly positive working relationships which foster self-esteem, encourage excellent behaviour and promote a calm working atmosphere,

evident from the youngest of pupils. The most successful teaching demonstrates a brisk pace, excellent subject knowledge and clear learning objectives, enabling children of all abilities to acquire new knowledge and make progress. This is an improvement since the previous inspection. Planning is well structured and, in the best lessons, enthusiastic teaching and skilful questioning engage pupils' interest, promoting thoughtful debate and developing enquiring, independent learners. For example, younger pupils, after lively discussion, created their own ideas to perform an engaging 'entrance' and 'freeze frame' for a superhero. Resources are used highly effectively; interactive boards, alongside other electronic devices, digital cameras, visual resources, games and practical tasks all contribute extremely well to providing stimulating lessons which foster excellent learning and promote successful outcomes. In a challenging English lesson, older pupils carefully analysed techniques to build humour and used this knowledge highly effectively in their own writing. In a small amount of less effective teaching, teaching methods lacked variety, expectations were lower and questions less stimulating; consequently, opportunities for pupils to discuss their learning and make progress were limited.

- 3.13 The setting of pupils by ability within year groups contributes greatly to the good quality of teaching. Provision for pupils who need support within the curriculum is carried out highly effectively in small class groups or with teaching assistants supporting the learning of the pupils. Higher-order thinking skills are developed in more able pupils through the setting of challenging work. For example when working on quadratic equations, scholarship pupils used their prior skills, knowledge and understanding to tackle challenging questions with confidence and enjoyment, demonstrating sophisticated thinking and reasoning.
- 3.14 Considerable improvement has been made since the previous inspection in marking. It is now comprehensive and informative, benefiting both pupils and staff. Teaching reflects good knowledge of pupils' achievement and progress which is monitored closely through a variety of standardised tests, assessments and observations. These are used to inform staff of ability sets and the next steps in learning for pupils. However, the organisation of this extensive data does not easily facilitate the monitoring of pupils' progress as they move through the school.
- 3.15 In their responses to the parental questionnaire, a very small minority of parents indicated that their children did not receive appropriate homework for their age. Communication to parents in the pupil homework diary and through letters is clear. In discussion with pupils, most felt homework provided was well organised and reasonable, and inspection findings concur with this opinion.

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 the pupils' personal development is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' self-awareness and spirituality is extremely good, meeting the aims of the school. It is strongly enhanced by the celebration of creativity throughout the school. Pupils demonstrate high levels of self-awareness and self-knowledge as, for example, they consider the importance of healthy eating for both physical and mental well-being. The pupils show an excellent awareness of the non-material aspects of life as they work with a Christian organisation to increase their knowledge of conservation. Pupils have excellent levels of self-confidence and self-esteem developed through the regular use of praise, the frequent celebration of their many and varied achievements, and the strongly inclusive approach to the curriculum.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral awareness is excellent. They have a strong understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Through their carefully structured PSHCE programme they consider the importance of friendship, being kind to one another and issues around bullying. Older pupils consider both personal and topical issues, for example discussing the conflict in Syria, its religious implications and how it would feel to be a refugee. There is an excellent appreciation of those less fortunate, aptly demonstrated through work which investigates the plight of the elderly and the homeless, and they raise considerable sums for good causes.
- 4.4 The pupils' social awareness is outstanding. Pupils display strong political and economic awareness. Through their excellent curriculum they have a thorough knowledge of democracy, the working of Parliament and of royalty. In the interest of non-political bias, pupils from Year 3 upwards held a mock election with the views of the different parties represented well. They accept responsibility with enthusiasm and participate in house events. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of pupils indicated that they have few opportunities to take on responsibilities. Inspectors concur that there are few opportunities for younger pupils. Responsibilities are largely given to older pupils who take their roles seriously, from being heads of house or assisting in the drop-off zone to being reading buddies and supporting younger pupils in literacy. Pupils have excellent self-discipline, showing genuine consideration for others.
- 4.5 The cultural development of pupils is strong. They are highly aware of other cultures for which they show excellent respect. Through their religious education lessons they develop a strong knowledge of other faiths, visiting places of worship including a Hindu Mandir. Pupils' extensive knowledge of western culture is strongly enhanced through their music and art curriculum and the extra-curricular programme. For example, pupils in Year 4 visited the William Morris Gallery in Walthamstow, inspiring pupils to create their own excellent tile designs.
- 4.6 Pupils have an extremely high standard of personal development by the time they leave the school at the end of Year 8 and they are very well-prepared for the next stage of the education.

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

- 4.7 The arrangements for pastoral care are excellent.
- 4.8 Since the previous inspection, the school has built on the already strong quality of pastoral care, support and guidance that the staff show towards their pupils, in a disciplined, nurturing and challenging environment. A caring atmosphere prevails throughout the school reflecting the school's Christian foundation and fully supporting its aims. Both in lessons and around the school, pupils and adults show high levels of courtesy for each other, and this makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development.
- 4.9 Measures to promote good discipline and behaviour are excellent. There is a well-understood system of rewards and sanctions, which the pupils interviewed during the inspection perceive as being operated fairly by the staff. Lessons, house meetings and assemblies ensure a strong focus on the importance of being a good citizen. In lessons and around the school, pupils' behaviour was excellent. It was not possible to observe playtime outside during the inspection due to inclement weather. The comprehensive anti-bullying policy is carefully followed. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a small minority of parents felt that some incidents of bullying were not dealt with effectively by the school. The inspection evidence does not substantiate this view. Pupils interviewed were clear that they felt safe and that they could always turn to a teacher if they had a problem. They stated that any incidents of bullying were dealt with promptly by the school. Monitoring and recording systems are extremely thorough, and are very well supported by the regular formal reviews, staff meetings and informal communications which enable the school to evaluate the quality of care and welfare provided.
- 4.10 Healthy eating and the need to take regular exercise are seen as very important aspects of the pupils' education, and this is re-inforced by the strongly inclusive sporting programme. Catering arrangements, appreciated by pupils and parents, ensure an excellent choice of food. Provision is made for those who require special diets. The school has a suitable plan for educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.11 A small minority of pupils expressed concerns in their responses to the questionnaire that their views were not always sought. However, carefully monitored 'worry boxes', form-time discussion, posters around the school, the Head Pupils survey and discussion with the Director of Pastoral care enable pupils to express their opinions or concerns about school life.

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

- 4.12 The overall quality of welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.13 Training in safeguarding is a priority for the school, with all staff, including the designated child protection officer, being appropriately trained. Additionally safeguarding has been a focus of very well planned in-service training for teaching and non-teaching staff. Relations are well maintained with local welfare agencies. The child protection policy has not been correctly implemented concerning the recruitment of staff, as was the case at the previous inspection. Health and safety procedures are comprehensive and make an effective contribution to pupils' personal development. Risk assessments have been carefully reviewed and

appropriate measures are taken to reduce the risk of fire and other hazards. The policy and documentation supporting external visits are thorough.

- 4.14 Arrangements for first aid, and for sick or injured pupils, are excellent. Staff are very well informed about individual pupils' needs and conditions, including any pupils with SEND, and pupils are looked after with great care. Accident reporting procedures are rigorous and records are accurately maintained. The admission and attendance registers are maintained correctly and are suitably archived, thus implementing the recommendations of the previous inspection.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.15 The quality of boarding is excellent.
- 4.16 The school is successful in its aims to prepare the boarders for life at senior school, give them the opportunity to use the excellent facilities, help them to learn to live with each other and support them in making the best use of their time. Boarders thoroughly enjoy their boarding experience and speak highly of it. Whether they board for two or more nights, they are grateful for the chance to spend time with their friends in the boarding house and appreciate the opportunities to become more independent.
- 4.17 Boarders have very positive and constructive relationships with all the house staff. They are confident, self-reliant and display excellent inter-personal skills with each other and adults. Behaviour is of a high standard, borne out of a strong sense of mutual respect and friendship across genders and different age groups. They are at ease with one another and enjoy life in the house to the full, taking enthusiastic advantage of the varied activities offered by the house staff after prep, or relishing the chance to relax with a friend or spend some time quietly on their own. Boarders' understanding of the world around them is enriched by the accessibility of newspapers, television and the internet.
- 4.18 On-line questionnaires, house meetings, a suggestion box and frequent informal opportunities to talk to house staff enable boarders to contribute their views and identify areas for improvement. Boarders feel that their opinions are greatly valued by the boarding staff and that they play a part in the boarding development.
- 4.19 Pastoral arrangements are excellent and boarders are cared for extremely well. The daily arrivals and departures inherent in this style of boarding require careful organisation to enable the house to run efficiently. House staff work hard to ensure that boarders move in and out smoothly and understand their differing needs. New boarders are quickly put at ease and given all the information they need by peers and staff to settle comfortably into boarding life. The boarding provision is highly effective in keeping boarders safe, fit and healthy. The house staff take a close interest in the boarders' well-being, supporting their individual needs. Internal systems of communication are excellent, records are kept meticulously and medical staff provide highly efficient care for all the pupils' needs. The boarders reported that they felt safe and cared for and that they enjoyed the regular contact with the enthusiastic team of boarding staff who organise activities for them and assist in boarding in the evenings. Boarders know to whom they can turn if they have a problem and they know who, outside school, would also provide support.
- 4.20 Boarders take extensive advantage of the wide range of opportunities available to them in the evenings and enjoy team games. These activities, whilst encouraging the development of many different skills, allow for self-directed time and freedom of

choice. Excellent indoor and outdoor facilities enhance the strength of the programme in the evenings. The common room provides a spacious, comfortable place for relaxation from which snacks are served every evening. The games room is extremely well-equipped and includes table tennis, table football and two newly installed dart boards.

- 4.21 Dormitories and washrooms are particularly well maintained, clean and regularly refurbished. There is ample storage space for boarders' personal effects and valuables are kept safely in the school office. Arrangements for boarders' laundry are effective and Housekeeping Staff take great pride in ensuring that boarders look smart and have tidy, well-organised rooms.
- 4.22 Provision for boarders to communicate with their families is excellent and they have access to both a landline and email during their free time. Senior boarding staff keep in regular touch with families, ensuring that key information is shared.
- 4.23 Arrangements for the boarders' welfare, health and safety are excellent. Suitable recruitment checks are carried out on those staff who care for boarders. All house staff are trained in safeguarding procedures and understand their responsibility for those in their care. Systems support boarders who may be concerned about being bullied, but pupils report no such concerns in the boarding house where a harmonious atmosphere prevails. Boarders have clear access to help-lines should the need arise and have the contact details of the independent listener. There are always several members of the boarding staff on duty in the evenings, and graduate assistants provide senior staff with excellent support in looking after the boarders. Suitably qualified and experienced members of staff take care of the boarders at all times and they have the means to contact a member of staff in the night. Risk assessments are extremely thorough, fire drills occur regularly and action to be taken in the unlikely event that a boarder goes missing is clearly established. Such processes ensure that boarders' safety is given the highest priority.
- 4.24 The excellent leadership and management for boarding have a significant impact on all aspects of the provision and successfully meets the boarding aims. Pupils and parents are very well informed about all aspects of boarding life through the comprehensive policy information on the website, the regular boarding newsletters and highly detailed boarding handbooks. The documentation of policies and procedures is meticulous and contains very clear guidance for the smooth running of the boarding house and any eventuality or emergency.
- 4.25 Regular weekly meetings of the house staff ensure that everyone involved remains up-to-date with pastoral and administrative matters. All staff receive excellent induction and training opportunities to support their boarding work. Staff demonstrate a highly dedicated level of commitment towards the needs of boarders. Senior boarding staff, in partnership with involved and supportive governors, have excellent vision for improvement and ensure that priorities are included in the whole school's development plan.
- 4.26 In response to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents report that their children thoroughly enjoy the boarding experience and much appreciate the support provided by the staff responsible for their care. Likewise, in their questionnaire responses, the boarders expressed high levels of satisfaction with their boarding life. The inspection team is in agreement with the views expressed.
- 4.27 Since the previous boarding inspection, recommendations regarding medical provision, supervision, sanctions and access to staff accommodation have been

promptly addressed and new leaders have continued to improve on the high quality provision recognised in the report at that time.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 Governance is good.
- 5.2 The structures of governance are exceptionally clear and ensure general oversight of the school in line with its aims. The board takes great care in the appointment of new governors to ensure that they are well informed about all areas of their work. Governors provide a wide variety of specialisms to the board, including legal, financial and educational expertise. Specific interests, such as for pastoral care, health and safety and the EYFS, ensure these areas are very well considered and supported.
- 5.3 Lines of communication between governors and senior management are excellent. All aspects of education and care provided by the school are discussed and minuted by both the highly efficient committee system and meetings of the whole board. Governors have clear financial oversight and a strong strategic vision for the future of the school. Their clear view that each individual matters is their guiding principle as they oversee educational provision, staffing, accommodation, resources and pastoral matters including boarding. Governors have undertaken a thorough process of self-appraisal. Policies are reviewed regularly, and governors effectively discharge their responsibilities for health and safety. They are mindful of their statutory responsibilities and have undertaken an annual review of safeguarding policies and procedures. However, statutory responsibilities have not always been fulfilled in the past with regard to safe recruitment practice. Nevertheless, as a result of their monitoring procedures, recruitment processes were reviewed and updated prior to the inspection.
- 5.4 Governors are committed to attending school functions and are well known by parents. Visits to the school to observe its day-to-day life are regular, contribute fully to the education of the pupils and are greatly valued by the school community.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management is good.
- 5.6 Leadership and management provide highly effective educational direction in line with the aims and ethos of the school. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, a few parents felt that the school was not well led and managed. Inspection findings do not agree with this view. The senior management team and middle management work closely and, together with the full staff team, have an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and can identify areas that need improvement. Thorough self-evaluation across all departments is drawn together to produce development planning that is carefully monitored. The pupils' high level of personal development is a direct response to the quality of pastoral care afforded to boarders and day pupils alike. This is reflected in the pupils' excellent achievements across the strong curricular and extra-curricular provision. The monitoring of learning and teaching is well structured and takes place through a variety of thorough processes including lesson observation, mutual peer observation and examination of work. Staff appraisal, which has recently been reviewed to occur annually, now provides clear targets contributing effectively to the further

development of teaching and learning. Opportunities for professional development across pastoral and academic matters are well planned.

- 5.7 Staff are deployed effectively with teaching assistants, where available, providing valuable support to meet the needs of pupils. Provision for pupils with SEND is excellent. As at the previous inspection, procedures relating to a few staff appointments have not been rigorous. This had been clearly identified and new measures had been put in place prior to the inspection. The school has undertaken criminal record checks on all staff. Teaching and non-teaching staff are appropriately trained in welfare, health and safety and safeguarding. The induction of new staff is thorough. Effective policies and procedures are conscientiously implemented by staff.
- 5.8 The school greatly values the strength of its partnership with parents and, through its open-door policy, establishes a careful bond between home and school. In their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire, parents are most satisfied by the progress their children make at school, the breadth of the curriculum, the help and guidance provided, the values promoted by the school and the excellent range of extra-curricular activities.
- 5.9 Parents have excellent opportunities to be involved in the work and progress of their children. Throughout the school, information about pupils' academic achievement and progress, and their personal development, is clearly set out in well-written and detailed reports, and in half-termly grades. Clear, focused and meaningful targets are outlined which enable parents and pupils to identify the next stage in learning. This resolves the issues raised in the previous inspection. Written reports are supplemented by parents' evenings; parents have many opportunities to meet staff informally and formally throughout the year. They may now communicate with staff at the school through emails and mobile phone messaging, and the parents have access to the school's intranet. The staff are readily available to speak with parents as needs arise. Homework and support material are also accessible on the school intranet. The daily bulletin is another useful communication tool.
- 5.10 Information provided to parents of pupils and prospective pupils is comprehensive. Parents receive highly informative information both about the school and their children's curriculum and progress, with booklets, termly magazines and a regular newsletter. The school's website provides a wealth of information about the school, its activities and its policies.
- 5.11 Parents have excellent opportunities to be involved in the various activities of the school. The Parents' Association is a particularly active and supportive body, organising a range of social and fund-raising events, including balls, sporting and charity events and a large amount of money has been raised by them, with a local hospice being supported by the fund-raising.
- 5.12 The school has an appropriate complaints policy that is operated effectively. A few parents in their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire stated that they felt the school did not handle their concerns well. The inspection team found that, when concerns are raised, the school takes these seriously and responds with due care. As a result of this, changes such as the appointment of a senior academic tutor and the development of the popular 'Sports for All' programme have been introduced.

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

6. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE

6.(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend

6.1 The setting makes outstanding provision in meeting the needs of the range of children who attend. The Montessori Nursery and the Reception curriculum make excellent provision for children's individual needs, enabling them to be well prepared for the next stage in their learning. Excellent support is given across the phase so that children make the best possible progress. The wide range of activities and balance of adult-led and child-initiated tasks enables children to learn highly effectively, develop basic skills and respond to the high expectations of staff. Staff are enthusiastic throughout the setting about their work which motivates and engages children in their learning. Children across the setting persevere with activities for long periods from playing as explorers to threading beads in a repeated pattern. Open-ended questioning encourages children to share their ideas readily with adults and peers alike. Specialist teachers in music, PE, French and drama enhance the EYFS curriculum. Both settings are well resourced. Assessment is focused, precise and completed by all those involved with the children's learning. Staff work closely with parents to settle children into school. Parents meetings, reading records and home/school contact books ensure strong systems of communication. Helpful reports are written twice yearly, and targets are set. Parents are encouraged to take part in their children's learning. In the Reception class, simple homework tasks are set and parents and children record special family events in the learning diary. The pre-inspection questionnaire shows a high level of satisfaction. Children new to the school are welcomed and parents feel free to contact the school at all times.

6.(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being

6.2 The contribution of the provision to the children's well-being is outstanding. The 'key person' plays an important role in their personal, social and emotional development. The staff in the EYFS setting work as an excellent team and move seamlessly from one activity to another ensuring children enjoy their work within a caring environment. Children's behaviour is excellent; Reception children are encouraged to tidy their games away quickly and Nursery children set out their lunch and chat appropriately with adults and peers at the table. Risk assessments are thorough; buildings, furniture and equipment are checked for safe use and children are continually reminded by adults how to keep themselves safe. Staff promote healthy eating, and children, through their various activities such as yoga, understand that exercise is important. Children across the setting are extremely happy and form excellent relationships with adults and one another. Children dress and undress independently from an early age and follow well-established hygiene routines. Children are thoroughly prepared for their next class.

6.(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision

6.3 Leadership and management are outstanding. The governors provide excellent support for the EYFS and are well-informed about the setting. The recently updated policies have been revised to ensure that they refer equally to the whole of the EYFS. The environment is welcoming and safe for all.

- 6.4 Staff are well qualified, and have undertaken training in child protection and health and safety procedures, which are thoroughly embedded into the daily routines. Rigorous implementation of policies and procedures ensures that children are safeguarded. Staff arrangements for the checking of suitability of staff in the EYFS are appropriate. Policies are in place to promote equality and eliminate discrimination. Staff meet regularly for self-evaluation and a recent development plan sets targets and outlines the vision for EYFS. Supervision of staff is thorough. Educational programmes are carefully reviewed. Staff work carefully with parents and others to ensure that children receive the support they need; staff have appropriate links with outside agencies and a relationship with the local authority. A formal system of appraisal is carried out; staff attend courses and have time to share ideas and reflect.

6.(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision

- 6.5 The overall quality and standards of the EYFS are outstanding. All children make excellent progress in their learning and development relative to their ability and starting points. The needs of all children are very well met and they are encouraged at all times to strive to reach their full potential in line with the school aims. At the end of Reception, children achieve highly in relation to the Early Learning Goals. Children express themselves clearly, they enjoy role-play and are encouraged to have a love of books from an early age. Nursery children can identify numbers, record them, and do simple calculations. Older children use their phonic knowledge well to support their early reading and writing skills and have a good understanding of how to manipulate simple numbers. Their personal and emotional development is excellent. Children feel safe and secure and are happy. The requirements for safeguarding and welfare have been met. Leadership and management is continually making improvements across the EYFS so that the best provision is made. In response to recommendations at the previous inspection, improvements have been made in the transition between the Nursery and Reception classes. Interactive whiteboards are used effectively in Reception but not in the Nursery, and teaching, learning and progress are more closely monitored using new systems of assessment.

Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three

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

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