



**INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE**

**INTEGRATED INSPECTION  
DRAGON SCHOOL**

# INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

## Dragon School

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Full Name of School       | <b>Dragon School</b>  |
| DfE Number                | <b>931/6062</b>   |
| Registered Charity Number | <b>309676</b>   |
| Address                   | <b>Dragon School<br/>Bardwell Road<br/>Oxford<br/>Oxfordshire<br/>OX2 6SS</b> |
| Telephone Number          | <b>01865 315401</b>   |
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| Email Address             | <b>mark.white@dragonschool.org</b>  |
| Head                      | <b>Mr John Baugh</b>  |
| Chair of Governors        | <b>Mr Chris Jones</b>   |
| Age Range                 | <b>4 to 13</b>  |
| Total Number of Pupils    | <b>845</b>  |
| Gender of Pupils          | <b>Mixed (507 boys; 338 girls)</b>  |
| Numbers by Age            | 4-5 (EYFS): <b>46</b> 5-11: <b>520</b><br>11-13: <b>279</b>                   |
| Number of Day Pupils      | Total: <b>603</b>   |
| Number of Boarders        | Total: <b>242</b><br>Full: <b>242</b>   |
| Head of EYFS Setting      | <b>Miss Ellen Fowler</b>  |
| EYFS Gender               | <b>Mixed</b>  |
| Inspection Dates          | <b>11 Nov 2014 to 14 Nov 2014</b>   |

## PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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', '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 and the governors responsible for safeguarding, boarding and the EYFS, 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 Jan Preece        | Reporting Inspector                                   |
| Mrs Gillian Bilbo     | Assistant Reporting Inspector                         |
| Mrs Elizabeth Harris  | Team Inspector (Director of Music, IAPS school)       |
| Mrs Barbara Knight    | Team Inspector (Head of Middle School, IAPS school)   |
| Mr Kim Parsley        | Team Inspector (Former Assistant Head, IAPS school)   |
| Mrs Catherine Peuleve | Team Inspector (Head of Lower Years, IAPS school)     |
| Mr John Preston       | Team Inspector (Senior Master, IAPS school)           |
| Mr Nigel Siddall      | Team Inspector (Senior Manager, IAPS school)          |
| Mr Mark Turner        | Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school)              |
| Mr Michael Westcombe  | Team Inspector (Senior Master, IAPS school)           |
| Mr Grant Whitaker     | Team Inspector (Director of Studies, IAPS school)     |
| Mr Jason Hyatt        | Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding                  |
| Mr Michael Hewett     | Team Inspector for Boarding (Former Head, ISA school) |
| Mrs Sally Gray        | Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years               |

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## 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 The Dragon School is a co-educational day and boarding school for pupils between the ages of 4 and 13. It is situated on two sites, a mile apart, to the north of Oxford. The school was founded in 1877 by a group of Oxford dons, as Oxford Preparatory School. It moved to its present 15-acre site bordering the River Cherwell soon after, and was re-named The Dragon School. Boarders are accommodated in ten houses within and around the preparatory school site. The pre-preparatory department, Lynams, for pupils between the ages of 4 and 8, was opened in 1995. The school is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It is administered by a board of governors who are directors of the company and trustees of the charity. Since the previous inspection a house for day boarders in Years 4 and 5 has been opened and the school has become the lead sponsor of a local academy, which embraces three primary schools.
- 1.2 The school aims to develop happy, independent, articulate and confident highly achieving children who see learning as a positive experience. It seeks to achieve this by the provision of a rich curriculum through which each can discover their strengths and feel valued not only for what they achieve but who they are. Encouraging each member of the school community to develop the skills and abilities to sustain both themselves and the community is seen as a priority. The school seeks to achieve its aims through the promotion of affectionate and trusting relationships between pupils and staff, which are supported by an ethos of relaxed rigour, robust informality and ordered freedom.
- 1.3 At the time of the inspection there were 845 pupils on the school roll, 507 boys and 338 girls. Two hundred and thirteen pupils were in the pre-preparatory department (4-8 years), of whom 46 were in the EYFS. There were 632 pupils in the preparatory school, 242 of whom are boarders. Pupils come from a wide local area, the home counties, London and from across the UK. There are 36 nationalities or dual nationalities represented in the pupil body and parents have a wide range of professions and careers. Forty-five boarders live overseas; representing 15 countries. Pupils join the school at various stages and most transfer to a wide range of senior independent schools at the age of 13. Entry is non-competitive and assessment on-entry is used solely to provide information on individual capabilities. The ability profile of the school is above the national average. The pupils have a fairly wide spread of abilities though most pupils are of at least above average ability and few are of below average ability.
- 1.4 The school has identified 170 pupils as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) of whom 141 receive learning support. None has a statement of special educational needs. Fifty-two pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), of whom 42 receive additional support.
- 1.5 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   |
| Reception | Reception |

***Pre-preparatory Department***

| School | NC name |
|--------|---------|
| Year 1 | Year 1  |
| Year 2 | Year 2  |
| Year 3 | Year 3  |

***Preparatory Department***

| School  | NC name |
|---------|---------|
| Block E | Year 4  |
| Block D | Year 5  |
| Block C | Year 6  |
| Block B | Year 7  |
| Block A | Year 8  |



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

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

- 2.1 The Dragon School meets its aims extremely successfully. The individual needs and abilities of each pupil are supported exceptionally well, so that during their time at the school they discover and develop their interests and talents whilst also becoming mindful of how they may contribute to the wider community. From the EYFS onwards, the pupils' achievement is exceptional because they achieve highly not only in academic areas, but in a very wide range of additional pursuits and social impact projects. Owing to their excellent academic standards many, including some who have received learning support for SEND or EAL, gain places and awards at leading senior schools. The wide curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities make a strong contribution to pupils' breadth of achievement. The most able and those with particular talents make excellent progress because of the numerous opportunities they have to develop their abilities both within and outside the curriculum. Excellent teaching which characteristically challenges pupils to think deeply, try out ideas and offer reasoned argument, excites pupils and motivates them to have a genuine spirit of enquiry. Pupils make excellent progress overall owing to the careful attention placed on matching work to their learning needs and provision of highly effective specialist learning support where necessary.
- 2.2 The pupils' personal development is excellent throughout the school. They demonstrate empathy, respect for others' opinions, strong confidence and self-esteem. As they grow older their manners and behaviour reflect self-discipline and common sense and they demonstrate an outstanding sense of social responsibility. The pupils are highly committed to their participation in projects within the community and further afield and each year raise large sums of money for charities that they carefully choose. Their cultural awareness of other faiths and communities is high and they value creativity as expressed in their musical, artistic and dramatic activities. The quality of pastoral care, including in the EYFS, is excellent so that, despite being a large school, pupils' welfare needs are particularly well communicated and supported. Welfare, health and safety arrangements are exemplary. The quality of boarding is excellent; boarders in each house receive a consistently high quality of care so that they regard boarding as home from home.
- 2.3 The quality of both governance and leadership and management is excellent. Highly committed governors, many of whom have a long-standing close relationship with the school, provide highly effective support and stimulus to enable the school to maintain its traditions yet embrace fresh expressions of learning. Well-organised management structures and rigorous self-evaluation ensure that school improvement is driven by careful consideration of how pupils' learning is equipping them for the world in which they will live as adults. The school is aware that outdoor learning in the EYFS does not fully match the high standard of the rest of its provision. The school has further improved its links with parents that were identified as excellent at the previous inspection. In the pre-inspection questionnaires parents expressed overwhelming support for the school and were happy with all aspects of its provision.

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

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

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvement.
1. Incorporate the use of the outdoor area across all areas of the curriculum in the EYFS.

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

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

- 3.1 The quality of pupils' achievements and learning is exceptional.
- 3.2 The pupils' success in their academic work and the equally extremely high quality of their achievements in other areas, strongly fulfil the school's aims. In the EYFS all children, including those requiring support, make excellent progress relative to their individual starting points. They concentrate well, express themselves clearly and enjoy their learning. Children use phonics to blend or sound out simple words as they acquire early reading and writing skills; some are reading at a more complex level and can write simple sentences. In numeracy, they recognise shapes, patterns, understand time to the hour, and count to 10 and beyond. Children show a high level of skills in information and communication technology (ICT); they use a digital camera confidently and are gaining competence with computer mouse skills. The children express themselves creatively through their art. They are happy, co-operate well and maintain attention in their activities. By the end of the EYFS most children achieve the early learning goals and many work beyond these.
- 3.3 As they progress through the school pupils attain high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills across a very broad range of subjects, sports and activities. They conduct research effectively and make extensive use of ICT, not only to support their learning across the curriculum, but as a discrete skill. Older pupils are able to write code to produce their own applications and websites and to create simple computer games. Pupils develop very high levels of speaking and listening skills. They express their ideas and explain their learning confidently and, from a young age, address an audience persuasively. Literacy and numeracy standards are high throughout the school and pupils read fluently for their ages. They demonstrate excellent ability to write in a variety of creative and factual genres and many demonstrate a mature ability to take notes whilst engaging in class discussion. Pupils achieve high standards in both modern and classical languages. Outstanding creative skills are evident in art, music and drama. Mathematical skills are applied well across the curriculum and scientific skills and knowledge are applied in other subjects such as design technology. The quality of pupils' physical skills, as demonstrated in a wide variety of games and swimming, is very high.
- 3.4 The pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests. On the evidence available, it is judged to be excellent in relation to national age-related expectations. The pupils achieve highly within a broad and challenging curriculum and extra-curricular activities, and on leaving the school about a third regularly gain a wide range of awards to their senior schools. This level of attainment as judged by inspectors from pupils' response in lessons, scrutiny of their work and curriculum interviews indicates that they make excellent progress in relation to their differing starting points. Most pupils with EAL or SEND make rapid progress in relation to their needs so that some are able to cease support and gain places in leading senior schools. The most able and those with particular talents make similarly excellent progress because of the numerous opportunities they have to develop their abilities both within and outside the curriculum.
- 3.5 Achievement in extra-curricular activities is outstanding and reflects the school's aim to include all pupils in music, drama, art and sport. Almost three-quarters of pupils learn a musical instrument and take part in ensembles or musical groups, some of which perform to an extremely high standard. Pupils achieve consistently high

marks in music examinations, many at high grades for their ages and regularly gain music awards to their senior schools. They perform in a wide variety of school productions that are of the highest quality and some individuals gain major parts in west-end productions. Pupils regularly gain art awards to their senior schools and displays around the school show their high level of artistic competence. The pupils' skills and achievements in a wide variety of sports are excellent. The success enjoyed in all team sports and by many individuals has earned the school a national award and each year pupils gain sports awards to their senior schools and recognition at county and national level. Pupils are exceptionally aware of their social and environmental responsibilities and their involvement with outreach is outstanding and unique for their ages, so that they devise and participate in schemes to fund many charitable projects with great commitment and success.

- 3.6 Pupils' attitudes to learning are exceptionally positive and contribute strongly to their high achievements. They are immensely curious and keen to learn, listen attentively and respect one another's opinions. They concentrate exceptionally well, most are highly organised within a busy school day and they take pride in the presentation of their work. The pupils are highly enthusiastic and relish all aspects of school life.

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

- 3.7 The quality of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.8 Throughout the school the curriculum covers more than the requisite areas for learning, supports the school's aims and meets the needs of all ages and abilities. In the EYFS enthusiastic and hardworking staff provide planned, purposeful adult led activities with opportunities for child-initiated activities across the educational programmes so that all children are able to develop and learn effectively. The outdoor classroom area provides limited opportunities for the children to take their planned learning outside.
- 3.9 In the pre-prep, pupils' educational experience is broadened by French from Year 1 and swimming lessons held at the prep school. Music and physical education are taken by specialist staff so that the younger pupils' needs and abilities are identified and addressed at an early stage. Strong emphasis is placed on the creative curriculum which links subjects through topics, such as 'Step into a Story' and 'Town and Gown'. This approach affords the pupils frequent opportunities to use ICT, which promotes their research and independent learning skills. Throughout the pre-prep a wide programme of visiting speakers and off-site activities, enriches the curriculum.
- 3.10 Throughout the school the curriculum is stimulating and wide-ranging in accordance with the school's aims. Older pupils benefit from specialist teaching which provides them with an excellent range of learning experiences and contributes towards their high level of achievement. Computer programming using open-source electronics platforms has been introduced to enhance learning in ICT. Latin is taught from Year 5 and German, Spanish and classical Greek are offered from Year 7. Drama, sport and music are given high priority; over 800 individual music lessons take place each week and over four-fifths of pupils represent the school in fixtures. Comprehensive links with local clubs and organisations help pupils develop their talents in particular areas. The highly effective programme for personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHE) contributes strongly to the pupils' personal qualities.

- 3.11 Provision for pupils with EAL or SEND is excellent. Regular meetings between learning support and subject staff, assignment of a learning support teacher to each class for younger pupils and careful monitoring of assessment results ensure pupils are given appropriate support and encouragement. Pupils with particular social and communication difficulties receive excellent support from a specialist speech and language therapy department. Multiple opportunities both within and outside of formal curriculum time meet the needs of the most able; for example, the prep school coding club provides an opportunity for very talented and motivated young computer programmers to achieve an exceptionally high level of skill.
- 3.12 Outstanding extra-curricular provision provides significant enrichment to the pupils' educational experience. A wide range of activities in sport, music, art and dance as well as gardening, textiles and an international club is offered in the pre-prep. In the prep school pupils with particular talents are selected for some musical and sporting activities which enable them to develop their abilities. All pupils undertake a range of activities by rotation during their time at the school, and are offered a diverse range of clubs. The body of experience and skills built up by all these activities is considerable and both staff and pupils clearly enjoy the purposeful and productive informality with which they are conducted. The large-scale commitment to extra-curricular provision is very well managed and the school has also introduced the excellent 'Dragon Award' and 'Skipper Shield' initiatives. These not only reward achievement in academic, sporting and extra-curricular areas but also social skills such as service to the community.
- 3.13 The school initiates unique links with the community that strongly promote its ethos and the personal development of the pupils. The work done to develop a meaningful relationship with local state schools is significant, for example 'Latin in the Community' where pupils in Year 6 share their learning with pupils in a local school. The school also organises joint initiatives with schools from their academy trust such as 'Science Thursdays' where able young scientists from academy schools engage in lessons with Dragon pupils, visits to an Oxford college and musical performances. The school strongly promotes commitment to the environment through active eco-committees on both sites. As a result it has retained the Green Eco-Flag over a number of years and regularly hosts environmental conferences for schools nationally. Pupils' social entrepreneurship, empathy, teamwork, and leadership are developed through a variety of projects such as 'The Dragon Philanthropic Bank', and the production and marketing of Dragon coffee and tea and honey from hives kept by pupils. Pupils decide how to donate proceeds raised from these projects and events, such as the Christmas Fair, after listening to presentations from their peers. Their work in this area has been recognized by invitation to membership of an international organisation which aims to develop social entrepreneurs who can solve problems and initiate global change.

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

- 3.14 The quality of teaching is excellent.
- 3.15 In the EYFS teachers use a varied range of good quality resources, particularly indoors, to plan interesting activities, which motivate children to explore and investigate. High standards of planning and detailed assessments evaluate the progress of each child and the next steps in learning for each individual child are carefully monitored so that learning for children of all abilities is highly effective.

- 3.16 Throughout the school a broad range of highly stimulating and challenging learning is undertaken across the curriculum. In most lessons pupils understand teachers' expectations for their learning through clearly communicated lesson objectives which build on their previous learning. Departments ensure that schemes of work are reviewed thoroughly and regularly to ensure that teaching is interesting and relevant. Resources are plentiful and carefully selected. Many teachers create their own materials to ensure that they are ideally suited to their pupils' needs. In science lessons, an ideas wall is used to allow pupils to explore and develop their thinking. Teachers use ICT very effectively throughout the school; for example to enable pupils in Year 8 to compose complex multi-track film scores.
- 3.17 Teachers' subject knowledge is exceptionally strong throughout the school. This enables them to convey enthusiasm and wide-ranging information, and inspires in the pupils a genuine desire to learn. Teachers meticulously model correct use of terminology and encourage pupils to do the same. They use highly skilful questioning to tease out pupils' knowledge and encourage them to make links to previous learning and other subjects. Teaching is brisk and uses a wide variety of dynamic strategies that develop thinking skills, the ability to solve problems creatively and to present a reasoned argument.
- 3.18 Teaching is sensitive to the needs of the individual and throughout the school teachers plan activities to ensure worthwhile learning for pupils with EAL, SEND and for the most able. Consequently all pupils generally make rapid progress in lessons. Teaching assistants in both the prep and pre-prep are well-deployed to provide very effective support or extension for small groups and individuals. In a very small number of lessons observed for younger pupils, the pupils' focus was not maintained either because the lesson was too teacher-led or the task was not correctly matched to pupils' needs.
- 3.19 Teachers of younger pupils develop a spirit of enquiry and creativity and include activities that encourage pupils to enjoy their learning; for example, in the pre-prep, freeze frame and hot-seating techniques were used highly effectively to explore the work of Florence Nightingale. Teachers of older pupils prepare many activities which are thought-provoking, stimulate the imagination and are open-ended, such as when pupils considered what changes there would be 'if the world was ruled by elephants'. Across the school, teachers maintain very good classroom discipline because the children are typically engrossed in their learning. Relationships between teachers and pupils are warm, positive and always respectful.
- 3.20 Assessment systems in the pre-prep have been reviewed, and provide useful information to enable teachers to monitor progress and inform their planning. Pupils told inspectors that they understand the clear marking scheme though inspectors found it is not used consistently. Pupils' self-evaluation is developing, such as when they use a traffic light system to indicate whether they have achieved their learning objective. In the prep school assessment is used highly effectively to support learning targets for individuals and also to monitor progress across year groups. Marking is regular, encouraging and, particularly for older pupils, often very detailed. Comments relate well to the lesson's learning objectives and relevant targets are followed up by pupils. This is further underpinned by teachers' very high expectations in terms of pupils' participation, collaboration, application and presentation of work.

## **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 the pupils is excellent.
- 4.2 The pupils' spiritual development is excellent. They demonstrate empathy, respect each other's opinions and understand the need to listen to the views of others. Their strong confidence and sense of self-worth is evident when they volunteer to lead assemblies and services on Sundays. The pupils appreciate that rewards given for displaying the school's core values of courage, respect and kindness affirm that they are valued for who they are as well as for what they are achieving. Pupils are developing an awareness of finding space for reflection and the concept of mindfulness through opportunities provided by staff. They display a mature sense of the intangible; for example some explained how the deconstruction of a sand mandala created by some visiting Buddhist monks showed that not all things of beauty or value have permanence.
- 4.3 Pupils' moral awareness is very well developed. Whilst they readily observe the very few rules required for the school to function as a community, they display notable levels of self-discipline and common sense. Those of all ages state the importance of being kind as a key moral principle. Pupils greet one another and visitors in a friendly fashion and model themselves on staff who always display courteous behaviour to them and to one another. Throughout the school behaviour is excellent; pupils exhibit exuberance and spirit yet responsiveness and sensitivity. This successfully reflects the school's ethos of relaxed rigour without the need for excessive compliance.
- 4.4 The social development of the pupils is outstanding. Older pupils are required to apply and justify why they should be appointed to a position of responsibility. The pupils' awareness of citizenship and public institutions is excellent and promoted through visits, such as from a soldier to the pre-prep for Remembrance Day and a visit to the prep school from a member of parliament. Pupils demonstrate a particularly strong sense of social and environmental responsibility for their ages owing to these areas being given a high priority in school. This is evident in pupils' active leadership and participation in the wide range of social impact projects being undertaken currently and over time. The pupils value their opportunities and are keen to share their resources with those who have less.
- 4.5 The pupils' cultural development is excellent. They have a strong awareness of faiths other than their own, promoted by religious studies lessons and assemblies. In the pre-prep this is enhanced when parents are invited to school to explain their beliefs and customs. Pupils develop an excellent knowledge and understanding of other communities and cultures through many external visits, including abroad, and from shared projects with local state schools. They learn to consider issues outside their own experience and gain valuable general knowledge through talks by external speakers and members of the school community at the 'Spectrum' evenings and international language days and evenings in the boarding houses. Pupils' understanding is further developed through work in the curriculum, for example on the work of great artists and by the constant provision of cultural events such as the pre-prep art exhibition and the many concerts and dramatic productions.
- 4.6 In the EYFS children enjoy coming to school and are able to make independent choices about their play, their learning and their behaviour. They cooperate and

share with each other very confidently. Their understanding of the world is enhanced by their visits to museums, theatres and an outdoor activities centre and by visitors to the school, who introduce them to such topics as the night sky. They celebrate different cultures, enjoying Chinese dancing and Diwali. They are well prepared for their transition to Year 1 through 'Buddy Playtimes' which promote learning and friendships with older children and close liaison between staff.

- 4.7 As a result of the individual care they receive, conscientiousness in promoting the school's guiding principles and wide opportunities, by the time pupils leave the school their standard of personal development is extremely high.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 Extremely well-organised pastoral structures, supported by a local charity's programme which emphasises self-awareness, self-esteem, appropriate expectations, positive discipline and empathy, ensure that excellent support and guidance are given to pupils of all ages, in accordance with the school's aims.
- 4.10 Provision for the children's well-being in the EYFS is excellent. Children form strong relationships with the staff designated as their key persons and feel safe, happy and confident to share their concerns. Staff act as excellent role models and give clear guidance on standards of courtesy and behaviour expected, so that children demonstrate exemplary levels of behaviour and show respect and care for each other. Staff support the children's independence in managing their own hygiene and personal needs. Their independence is further encouraged by self-registration and the setting up and clearing away of their own break time snacks. The setting encourages good eating habits through the curriculum and the healthy meals provided and children have good opportunities for physical exercise through their outdoor play as well as their specialist physical education sessions, while outdoor climbing equipment provides some opportunity for controlled risk taking.
- 4.11 Throughout the school, relationships between staff and pupils are excellent and encourage tolerance and an open dialogue. Pupils are very well supported by their teachers and are given strong guidance by their tutors as well as pastoral, medical and boarding staff so that they know who to turn to should they need help. Weekly meetings monitor and maintain the high standards of care and a unique 'Dragon Plan' provides a clear record of each pupil's well-being as they progress through the school. Several pupil-friendly publications are provided for each pupil to support their pastoral development.
- 4.12 Healthy eating habits and exercise are promoted well through the provision of a wide range of activities related to health and fitness, which includes excellent provision for sport. Pupils are encouraged to eat healthily from a good choice of food available at lunchtimes. Younger pupils' awareness of a healthy lifestyle is promoted through yoga or morning exercise classes to music.
- 4.13 Standards of behaviour are excellent. Staff convey high expectations based on the school's three core values. In the pre-inspection questionnaire a few pupils indicated that the sanctions are not always fair. Inspection evidence did not substantiate this and confirmed that sanctions are few, that the number awarded has declined steadily for the past six years and pupils spoken to by inspectors did not feel this to be a concern. Similarly, whilst in the questionnaires a few pupils commented that the school does not deal appropriately with incidents of bullying,



records show that any extremely rare issues are dealt with fairly and constructively and pupils spoken to expressed confidence that staff would deal with any such incident swiftly and effectively. The school has a suitable plan to enable educational access for pupils with SEND.

- 4.14 Sensitively planned PSHE lessons, tutor time and circle time provide frequent opportunities for pupils to explore their views and emotions and to speak out with confidence. In the pre-prep, this is achieved through worry boxes and a recently established school council. In the prep, the school council, food committee, boarding council and eco-group each consist of pupils elected by their peers who meet regularly to discuss issues raised via suggestion boxes or surgeries run by the pupils. These opportunities and changes such as the extended opening of lost property and the provision of a beginners' knitting club confirm the inspectors' view that the pupils' opinions are sought and responded to, which was a concern of a small minority in the questionnaire response.

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

- 4.15 Arrangements for welfare, health and safety are excellent.
- 4.16 Throughout the school the pupils' welfare is extremely well managed to meet the needs of the differing age groups, including children in the EYFS. Attention to safeguarding is particularly thorough and the school has an excellent relationship with the local safeguarding children board. Staff, volunteers and governors are suitably trained in child protection, including induction training for staff new to the school and a governor has specific responsibility for safeguarding. The pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for and they have a good understanding for their ages of keeping themselves safe, particularly on the internet.
- 4.17 Health and safety measures are stringent, implemented well and engrained into the school's organisation. Health and safety is an agenda item for all meetings so that staff at all levels and in all areas of the school are reminded of their responsibilities to promote safe working practice and maintain a safe environment. Staff have regular training to ensure they maintain a strong awareness of their health and safety responsibilities. The school's site and buildings are well maintained and defects are easily reported through the school's administration management system which allows progress with repairs to be closely monitored. Risk assessments for activities, all areas of the school and external visits are thorough and reviewed at appropriate intervals.
- 4.18 Procedures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards are exemplary. External professionals regularly carry out checks of fire and alarm equipment, emergency lighting and portable electrical equipment used by staff and pupils. Fire evacuation practices are logged carefully at both sites and evaluated. Provision for pupils who fall ill during the school day or who hurt themselves is excellent and provided in the well-equipped health centre which is staffed by qualified nurses for the prep school and by fully trained first aiders in the pre-prep. Admission and attendance registers are suitably maintained and stored and unexplained absences are checked by timely contact with parents.

#### **4.(d) The quality of boarding**

- 4.19 The quality of boarding education is excellent.

- 4.20 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. The outstanding sense of community, which permeates all the boarding houses, ensures that boarders have an excellent standard of personal development. Boarders are very confident and articulate their feelings with great clarity. They have a strong sense of belonging and display a mature and balanced understanding of the issues that affect their boarding life. They demonstrate considerable insight into the importance of tolerance for other opinions and values. Boarders from overseas are well integrated; individuality is respected and, overall, boarders display high standards of conduct. Boarders with SEND or EAL are extremely well supported. Boarders understand the importance of the smooth running of their boarding house and are actively involved in taking responsibility for their own lives as well their peers. A small minority of boarders indicated in the pre-inspection questionnaire that their personal belongings were not safe, but inspectors found that this was only the case when items were incorrectly put away. The opportunities available to be involved in councils and committees strengthen their contributions to the community. Senior boarders acknowledge how their own personal development is a reflection of their commitment to becoming responsible citizens in the boarding environment as well as in the wider school setting.
- 4.21 Relationships between boarders and between boarders and staff are extremely strong so that they view their environment as a home from home. They speak very warmly of the support they are given by their house parents and other staff and are very confident that their worries and concerns will always be sympathetically and professionally handled. They display strong support strategies for their peers, particularly in activities where helping each other is a key to success.
- 4.22 The quality of boarding provision is excellent. Boarding houses are run by extremely enthusiastic, hard-working and dedicated staff who achieve excellence in terms of pastoral care as well as bringing a unique individuality to each house. All staff are extremely well trained to ensure the highest levels of support for the boarders. Great care is taken to understand each boarder's academic, as well as social needs, and extremely robust systems are in place for ensuring that these needs are being met. Individual education or care plans are closely monitored to ensure effective continuity between the boarding houses and the school. The boarding environment is safe and secure, and the excellent facilities within each house make them attractive, comfortable and comforting homes from home.
- 4.23 The comprehensive, highly organised programmes of activities and clubs create a rich tapestry of opportunities for all boarders to engage in a wide range of challenges to suit their individual needs and interests. Many weekend activities are so attractive that boarders are often very keen to stay at school. The excellent facilities for sport, music, art and drama contribute positively to their opportunities, and yet they can still find space for quiet reflection or other self-directed time.
- 4.24 Food is plentiful, nutritious and varied with plenty of choice during the day. Care is taken to cater for those with special dietary needs. A majority of boarders indicated in their pre-inspection questionnaires and through meetings with the inspectors that the quality of the dining experience in the evening is occasionally inferior to that offered during the day. Inspectors found that they dislike the lack of choice at the family suppers that occur twice a week. However, boarders acknowledge that there are suitable procedures to give feedback about their meals and the school is aware of their feelings. Boarders maintain regular contact with their families, either by email or telephone, and overseas boarders use video messaging. House parents

maintain extremely close contact with parents and guardians to ensure the general wellbeing of boarders is always given a high priority.

- 4.25 The health care centre has recently been refurbished making it an excellent facility and is led by a professional team of registered nurses with useful specialisms. The boarders have access to local doctors, a dentist and an optician, all of whom make use of the school's modern facility. Thorough procedures for the administration of medicines and storage of controlled drugs are understood by all medical and boarding staff, which represents an improvement since the previous inspection.
- 4.26 Arrangements for the welfare and safeguarding of boarders are excellent. Boarders feel safe and extremely well cared for by a large team of dedicated staff. The school has robust procedures for safeguarding with excellent links to local agencies. Boarders do not identify bullying as an issue and know that there is a wide range of adults available to talk to, including a full time counsellor and a speech and language therapist. The welfare and safeguarding of the boarders are extremely well supported and monitored by effective communication between staff in all areas of the school.
- 4.27 Boarding house staff are aware of the boarders' whereabouts at all times and maintain effective systems for registration. In each house several staff can be easily contacted throughout the night. In response to a recommendation from the previous inspection all the correct agreements and checks have been carried out on adults living in boarding accommodation who are not employed by the school. The school's rigorous attention to health and safety includes the boarding houses, and the local fire and rescue services review all aspects of fire safety. Detailed risk assessments are clear, and regular fire practices are carried out within all of the boarding houses in boarding time.
- 4.28 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is excellent. Boarding principles are clear throughout each house. House parents work with the boarders to create house rules, which are effectively underpinned by the school's three core values. The success of boarding is supported by strong leadership at all levels. House parents manage each of the ten boarding houses with a degree of autonomy, giving each house its own identity. This highly effective group is led by dedicated and experienced heads of boarding who represent boarding on the senior management committee. Regular meetings for boarding staff at all levels ensure communication is a key feature of effective management of boarding. Comprehensive boarders' files, which are updated daily on the school's management information system, ensure that all staff within the school are kept abreast of their pastoral needs.
- 4.29 The effective system of induction and appraisal for all boarding staff takes into consideration the views of parents, boarders and senior staff and enables clear targets to be set for future development. Staff are committed to continuous self-evaluation within each house. This has resulted in several comprehensive whole school boarding reviews. The governors have recently created a day-boarding house aimed at gently introducing some younger boarders to the full boarding experience. The governor responsible for boarding takes an active interest. Boarding staff give presentations and governors meet often with staff, ensuring that they have a firm understanding of the policies and procedures.
- 4.30 The school has met the recommendations from the previous boarding inspection and, as a result of excellent care, a very large majority of boarders say they enjoy

their boarding experience. Their parents were also overwhelmingly positive in their responses to the pre-inspection questionnaire.

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

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

- 5.1 The quality of governance is excellent.
- 5.2 Governors, many of whom are previous pupils, past or current parents, provide highly committed support and stimulus to the school to enable it to maintain its traditions and achieve its aims and guiding principles. Governors offer a wide range of experience and expertise and ensure that strong governance is maintained through careful succession planning. New governors are provided with thorough induction training and serving governors undertake further training, such as in safeguarding. The governors fulfil their responsibilities for maintaining the school's high educational standards extremely well through prudent financial planning and investment in staffing, accommodation and resources, which place benefit to the pupils as the key priority. Annual strategy days with the leadership enable governors to contribute to strategic planning for long-term improvement.
- 5.3 The governing body maintains excellent insight into the school's strengths, challenges and areas for development through the work of a number of sub-committees. Governors work with senior staff in the academic committee to ensure they gain a close understanding of curricular issues and developments. They are well informed by detailed reports from the leadership of both the prep and pre-prep schools as well as regular presentations on specific areas of the school's academic and welfare provision from senior managers and pupils. Governors who undertake specific responsibilities such as for the pre-prep and EYFS, boarding, health and safety and safeguarding, maintain close and effective liaison. Those governors who are able visit the school regularly, promote good relationships with staff and gain direct experience of school life.
- 5.4 The governing body ensures that its statutory responsibilities are well met through efficient monitoring systems. Policies and their implementation are regularly reviewed, including a thorough annual review of safeguarding and child protection arrangements carried out by the whole governing body.

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

- 5.5 The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians, is excellent.
- 5.6 The caring and highly committed leadership enables the school to achieve its guiding principles because it communicates a clear and innovative vision, which gives excellent direction. Management structures are clearly defined and at all levels of responsibility leaders and managers are highly effective in fulfilling their delegated responsibilities, upholding the school's values and promoting excellence in their areas. Monitoring of teaching and learning through lesson observation and scrutiny of work is carried out regularly by senior leaders and heads of department and drives school improvement.
- 5.7 A clear EYFS improvement plan, demonstrates the effective systems for self-evaluation that inform the setting's priorities and sets targets for continuous improvement to enhance the children's learning and achievement. Supervision

sessions enable staff to discuss their practice or concerns about individual children but are not yet used consistently across the setting. Following a recommendation at the previous inspection, the EYFS teaching area has been adapted to facilitate better access to the outdoor learning area but the school is aware that this aspect of provision does not yet meet its otherwise high standards.

- 5.8 Across the school, highly analytical self-evaluation identifies areas that require improvement and sets ambitious priorities to ensure these are achieved. An openness to forward thinking about the way pupils learn and develop as individuals, together with a keen awareness of what their future may look like, leads to a continuous process of review and innovation so that pupils receive a stimulating educational experience of high quality. Relationships within the school community are mutually supportive. Staff value and respect the leadership and feel that their views are listened to. As a result, staff at every level are highly committed and enthusiastic. They work extremely hard to secure their high aspirations for their pupils to become successful learners and their shared sense of purpose contributes strongly to the pupils' exceptional achievement and their excellent personal development.
- 5.9 The pastoral needs of the pupils and their families are particularly well supported through the skilled and compassionate pastoral care team who ensure that information about welfare needs is sensitively communicated. Frequent meetings between different levels of management ensure that communication across the school is efficient. Liaison between staff in the pre-prep and prep schools and ease of pupil transfer are enhanced by staff who teach on both sites and ensure the school's ethos and feeling of unity is consistently promoted. The whole school runs extremely efficiently due to the responsiveness and expertise of all those who work in the administrative, medical, catering and maintenance departments.
- 5.10 Senior leaders ensure that all statutory obligations for the safeguarding, welfare, health and safety of pupils are met. Policies are regularly reviewed and staff are well-trained to meet their responsibilities. The school seeks to appoint and retain staff of high calibre to support its aims. Staff recruitment procedures are thorough and correctly recorded in meticulous personnel records. New staff follow a comprehensive induction programme and the biennial appraisal programme supports staff in their professional development. Staff training is given high priority, and generous time given each term to whole-staff training contributes to a common approach to achieving high quality. In the pre-inspection parental questionnaire, the overwhelming majority of parents expressed their satisfaction with the leadership and management of the school.
- 5.11 Links with parents throughout the school are excellent. Parents are exceptionally supportive of the school and extremely satisfied with the education and care that their children receive, and with the communication and support that is offered. Contact with parents is regular across the school, increasingly through digital and mobile technology, such as the parents' area on the updated and informative website. Many parents choose to follow the school's news on social media. The school is justly proud of its partnership with the parents, which it regards as crucial to the development of each child.
- 5.12 In the EYFS parents are highly appreciative of the continuous support provided by staff, designated as key persons, to help their children settle and there is an exceptionally strong partnership between school and home. Parents are kept well informed and involved in their children's learning and progress through daily contact

and verbal and written reports such as parents evenings, e-mails, 'Journey Books' for home-school learning and their child's 'Year in Pictures' DVD. Highly effective partnerships have been established with parents and external agencies so that children can access appropriate interventions to support their needs.

- 5.13 The school maintains constructive and open relationships with parents. It is proactive in seeking their views through regular surveys and senior leaders respond to feedback. Most parents are happy with the way that concerns are handled, and there is a robust policy in place to deal promptly with any complaints, in line with the stated procedures, though concerns are usually resolved informally.
- 5.14 Parents have numerous opportunities to attend informative meetings, such as curriculum workshops and pastoral care courses, and social events throughout the year, and to become actively involved in school functions. In the pre-prep, parents help on school trips and in the classroom, and are welcome to attend music practices and assemblies. A representative for each class organises social and charitable events. In the prep school, a committee organises social and fund-raising events, such as the 'Dragon Sale' and the fathers' breakfast, as well as regular lunches and receptions.
- 5.15 Parents and prospective parents receive all the required information about the school such as its policies and contacts. They also receive news of forthcoming and recent events through informative handbooks, weekly newsletters and bi-annual and annual magazines.
- 5.16 Parents are provided with regular information on their child's progress. Those with children in the pre-prep receive twice-yearly reports and two formal consultations. The school has an open-door policy and parents are welcome to make contact at any time. In the prep school, two full and two progress reports are followed up with a phone call from the pupil's tutor. There are regular consultation evenings and, in addition, parents are informed when their child has done particularly well. A dedicated office provides parents with advice about future schools.

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