



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION**

**BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL**

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## Birkenhead School

Full Name of School	<b>Birkenhead School</b>
DfE Number	<b>344/6023</b>
EYFS Number	<b>EY320318</b>
Registered Charity Number	<b>1093419</b>
Address	<b>Birkenhead School 58 Beresford Road Oxton Prenton Merseyside CH43 2JD</b>
Telephone Number	<b>0151 6524014</b>
Fax Number	<b>0151 6513091</b>
Email Address	<b>headmaster@birkenheadschoo.co.uk</b>
Head	<b>Mr John Clark</b>
Chair of Governors	<b>Mr Andrew Sutton</b>
Age Range	<b>3 mths to 18</b>
Total Number of Pupils	<b>789</b>
Gender of Pupils	<b>Mixed (513 boys; 276 girls)</b>
Numbers by Age	0-2 (EYFS): <b>54</b> 5-11: <b>297</b> 3-5 (EYFS): <b>66</b> 11-18: <b>372</b>
Number of Day Pupils	Total: <b>789</b>
Head of EYFS Setting	<b>Mrs Jan Dorney</b>
EYFS Gender	<b>Mixed</b>
Inspection Dates	<b>03 Dec 2013 to 06 Dec 2013</b>

## PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection of the whole school was in November 2007 and that of the EYFS in January 2012.

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. **For EYFS registered provision (for pupils aged under three), reports are required to use the same terminology ('outstanding', 'good', 'requires improvement' 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 and with the chair of governors, 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 Martin Bussey	Reporting Inspector
Mr Howard Bourne	Team Inspector (Former Senior Master, IAPS school)
Mr Christopher King	Team Inspector (Head, HMC school)
Ms Linda Macfarlane	Team Inspector (Former Deputy Head, HMC school)
Mrs Lesley Parlane	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Ian Raybould	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Mr Edward Rees	Team Inspector (Head, IAPS school)
Ms Adrienne Richmond	Team Inspector (Deputy Head, GSA school)
Mr Roger Waller	Team Inspector (Former Head, ISA school)
Mrs Jenny Clayphan	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	7
<b>4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>9</b>
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	9
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	10
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	11
<b>5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>12</b>
(a) The quality of governance	12
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	12
<b>6 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE</b>	<b>15</b>
(a) How well the early years provision meets the needs of the range of children who attend	15
(b) The contribution of the early years provision to children's well-being	15
(c) The leadership and management of the early years provision	15
(d) The overall quality and standards of the early years provision	16

## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Birkenhead School is a co-educational day school for pupils from three months to 18 years consisting of two sections, identified as the Prep, which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Seniors. Situated at the top of the Wirral peninsula it draws pupils from throughout the Wirral and the Chester area with small numbers from Liverpool. The school is housed in a mixture of late Victorian and modern buildings within a green urban site. It is operated as a charity and company limited by guarantee, overseen by a board of governors who are trustees of the charity and directors of the company. Since the previous inspection the school has become co-educational across the entire age range; opened an extension to the Prep with facilities for science, information and communication technology (ICT) and new classrooms; opened a new careers room, and extended and modernised the sixth form centre, ICT and science facilities in Seniors, the sports pavilions and performing spaces. The chair of governors took up his post in 2011 and the head of the Prep in 2013.
- 1.2 The school aims to: provide an open and happy community in which endeavour and achievement flourish; offer a route to academic success enabling pupils to realise their potential inside and outside the classroom and prepare them for later life; create a caring and structured environment to encourage self-confidence and offer many opportunities for teamwork and personal development; set high academic and personal standards of integrity, self-discipline, compassion and respect for others. It has a Christian ethos but welcomes pupils of all faiths or no faith background.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 789 pupils on roll, of whom around a third were girls. There were 120 children in the EYFS. The Prep, consisting of Years 1 to 6, educates 297 pupils and there were 372 pupils in Seniors, including 93 pupils in the sixth form.
- 1.4 The ability profile of the Prep and Senior pupils is above the national average, with most pupils having at least above average ability, and around a quarter having well above average ability. This profile remains consistent in the sixth form. Most pupils are of British origin and from professional families. Nine pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom five receive support. Two pupils have a statement of special educational needs. Of the 67 pupils who have been identified as having special needs and/or disabilities (SEND), 40 receive specialist help with their learning.
- 1.5 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 quality of the pupils' achievement and learning is excellent and children in the EYFS make outstanding progress. Those with SEND or EAL achieve at levels equal to their peers. More able pupils and those with particular talents fulfil their potential, particularly in extra-curricular activities, although not all teaching offers tasks of suitably high demand to ensure this consistently. All pupils are enthusiastic learners, keen to succeed. They develop learning skills successfully in many subject areas but teaching does not always encourage pupils to transfer these skills when appropriate or to see how they might apply them to their learning in new contexts. Pupils of all ages respond well to excellent opportunities both inside and outside the classroom, and to good teaching. This results in good levels of progress. Excellent achievement in activities includes national success in lacrosse, trampolining, music, drama and dance.
- 2.2 The pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils show natural openness, confidence and excellent behaviour. They have a high level of moral awareness, and their cultural awareness is enhanced by trips and activities. The school provides excellent pastoral care, including in the EYFS. Those pupils who responded to pre-inspection questionnaires were very positive about the school. Excellent arrangements exist to ensure the pupils' welfare, health and safety.
- 2.3 Good governance promotes the school's aims well and well-informed support enables the pupils' excellent achievement and personal development. All recommendations from the previous inspections have been met. Governors fulfil their responsibilities for oversight in those areas where they have legal responsibilities. The school has made significant progress since the inspection of 2007, particularly in teaching and learning, although monitoring of some aspects, such as marking is not yet consistent. Leadership and management are excellent, including in the EYFS, and are characterised by strong promotion of the ethos of the school as one community by senior leaders. The school's links with parents are excellent.

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

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

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Build on existing programmes to enable pupils to develop and use a wider range of transferable skills more consistently.
  2. Ensure all teaching demonstrates suitably high expectations for pupils at all levels of ability.
  3. In the EYFS, improve outside play areas to provide greater opportunities for children to observe and investigate aspects of the living world.



### **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' achievement and learning is excellent.

##### ***The Prep***

3.2 Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across all subject areas by the end of Year 6, enabled by good teaching and a well-constructed curriculum. The school's aim to set high academic standards is met very successfully.

3.3 The pupils' literacy skills are strong, exemplified by excellent reading, extended writing and highly effective oral contributions and listening in class. Their numeracy skills are good by the end of Year 2 and result in excellent progress at all levels of ability by Year 6. Pupils apply these skills well in science where good understanding is evident and written work shows good progress over time. Pupils develop good skills in modern foreign languages (MFL). They produce strong creative writing and displays of art show imagination, although pupils use their imaginations less successfully when tasks are structured too closely.

3.4 The pupils' ICT skills develop well by Years 5 and 6 but limited resources hinder wide use in subjects other than ICT. Their physical development is good. The achievements of those with SEND or EAL are equal to those of their peers. More able pupils and those with particular talents achieve well, particularly in activities.

3.5 Pupils reach good levels of achievement in activities. They achieve good grades in instrumental examinations. Pupils participate in large numbers, and with success, in science awards. They progress well in skills in martial arts, and the cricket team has enjoyed local success. Younger pupils have exhibited art work in a local gallery of national standing.

3.6 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance against national tests but, on the evidence available from their work, responses in interviews and performance in lessons, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. This attainment, as judged, indicates that their progress, including that of pupils with SEND or EAL, is good. Most pupils proceed directly into Seniors.

##### ***Seniors***

3.7 Pupils demonstrate good levels of knowledge, skills and understanding across all subject areas in response to good teaching and a stimulating curriculum. Their mathematical skills are strong; they apply arithmetic skills very well in mathematics and to excellent effect in science, although investigational approaches to mathematics are less well developed. Pupils show excellent understanding in science. The pupils' skills in MFL and classics are strong. Pupils reach good levels of articulacy in written and spoken English, and excellent levels in the sixth form, including analytical and creative writing, but their writing lacks development in some of the humanities. The pupils' ICT skills are good and are used frequently in music, design technology (DT) and art, but opportunities to utilise them fully are limited in some other subjects. Excellent levels of skills are attained in physical development.

- 3.8 Those pupils with EAL develop a good grasp of language which enables them to participate fully in teaching and learning. Those with SEND achieve consistently at similar levels to their peers, supported by work tailored to their needs. More able pupils and those with particular talents achieve at high levels in activities, although not all teaching provides the levels of demand to enable them to reach their full potential in class. Pupils demonstrate excellent achievement in creative subjects and sport.
- 3.9 Pupils reach excellent levels of achievement in activities. They audition successfully to become members of national instrumental, drama and music theatre groups. They perform strongly in instrumental examinations; frequently pupils achieve distinctions at the highest grades. Pupils participate in a variety of musical ensembles playing demanding pieces, and the chapel choir sings to a high standard. Pupils have won creative writing competitions and national dance competitions and appear in theatrical productions by professional companies. Achievement in sports activities is excellent. Individuals play lacrosse and compete in trampolining at national level and, at regional level, rugby, hockey and athletics.
- 3.10 The following analysis uses the national data for the years 2010 to 2012. These are the most recent three years for which comparative statistics are currently available. Results in GCSE have been similar to the average for pupils in maintained selective schools. Results at A level have been above the national average for pupils in maintained selective schools. Around 79% of passes at A level have been awarded at grades A\* to B. This proportion rose to 85% in 2013. Results in the IGCSE are higher than world-wide averages in English. This level of attainment, considered alongside the pupils' work and their achievement in lessons, indicates that their progress to GCSE and A level in relation to pupils of similar ability, including those with SEND or EAL, is good. Pupils consistently gain places at universities in the UK.

### ***Whole School***

- 3.11 Pupils throughout the school are enthusiastic learners, keen to succeed, particularly in examination classes. They work well independently when given structured tasks. From Year 3 onwards, in the Prep, some pupils have already developed strong transferable and problem-solving skills. Older pupils develop these learning skills successfully in many subject areas but do not always see how they might apply them in new contexts. The pupils' work throughout the school demonstrates excellent presentation and a good volume.

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

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

#### ***The Prep***

- 3.13 The curriculum in the Prep is well constructed, and makes an important contribution to the high standards which pupils achieve. The curriculum is balanced and is effective in its coverage of all the required areas of learning. It supports the aims of the school. The recent appointment of subject co-ordinators has already had an impact on curriculum development, in which all staff participate.
- 3.14 In addition to core subjects, the study of MFL is introduced in Year 4 and pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6 have good opportunities to gain experience of Spanish, German and Mandarin. The recent introduction of a 'future skills' programme in Years 3 to 6 enables pupils to take a course of modules which include problem solving,

independent study, communication and philosophical enquiry. The success of this initiative has already begun to bear fruit in its preparation of pupils for the next stage of their education and for their longer-term development.

- 3.15 Each class has a double ICT lesson in the dedicated suite each week. The school is aware that this means that availability of this resource for other subjects is currently limited; additional provision forms part of current development planning.
- 3.16 The curriculum provides very well for those pupils with SEND or EAL; specialist teachers give individual tuition and well-structured programmes, communicated effectively to staff, ensure that classroom teaching continues this support. A good personal, social and health education programme covers a wide range of relevant topics on, for example, feelings and relationships.
- 3.17 An extensive range of extra-curricular activities is well supported by pupils and provides plenty of choice for pupils of all abilities. The science club provides additional challenge to more able pupils, who can achieve nationally-recognised awards by undertaking extended projects. Music, dance, and speech and drama clubs offer creative enrichment; whilst a wide range of sports are provided. Educational visits complement and reinforce the work covered in the classroom. All Year 6 pupils benefit greatly from a residential trip, which includes adventure activities and team building. Visitors to the school share their expertise with pupils; pupils enjoyed wearing costumes and studying artefacts as part of Victorian and Roman days.
- 3.18 Strong community links have been established. The gardening club helped to brighten up the local community by distributing old wellington boots which pupils transformed into plant pots and the cub scout group sings at a local residential home.

### **Seniors**

- 3.19 The curriculum in Seniors is highly successful in meeting the school's aims. Its coverage of the requisite areas of learning is good. It is stimulating and wide-ranging, providing a highly effective contribution to pupils' linguistic, mathematical and scientific development. Procedures to monitor the effectiveness of the curriculum ensure that it is well suited to pupils of all ages and abilities. The most successful departmental planning, reflected in individual handbooks, is excellent and gives guidance to staff on strategies to adopt to extend the pupils' learning, but such comprehensive documentation is not provided in all subjects. In Years 7 to 9, the curriculum provides a good platform for future study. Pupils are thereby enabled to choose from the range of options provided at GCSE. Flexibility allows pupils to study extra subjects, such as additional MFL and Greek. Separate biology, chemistry and physics courses provide additional challenge in science. At GCSE and A level, pupils make their choices from a good and steadily increasing number of subjects before the timetable is constructed. Personal, social and health education (PSHE) includes guidance on cyber-bullying and focus days provide intensive programmes on specific topics. It includes some guidance on the development of transferable learning skills.
- 3.20 Timely identification of the learning needs of pupils with EAL and SEND ensures that they receive appropriate support for their specific educational requirements. This meets the requirement of the previous inspection to provide an appropriate system for those with SEND. The most successful curriculum planning requires different tasks to cater for the pupils' differing abilities and learning styles. The realisation of

this provision in teaching is not always apparent in all curriculum areas. Research projects undertaken in sixth-form chemistry stimulate excellent achievement by more able scientists.

- 3.21 The school has very significantly developed the careers education programme since the previous inspection. Great care is taken to help pupils decide which GCSE and A-level courses to take. The introduction of a biennial careers conference, along with a very well-planned programme of advice for pupils of all ages, helps them to decide on their future vocations or degree choices. The 'Beyond the Curriculum' programme includes opportunities to study subjects such as cookery, law and drama which enhance the pupils' learning well.
- 3.22 An excellent extra-curricular programme allows pupils to participate in teams, and to develop existing talents and new interests. A good balance of activities ensures that something is available to suit all pupils' tastes and reflects the school's policy of inclusiveness. The programme is a valued part of school life. There are many excellent activities which both enhance and go well beyond the demands of the academic curriculum. House drama and regular whole-school plays are well supported.
- 3.23 Pupils take good advantage of opportunities to engage in the local community or in national schemes such as a 'science in the community' project, public-speaking competitions, MFL exchanges and sports tours. The pupils' personal development benefits from opportunities for service activities such as the scout troop, combined cadet force and The Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme. Each year pupils raise considerable sums for charities, local, national and international. This reflects their high levels of vigour and commitment and strongly develops their leadership skills.

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

- 3.24 The contribution of teaching is good.
- 3.25 Teaching promotes the pupils' progress well and supports the aims of the school. The recommendation of the previous inspection to develop teaching methods has been met effectively.
- 3.26 Teaching throughout the school demonstrates teachers' good subject knowledge and, in the sixth form, excellent subject knowledge stimulates the pupils' interest. Time management in lessons is good. A range of resources is used creatively to ensure a lively pace and maintain the pupils' focus and some highly interesting and imaginative teaching results from varied and stimulating resources. Younger Senior pupils with a range of abilities all made rapid progress in German when varied use of the interactive whiteboard extended their understanding of the names of curriculum subjects. Similar use of ICT by pupils themselves is extensive in some areas, for example music, art, and DT. It gives strong support to their learning and utilises their well-developed ICT skills but use of ICT resources by pupils is less consistently required in other teaching. This has been identified in the school's draft plan as an area for further development.
- 3.27 Teachers know the pupils well. Teaching makes good provision for those pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The teaching of pupils with EAL and SEND is a significant strength of the school. All have individual education plans which are shared with parents and made accessible to staff, who show awareness of these pupils' needs in teaching and plan accordingly. Teaching supplements and assists the specialist one-to-one support these pupils receive, for example by

providing electronic versions of resources used in class for such sessions. Some teaching extends and challenges more able pupils and gives them more demanding tasks but suitably high expectations are not always evident. In the Prep, the imaginative provision of 'challenge corners' for the most able pupils was not seen to be used to its full potential.

- 3.28 Teaching uses formal and informal methods to track and measure the pupils' progress from Year 1 upwards. This results in excellent planning of much teaching. In the Prep, effort and attainment grades given twice each term are used in conjunction with standardised tests to assess achievement and learning but the use of such assessment to inform the planning of future work is not yet embedded throughout all year groups. In Seniors, standardised tests are a key element of an excellent, well-focused assessment system. The progress of all pupils is tracked against data from baseline tests to identify those whose achievement does not match their potential. This information feeds into the planning of future work and ensures that the needs of these pupils are met. Half-termly internal tracking sheets, which include comments from staff, supplement effort and attainment grades which are reported to parents. In Year 12, a system has recently been introduced whereby pupils set their own targets in consultation with teaching staff. These use the data from standardised tests. This system is evolving but it is already used to focus the pupils' minds on their future work and pupils have a clear understanding of its intentions.
- 3.29 Marking is regular but not consistent in quality throughout the school. The most successful marking, for example in English, uses rewards, positive and constructive comments. It sets targets to improve the pupils' learning. In some subject areas, books are ticked but there are very few comments indicating what pupils need to do to improve, although this is stipulated in the school marking policy. Although not yet used consistently, self-assessment of their work by pupils is being used to excellent effect in much teaching.

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

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

- 4.1 The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The school's aim for pupils to grow in self-confidence and enjoy many opportunities for teamwork and personal development is met highly successfully. Pupils have an excellent standard of personal development by the time they leave the school.
- 4.3 Pupils demonstrate excellent levels of spiritual development. They are friendly and open and show excellent levels of self-confidence and self-awareness. They are emotionally mature for their ages and enjoy mutually supportive and empathetic relationships with others. They consider the non-material aspects of life in a wide variety of contexts. For example, in a Prep chapel service pupils reflected in a focused manner on the contribution which each individual makes to the community. Pupils are offered and enjoy many spiritual experiences; for example, younger pupils identify and reflect upon the beauty of their surroundings when it has snowed or when wildlife is observed. Art work demonstrates strong personal expression, combined in Prep lessons with the pupils' responses to music. The act of prayer and remembrance where the whole school gathered alongside the main field to plant a cross for each ex-pupil killed in conflicts was described by pupils as a memorable and moving experience.
- 4.4 The moral awareness of pupils is well developed. From an early age they demonstrate a clear sense of right and wrong and respect the need for rules. This is reflected in their excellent behaviour, which is further encouraged by the recording of many examples of exemplary behaviour electronically. Pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of ethical values; for example, they discuss with maturity such topics as fair trading, testing on animals and the morality of gambling. In Seniors, pupils discussed discrimination, in relation to their classwork on justice, with good awareness.
- 4.5 The pupils' social development is excellent. Pupils readily accept responsibility, and in both the Prep and Seniors, including in Years 8 and 11, many serve as prefects or take on leadership roles within the house system; pupils take their duties seriously and do so with pride. Older pupils frequently support younger pupils, formally in lessons, during sports and other extra-curricular activities, or through structured mentoring. This occurs within the Prep and Seniors and also across wider age differences. The chapel choir, which includes pupils from the Prep and Seniors, is responsible for singing Evensong each Sunday; its dedicated members willingly take on this substantial commitment outside normal school time, which is appreciated by those who attend from the local community. Pupils are conscious of those less fortunate than themselves and are enthusiastic about fund raising for UK charities as well as those further afield. Pupils have helped to extend a school in Nepal and support communities in Africa. Many fund-raising activities, such as the house drama competition and the annual talent competition are run entirely by pupils. Social, political and economic awareness is raised by the regular discussion of current affairs during form periods in Seniors and as part of the future skills programme in the Prep.
- 4.6 Pupils show a strong awareness of both western and other cultures. Knowledge of western culture develops through the pupils' participation in music and drama, visits to museums and an appreciation of artists' style from Da Vinci to Hockney and

beyond. Religious education teaching helps pupils to understand and respect other faiths and cultures; in Years 1 and 2 pupils study such celebrations as Hanukkah and Diwali and in Seniors Islam is often chosen as an option for study by pupils. International sports trips make an important contribution for older pupils; the rugby tour of Namibia and South Africa included visiting townships and helping to improve facilities there. Diversity within the school community, both socially and culturally, helps pupils to learn how to live harmoniously alongside those whose families are different from their own.

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

- 4.7 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.8 Staff provide excellent support and guidance which is in accordance with the school's aim to create a caring and structured environment. The learning environment is underpinned by a strong pastoral network of form teachers and form tutors and, in Seniors, heads of year, led and overseen by senior managers.
- 4.9 Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent both in and out of the classroom. They are founded on mutual respect. Pupils also respect one another and get on well across age groups. Pupils are proud of their school. They accept the school's code of conduct and are courteous and considerate towards others.
- 4.10 Pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits; this is supported through PSHE lessons, awareness posters and the variety of healthy foods available in the school dining room. All pupils take regular exercise through the school's generous provision for physical education.
- 4.11 Behaviour policies in the Prep and Seniors are effective in promoting good behaviour: pupils are encouraged to behave well and poor behaviour is rare. In the Prep and in Years 7 and 8 there is a range of rewards for good work and behaviour. Use of electronic records in Seniors enables staff to be aware of any change in the behaviour of an individual pupil and concerns are followed up and action taken. In responses to pupil questionnaires, a minority of pupils in Seniors felt that sanctions and rewards are not always administered fairly. Inspection evidence shows that serious sanctions are implemented and recorded fairly and appropriately. Senior managers actively monitor staff use of lesser sanctions and rewards to promote a balance of positive and negative action. Disciplinary measures take due account of any pupil's difficulty or disability.
- 4.12 The school has effective procedures to guard against harassment and bullying. Pupils throughout the school report that bullying is not a problem and if it were to happen, they feel confident that staff would deal with it speedily and fully. They say there is always someone who will listen.
- 4.13 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs.
- 4.14 There are effective methods in place for the school to seek the views of pupils. In response to questionnaires a minority of pupils indicated that they felt the school does not ask for their opinions or respond to them. Inspection evidence shows that the pupils' views are welcomed consistently. In Seniors, an elected student council is chaired by a sixth-form pupil and attended by the headmaster as an observer. Feedback is given from the weekly meetings although some pupils showed uncertainty about what the outcomes of meetings, communicated through a public

notice, are. In the Prep, pupils say that teachers are open to hear their ideas and they see some of their suggestions put in place. They believe they have a voice in the school.

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

- 4.15 The arrangements to ensure the welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent.
- 4.16 The school has good arrangements to safeguard the pupils' welfare. Designated staff receive regular child protection and inter-agency training. Child protection training for all other staff is suitably regular and recorded effectively. The school now has good methods to ensure volunteers are aware of arrangements. Induction for new staff is methodical. Good working relationships exist with local agencies with advice being followed promptly and effectively.
- 4.17 Registration of all pupils electronically is careful and an efficient system to follow up absence operates well. The school maintains an appropriate admission register electronically, which is backed up and stored correctly.
- 4.18 Arrangements to ensure the pupils' health and safety are strong. Pupils who feel unwell receive excellent care from the medical centre. The first aid policy provides well for emergencies. Appropriate numbers of staff are qualified in first aid, including in paediatric first aid in the EYFS. Due care is taken to ensure the health and safety of those with special physical or learning needs.
- 4.19 Measures to prevent risks of fire and other hazards are very well organised. Regular drills are held and recorded. Equipment is checked by outside consultants and, within school, by suitably qualified staff who undertake effective assessments of risk. Health and safety measures are regularly monitored and reviewed.



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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 Governance promotes the school's aims well and supports its commitment to providing a wealth of opportunities both inside and outside the classroom. This enables the pupils' excellent personal development and achievement. Governors acquire information from a range of sources, including reports from senior staff which now embrace the EYFS, questionnaires to staff and parents, and direct experience of school life inside and outside the taught curriculum. All governors receive induction through meetings with senior figures in the school. All have received safeguarding training and some have undertaken other training. Currently systems to monitor governors' training and indicate useful experiences which might fruitfully be passed on to other governors, are in the early stages of development. A system of link governors ensures good links in some areas such as health and safety, safeguarding and the EYFS. This contributes well to the oversight of regulatory areas. Since the previous inspection, the institution of an education committee to look in greater detail at areas of the school's provision, such as that for pupils with SEND, has strengthened the level of challenge which governors provide.
- 5.3 Financial systems ensure effective use of investment income and judicious budgeting contributes to the effective provision of human and material resources. Governors oversee strategic review of the school's needs in order to formulate future plans. Many building development projects have been realised since the previous inspection which provide attractive and welcoming spaces, particularly for younger pupils. Methodical plans support the gradual refurbishment of other areas.
- 5.4 Governors provide strong oversight of those areas where they have legal responsibilities. They review welfare and health and safety arrangements regularly and, in recent years, staff recruitment checks. Minutes record questioning by governors in response to an annual report on the school's safeguarding arrangements as part of the annual review by all governors. They receive intermediate reports on any current concerns.

### **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, is excellent.
- 5.6 Well-focused senior leadership demonstrates integrity and strong promotion of the ethos of the school as one community. This is linked to effective senior management structures which have recently been revised to develop more cohesive links between management of the Prep and Seniors. These groupings ensure that the school's aims are met with success and meet the recommendation of the previous report. The school has made significant progress since the previous inspection, particularly in developing co-education, and providing a route for pupils to academic success combined with opportunities to develop skills inside and outside the classroom. This enables the pupils' excellent achievement and continued high level of personal development.

- 5.7 Senior figures in both the Prep and Seniors evaluate the success and the needs of the school perceptively. Subsequent planning is good and takes account of the views of the school community. The current strategic planning review has resulted in a draft plan which has clear timescales and criteria by which to judge success within the context of achievability within identifiable financial resources. This ensures that planning meets the recommendation of the previous inspection. Policy-making is strong, particularly in areas concerning safeguarding, welfare, health and safety and is implemented and monitored very successfully. Whole-staff training is regular and well documented in these areas and that for teaching and learning has included topics such as target setting and extending challenge for more able pupils and those with particular talents.
- 5.8 Revisions to middle management structures in the Prep have extended responsibility for initiatives effectively, particularly with regard to the development of learning skills. Middle managers in Seniors have developed their roles since the previous inspection through lesson observation and review although monitoring in some areas, such as consistent application of marking schemes and the development of transferable learning skills is not wholly consistent. Throughout the school, pastoral management has many strengths, aided by careful monitoring by senior managers. Effective budgeting ensures that all areas of school life receive good human and material resources.
- 5.9 The school appoints staff of high quality, both teaching and support. Schemes of appraisal and linked professional development operate effectively. These are enhanced in Seniors by annual audits of departments to evaluate development and success which provide good levels of challenge to middle managers. Checking procedures to ensure the suitability of staff, volunteers and governors to work with children are secure and recording is now comprehensive.
- 5.10 Support staff provide committed support for the pupils' development and enable the school's wide range of activities by providing technical, administrative and other expertise.
- 5.11 The quality of the school's links with parents is excellent. Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire showed very high levels of satisfaction with the school's provision. They are pleased with their child's progress and they recognise that their child is happy and safe at school. They feel able to contact staff who care for their child, that their child is well supported and that information about the school is readily available.
- 5.12 Parents are fully informed about the educational progress of their children through good quality reports issued at least once a year and backed up by half-termly attainment and effort grades. Regular parents' evenings are held for all years. Reports indicate the standards achieved and areas requiring improvement. Parents are encouraged to come into school to discuss issues regarding their children at other times.
- 5.13 The website provides easy access to school policies, developments, news and other useful and relevant information and all required information is provided to the parents of current and prospective pupils. The school produces high quality publications, such as the records of achievements which acknowledge the many and varied activities of the school year, and the termly 'In Focus' magazine. In the Prep, the 'Prep Times' gives parents information about key events and curriculum issues. Through the introduction in Seniors of on-line reporting and the student portal,

parents can monitor sanctions and rewards and see what homework is being set. In the pre-inspection questionnaires, comments from a small minority of pupils, and some parents, expressed concerns about the balance between the amount of homework set for pupils and their other school commitments. Inspection found that the electronic system enables parents to monitor this situation and the school's ready response to parents' concerns means that any issues are considered promptly. The school has an appropriate complaints policy which is operated very thoroughly and appropriately when initiated.

- 5.14 There are very strong links with parents through the Parents Association and parents have many opportunities to be actively involved in school activities. Parents participate and support many of the extra-curricular activities such as the bazaar and the chapel choir. The association raises funds and purchases equipment for the benefit of the whole school.

**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 quality of the provision is outstanding in meeting the needs of the range of the children who attend. The expertly devised programmes give all children rich opportunities to develop close relationships, learn both independently and with adult support, speak clearly and thoughtfully and listen attentively. The setting enables their physical skills to develop well and children under three learn to use pencils and small tools particularly well. Staff have high expectations and provide exciting and stimulating activities. They use probing questions and provide interesting information to enthuse children and encourage them to think and start to reason. This enables children to sustain concentration and they are eager to investigate and learn. In Reception, children discussed hands and went on to think about and define the difference between 'gloves' and 'mittens'. Excellent planning results from detailed and effective assessment and ensures that all children, including those with SEND, are challenged appropriately and make rapid progress in all areas of learning from a variety of starting points. Staff work closely with parents to involve them in their children's learning. Parents are particularly pleased with the family atmosphere in the setting which helps children to feel secure and confident. They also appreciate the way in which they are involved in what their children do.

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

6.2 Provision for the children's well-being is outstanding. All the key persons identified for individual children are skilled and experienced. They provide excellent role models for the children in kindness and thoughtfulness towards others, forming good relationships and having high standards of behaviour. Children, particularly in Reception, are encouraged to think independently and to use their imaginations. Staff create a warm, family atmosphere where children feel happy and flourish, and work both independently and with others. They ensure that children know how to keep safe, the importance of physical exercise and eating healthily; even children under three start to understand the principles of good hygiene. Staff provide numerous opportunities for children to feel confident about transferring to their next class. Staff visit the class from which children will move to read stories to them, talk with and get to know them.

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

6.3 The quality of leadership and management is outstanding. Governance is effective in supporting the EYFS. The strong management team is experienced and enthusiastic, and ensures that all staff receive training in health and safety procedures and thoroughly understand safeguarding and welfare requirements. This ensures that children are safe and secure in a welcoming environment. Management oversees the quality of planning and assessment and the full implementation of educational programmes. Rigorous systems for monitoring the success of the curriculum are in place which clarify priorities and identify areas for further improvement. This has led to the improvement of the outside environment, but opportunities in the play areas for children to investigate many aspects of the living world are still restricted. Staff meet regularly to plan and to evaluate the

progress of individual children. They have regular opportunities to discuss areas for their professional development with management, and ideas are shared following attendance on courses. Expertise is shared unstintingly and there is a strong feeling throughout the EYFS that everyone works as a close-knit unit for the benefit of the children in their charge. There are close partnerships with parents, and external agencies give valued advice when needed.

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

- 6.4 The quality and standards in the EYFS are outstanding. All children make rapid progress in relation to their abilities and starting points, and many are on course to exceed the early learning goals by the end of the Reception year. Children in all rooms are happy, form close relationships with adults and each other, and are serious and confident learners. Children with SEND receive excellent support and this provision meets the requirements of the previous EYFS inspection. Children under three are eager to talk and to explore their surroundings. Older children take keen interest in using their wide knowledge of phonics to read simple text and they start to write short sentences. Younger children identify the colours and shapes of objects, and in Reception children counted out pence correctly when buying items from the class post office and knew how much money they had left. Children's outstanding personal and emotional development is characterised by impeccable behaviour. In the baby room children are happy and laugh and gurgle frequently with delight. Older children are eager to talk about what they are doing, to take turns and share, and in Reception children are conscientious in all they do. Staff are highly conscientious and children's well-being is central to everything they do. They ensure that all safeguarding and welfare requirements for children are met. The leadership and management team evaluates the quality of caring, teaching and learning highly effectively, and creates excellent plans to enrich further children's experiences.

#### **Compliance with statutory requirements for children under three**

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

**Section 2 includes any identified action the Early Years Foundation Stage is recommended to take in order to improve its provision.**