



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

ELSTREE SCHOOL

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Elstree School

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| Full Name of School | Elstree School | | |
| DfE Number | 869/6007 | | |
| Registered Charity Number | 309101 | | |
| Address | Elstree School Woolhampton Hill Reading Berkshire RG7 5TD | | |
| Telephone Number | 0118 9713302 | | |
| Fax Number | 0118 9714280 | | |
| Email Address | office@elstreeschool.org.uk | | |
| Head | Mr Andrew Inglis | | |
| Chair of Governors | Mr James Sunley | | |
| Age Range | 3 to 13 | | |
| Total Number of Pupils | 258 | | |
| Gender of Pupils | Mixed (245 boys: 13 girls) | | |
| Numbers by Age | 0-2 (EYFS): | 0 | 5-11: 167 |
| | 3-5 (EYFS): | 24 | 11-18: 67 |
| Number of Day Pupils | Total: | 147 | |
| Number of Boarders | Total: | 111 | |
| | Full: | 8 | Weekly: 11 Flexi: 92 |
| Head of EYFS Setting | Mrs Kay Markides | | |
| EYFS Gender | Mixed | | |
| Inspection Dates | 03 Mar 2015 to 06 Mar 2015 | | |

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous full ISI inspection was in November 2009. There was an intermediate inspection of boarding in March 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) Regulations 2014. The range of these Regulations can be viewed on the website www.legislation.gov.uk. Additionally, inspections will consider the school's accessibility plan under Schedule 10 of the Equality Act 2010 and the ban on corporal punishment introduced by the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

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

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

This inspection contains specific judgements on the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools. It comments on the progress made by the school in meeting the recommendations set out in the most recent statutory boarding inspection and evaluates the quality of the boarding experience and its contribution to pupils' education, personal development and welfare.

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 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

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|-----------------------|--|
| Mrs Jane Chesterfield | Reporting Inspector |
| Mrs Audrey Marsden | Team Inspector (Head of pre-prep, IAPS school) |
| Mrs Jennifer Moran | Team Inspector (Head of year, IAPS school) |
| Mr David Tidmarsh | Team Inspector (Headmaster, IAPS school) |
| Mr Richard Gibbs | Co-ordinating Inspector for Boarding |
| Mrs Angela Russell | Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years |

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1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Elstree School is a preparatory day and boarding school for boys aged three to thirteen years and girls aged three to eight years. It is situated in rural surroundings in Berkshire, between the towns of Newbury and Reading. The pre-prep department, known as Home Farm, is housed in a separate building on the same site, and caters for pupils aged three to seven. The school was founded in 1848 and moved to its current site in 1939. It is a charitable trust administered by a board of governors.
- 1.2 The school aims to embed in pupils the important values of hard work, kindness to others and making the most of opportunities; to encourage pupils to respect one another and gain a strong sense of personal worth, and to ensure that pupils respect the school community and contribute wherever possible.
- 1.3 The school offers Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) provision to children in its Nursery and Reception classes, and boarding for boys aged eight years upwards, on a termly, weekly or flexi-boarding basis. One hundred and eleven boys currently board. Boarding is not available for girls.
- 1.4 Since the previous inspection, the present headmaster has taken up his post, in September 2013, and the role of assistant director of studies has been introduced. A new chair of governors has been appointed in September 2014. A new science centre has been built and a new all-weather pitch for hockey and tennis constructed.
- 1.5 Currently there are 258 pupils on roll, of whom 245 are boys and 13 are girls. There are 24 children in the EYFS. Results of standardised tests indicate that the ability profile of the pupils is above the national average, with some cohorts having many pupils of well above average ability. Pupils come from mainly professional or business backgrounds, and a small proportion is from minority ethnic or overseas backgrounds, mainly Asian.
- 1.6 Forty-two pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), and 38 receive specialist support from the school. No pupils currently have a statement of special educational needs. Thirteen pupils have been identified as having English as an additional language (EAL) and nine receive support for this.
- 1.7 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 Elstree School is highly successful in meeting its aims of providing a first class all-round education, while embedding the values of hard work, kindness to others and making the most of opportunities. From the EYFS onwards, pupils' achievement is excellent and they reach high standards across the school, making excellent progress in all areas of their development. This is thanks to an excellent curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities, offering pupils the chance to discover and develop their individual skills and talents, and to excellent teaching, which inspires and motivates pupils to want to learn. There is some inconsistency in the quality of marking in Year 3 to Year 8. The needs of pupils with SEND, the more able and those learning English as an additional language are extremely well met.
- 2.2 Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Pupils have a thoughtful appreciation of the world around them, a well-defined sense of right and wrong, and of fair play, and a willingness to take on responsibility. Through the 'Elstree Award' structure, older pupils help to support younger ones and make a useful contribution to the wider community. They have a clear insight into British values and traditions, and an interest in and respect for other cultures. From the EYFS onwards, pupils benefit from excellent pastoral care, and relationships throughout the school are excellent. The quality of boarding provision is good, and the school gives good attention to matters of welfare, health and safety. Scrutiny of policies prior to the inspection showed that the school had not always been rigorous in ensuring that it keeps up to date with regulatory requirements. By the end of the inspection, the school had addressed the identified shortcomings, so that all areas now comply with requirements.
- 2.3 Governance of the school is good. Governors are supportive of the school and are increasingly playing a greater part in its daily life. The school is well led and managed and has made good improvement since the previous inspection. The new senior leadership team has effectively assessed the school's strengths and areas for improvement, and has introduced a number of useful new initiatives to monitor the performance of staff and outcomes for pupils, though these are not yet fully embedded. The development of strategic planning for the school's future is in its early stages. Parents are extremely happy with the school and what it offers their children, and would readily recommend it to others. They feel well informed and well involved in their children's education.

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

- 2.4 The school meets all the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.
- 2.5 The school meets all the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools 2013.

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

- 2.6 The school is advised to make the following improvements.
1. Establish procedures for whole-school and boarding development planning, involving all staff and governors, to give future direction to the school.
 2. Embed processes for monitoring in the school, including staff performance reviews and the role of subject leaders in overseeing their curriculum areas.
 3. Ensure that marking in Year 3 to Year 8 consistently helps pupils to know what they have achieved and what they need to do to improve their work.

3. THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS

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

- 3.1 The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning is excellent.
- 3.2 The school is successful in meeting its aims of building confidence, developing talent and maximising potential. Pupils of all ages achieve highly, both in academic and extra-curricular activities. In the EYFS, outcomes for children are excellent. All children, including those with SEND and the more able, are active learners who make excellent progress in relation to their starting points. They reach, and at times exceed, the level of development typical for their age. Nursery children communicate with others with increasing confidence. They listen carefully and respond extremely well to instructions.
- 3.3 Children in Reception use their excellent knowledge of the sounds made by letters to read simple words. Their mathematical understanding develops as they record heavier and lighter, do simple addition and find missing numbers in a short sequence. Children apply their creative thinking skills when they design their own cartoon character. They make excellent progress in their physical skills when bouncing balls in physical education (PE), pouring water into a tube, and making observational drawings of fruit. Children use interactive whiteboards to recognise different fruit in an art lesson, and use remote controlled toys and cameras to support their learning in a variety of activities.
- 3.4 Older pupils have extremely well-developed skills for learning. They listen attentively in lessons and to think before they speak, expressing their ideas cogently and asking sensible questions. Most have reading skills well beyond those expected for their age, and can translate their thoughts coherently into writing. They understand how to match their writing to the needs of the situation. In a Year 6 history lesson, for example, pupils wrote realistic dialogue between Henry II and Thomas à Beckett, empathising with the different standpoints of the individuals. They think things through logically and enjoy opportunities to work independently or collaboratively, supporting and encouraging one another.
- 3.5 Pupils apply themselves thoroughly to mathematical problems. Year 4, for example, tackled proper and improper fractions with great determination and perseverance. Pupils have well-developed information and communication technology (ICT) skills and use computers with confidence. Year 7 pupils worked independently in small groups to create illustrated books to read to Year 1, as part of the Elstree Award, experimenting with different styles of presentation. Pupils show great creativity in their music, art and drama. This was very evident in Year 2 topic work on knights and castles, where pupils designed their own shields and constructed their own small-scale fortresses.
- 3.6 Pupils' sporting prowess is very strong. They enjoy being active and participating in the many opportunities available to them, from football, rugby, hockey and cricket to sailing, shooting and riding. Pupils of all abilities represent the school at sport and have success in their fixtures. Some represent the school at county level or in association tournaments. Pupils also have significant success in the performing arts, competing in local festivals.
- 3.7 Pupils' attainment cannot be measured in relation to average performance in national tests, but on the evidence available from lesson observations, scrutiny of

pupils' work and school data, it is judged to be high in relation to national age-related expectations. Pupils are consistently successful in gaining places at the country's most selective independent schools, with a significant number being awarded scholarships or exhibitions in a range of subjects. Most pupils achieve places at their first choice of senior school.

- 3.8 Pupils of all abilities make excellent progress through the school. The small size of teaching groups means that pupils are very well known to staff who plan work which is appropriate for their individual needs. More able pupils are consistently challenged to perform at higher levels, while those with SEND or EAL are given the specialist, targeted support they require to make similar progress to their classmates.
- 3.9 Throughout the school, pupils have excellent attitudes to learning displaying high levels of interest, application and concentration. They show great curiosity and enjoyment in their learning. Most take great care to present their work as neatly as they can, though some have difficulty in achieving this. By the time they leave the school, they have excellent study skills to build on for the future.

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

- 3.10 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent.
- 3.11 In the EYFS, excellent educational programmes, along with many imaginative resources for exploration both indoors and outdoors, provide exciting opportunities for learning. This was seen in the outdoor area when children hunted for dinosaur eggs and dug in the dinosaur swamp. Children have many opportunities to develop their physical skills during PE lessons and when problem solving in the woods. Staff provide high quality interaction with children to encourage their listening skills, and regularly engage them in meaningful conversation and open-ended questioning. Children have outstanding opportunities to develop their skills and to take risks to succeed, in particular in their weekly visits to the woods. Staff know each child's unique needs extremely well and provide excellent support, enabling all children to be ready for the next stages in their learning.
- 3.12 The curriculum successfully covers the required areas of learning and supports the aims of the school to develop fully the natural ability of each pupil. It is suitable for all ages and abilities, and meets the needs of all pupils. The balanced curriculum is broad and includes interesting additional opportunities such as Latin and Greek for the older pupils, and exciting elements such as drama and fencing. The personal, social, health and education (PSHE) programme promotes pupils' well-being effectively. The experiences of the pupils are enriched through visits and visitors linked to the subjects and topics studied. Younger pupils enjoy local outings, whilst older pupils visit parliament, a Jewish museum, a mosque, London theatres and France.
- 3.13 Learning is supported through specialist teaching and appropriate setting by ability for older pupils. Younger pupils in Home Farm benefit from many links to the main school such as specialist teaching in French, PE and music, all of which begin in Nursery. There is a suite for ICT, with some computers available in class, but this provision is not used extensively by the pupils. Curriculum planning is thorough and most schemes of work are detailed and effectively support progression. Currently there is no formal structure in place to review, monitor or evaluate these.

- 3.14 The curriculum ensures a strong focus on the development of English and mathematics, and across the school it promotes the knowledge, understanding and skills pupils require to prepare them for the next phase in their education. All pupils benefit from their spacious surroundings which help them to develop confidence and independence, to take managed risks and to carry out investigations. The school actively promotes the teaching of fundamental British values.
- 3.15 Provision for pupils with SEND is excellent. The school has a thorough process to identify, screen and track pupils with a team of dedicated and specialist staff on hand to support everyone across the school. Pupils follow clear and detailed individual plans and all staff are given clear and concise communications about the needs of all pupils in the school. These plans are reviewed and updated regularly. Those pupils identified as able, gifted and talented are also supported, often with suitably challenging tasks in lessons and extra opportunities such as specialist lectures. Good arrangements are in place for any pupils who require support with EAL.
- 3.16 The excellent array of extra-curricular activities enhances pupils' learning experiences and is greatly appreciated by them. The younger pupils enjoy a variety of clubs, which include art, football, basketball, French and drama. Junior pupils take part in a regular activity programme and there are choirs for all age groups. Older pupils enjoy a range of sporting activities, which include opportunities such as horse riding and sailing. A comprehensive provision and extensive fixture programme offers pupils the opportunity to play a variety of games such as football, rugby, hockey and cricket, and to represent the school in a team.
- 3.17 The school has established productive links with the local community. EYFS children visit a local farm and a zoo to learn about the wider world, and they welcome visitors from a guide dog charity and a local theatre group. Maintained schools use the sports facilities and also join pupils for visiting theatre productions. Harvest goods are shared and recycled clothes are donated locally. A nearby garden and the parish church recently benefited from a clean-up operation by pupils. Further afield there are strong links with a school in Mombasa, Kenya and a charity in Afghanistan, which afford pupils the opportunity to offer charitable support to and understand cultures which are different from their own.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.18 The contribution of teaching is excellent.
- 3.19 In the EYFS, highly effective use of assessment means that staff consistently take children's needs and interests into account when planning activities, enabling them to make excellent progress. Staff have excellent relationships with children and very high expectations of what they can achieve, skilfully motivating them to learn and encouraging them to explore. Opportunities for children to engage fully in problem-solving activities are provided on a daily basis, for example making a glass of blue 'wine' in the potion lab, or creating their own dance routine. Such activities lead to excellent development of the children's confidence and skills. Staff are highly knowledgeable about the needs of this age group, and select from a wide range of good quality resources to accelerate their learning.
- 3.20 Throughout the school, teaching is highly effective in promoting pupils' progress and most teachers have high expectations for pupils' learning and behaviour within class. Most teachers plan their lessons well and this enables pupils to work confidently at

levels appropriate for their individual needs. A suitable range of teaching methods ensures that pupils are challenged and supported in their learning. The variety of activities within lessons ensures that pupils are engaged with their tasks. Teachers inject a great deal of enthusiasm into their lessons, so that pupils are highly motivated to do their best and achieve high standards in all that they do.

- 3.21 At every stage of the school, regular assessment ensures that teachers are informed about pupils' progress. The marking of pupils' work is often thorough and positive. In the best examples, teachers' comments actively encourage pupils to consider how best to improve their work, offer targets which are personally set and suggest ways to advance and develop their learning. However, this is not always done consistently in Years 3 to 8.
- 3.22 Teachers make effective use of questioning, as seen in a Year 7 religious studies (RE) lesson when the class discussed the parable of the Good Samaritan. They create an atmosphere of interest and enquiry in their lessons. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and make good use of time and pace to engage their pupils. They have a positive focus on the development of skills and a strong attention to the needs of individual pupils. They promote tolerance and respect, and ensure that political issues are covered in a non-partisan way.
- 3.23 In lessons, teachers have high expectations for pupils' behaviour and co-operation. This was witnessed in a Latin lesson when pupils worked together well to translate a passage about Odysseus and the lotus eaters. Activities and classroom work are often targeted to support individuals or groups of similar ability. Year 4 pupils demonstrated this when sharing their artwork of sketching and clay modelling inspired by aboriginal designs. There is a wide range of resources across the school, which is enhanced by informative and thought-provoking displays, stimulating artwork and a well-stocked library. These inspire pupils to work hard and do their best in all that they attempt. Teaching assistants are usually deployed well and help support the learning in many classes. In the majority of lessons the quality and presentation of work is good, although in some instances there is an over-emphasis on the use of work sheets.
- 3.24 A highly effective learning support department provides a comprehensive wealth of knowledge and direction to the teaching staff. There is an effective assessment and monitoring procedure in place for all pupils. Highly qualified staff offer a nurturing and valuable service for pupils with a range of needs, including SEND and EAL. Those pupils identified as able or gifted are suitably challenged and many achieve very high standards of work and success. The school prides itself in nurturing talent and many older pupils are supported to achieve highly in their scholarship or Common Entrance exams.

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 In the EYFS, the children's excellent behaviour is a key feature of their personal and social development. All children respond extremely well to clear guidelines and play co-operatively as part of a group. They learn to share and take turns. Their obvious happiness and enjoyment, along with their willingness to participate, show that they feel safe. Children develop a respect for other cultures when they learn about Chinese New Year and Diwali, and learn how to care for others when they raise money for different charities. They develop excellent skills for the future and are very ready to make the move to their next class or new school.
- 4.3 In the rest of the school, pupils' spiritual development is excellent. The school adopts a holistic approach and Christian values form the basis of the education provided. Pupils are happy, self-confident and eager to learn. Their sense of self-worth is demonstrated by their openness, their pride in their school and their willingness to make a positive contribution to school life. Pupils value one another's opinions and develop an understanding and respect for other faiths in carefully planned RS lessons. Their spiritual awareness is fostered through weekly services at the local church, well-planned assemblies and Bible study. Pupils show a real appreciation for the non-material aspects of life. The confident singing of the school choirs is spiritually uplifting.
- 4.4 Pupils' moral development is excellent. From an early age, pupils have a very clear understanding of right and wrong and they respect the school rules. Pupils are self-disciplined; they appreciate the school's system of rewards and sanctions and they respond positively to the guidance and advice of their supportive teachers. Throughout the school, behaviour is excellent and reflects the respectful relationships that exist in the school community. Pupils display honesty and integrity and greet visitors in a friendly and natural manner. This behaviour reflects the emphasis that the school places upon traditional values and a happy family atmosphere. Pupils have a good general knowledge of public institutions and of fundamental British values, and are able to discuss moral issues. They show a respect for English law.
- 4.5 From an early age, pupils' social development is excellent. They are encouraged to think about how they relate to one another and they are caring and helpful. Pupils of all ages are eager to accept positions of responsibility. Older pupils participate in the Elstree Award with its range of opportunities for leadership, personal challenges and service to the community. They serve the school and the local community through activities such as charity work, estates work, assisting with games and supporting younger pupils. Pupils readily take on responsibilities such as school councillor, prefect, head of house, church warden, librarian or team captain. Participation in the school council, the dining room committee and the eco-committee builds confidence and affords pupils the opportunity to voice their own opinions. Pupils have an excellent understanding of the needs of others; they raise money for a wide variety of charities, such as a local children's charity, and they support three teachers in a Mombasa street school. Through community service, pupils demonstrate their understanding of their responsibilities in the wider community.

- 4.6 Pupils' cultural development is excellent. Well-focused PSHE and history lessons encourage a respect for the democratic process and explain the importance of voting. Their excellent cultural awareness is enhanced through visits to such places as the Houses of Parliament, Windsor Castle, art galleries, museums, places of worship and the theatre. Throughout the school, pupils' cultural perspective is developed through a stimulating range of art and music, through themed meals and visiting speakers. Overseas pupils bring a wealth of different cultural traditions to the school and pupils of all backgrounds promote respect, harmony and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Pupils enjoy a number of overseas trips and benefit from the enriching experience.
- 4.7 As a result of the excellent individual care that they receive and the breadth of their individual experiences, by the time that pupils leave the school their standard of personal development is excellent.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 The excellent pastoral care structures throughout the school ensure that pupils receive valuable support and guidance in accordance with the school's aims. Pupils are happy and safe. They thrive in a caring environment in which they are valued and praised for their efforts.
- 4.10 In the EYFS, children respond very well to the welcoming family atmosphere, and comprehensive induction procedures help them to settle and feel secure. They develop positive relationships with the staff and respond quickly to the high standards of courtesy and behaviour. Committed and caring staff provide excellent support, ensuring that all children are extremely happy and emotionally secure. Children form very strong bonds with adults, particularly their key person, as a result of the excellent support they receive.
- 4.11 Throughout the school, relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect and pupils feel well supported in all aspects of school life. Form tutors are responsible for pupils' academic and personal progress. The boarders benefit from the caring support of the housemaster and his team. The pupils' confident and friendly manner is a result of the excellent pastoral support that they receive.
- 4.12 There are high expectations of behaviour and self-discipline, resulting in excellent standards of behaviour. Discipline is firm and fair and pupils understand the need for rules and sanctions. The school's anti-bullying policy is very well implemented. When interviewed, pupils said that there are few incidents of bullying and that they are confident that the school deals with them efficiently. School records support this. Guidance on cyber bullying has been provided. The school has a suitable plan to enable educational access for pupils with SEND.
- 4.13 All pupils are encouraged to develop healthy eating habits and to take regular exercise. The location of the school facilitates a wide range of activities related to health and fitness. Staff members eat with pupils and encourage good table manners. Pupils understand the importance of a balanced diet. Children in the EYFS are taught about healthy eating, know that fruit is good for them, and become increasingly independent with regard to personal hygiene and self-care. Their independence is encouraged when they select their own activities and make their

own activities in class. However, there are limited opportunities for them to show independence in the dining room at lunch times.

- 4.14 Pupils have various opportunities to express their views. Younger pupils feel confident and able to express any concerns that they may have. Responses to the pre-inspection pupil questionnaire indicated that a small minority of pupils feel that the school does not ask for their opinions and respond to them. The inspectors found that pupils do have opportunities for expressing their views, but that these are sometimes limited.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good.
- 4.16 Regulatory requirements linked to policy compliance were drawn to the school's attention and were thoroughly addressed by the end of the inspection. Throughout the school, including in EYFS, safeguarding arrangements are good and are appropriately linked to current official guidance. Staff receive regular training in child protection. All pupils, including children in the EYFS, feel safe and secure in the environment.
- 4.17 Health and safety measures are effective and well established. A comprehensive range of policies and procedures covers all aspects of health and safety. Thorough risk assessments are in place for activities that take place on site, as well as for educational visits, and these effectively promote pupils' safety. The site is regularly checked and any maintenance requirements are addressed quickly. Testing and maintenance of electrical, water and gas supplies and equipment take place at the required times. In all areas of the school, measures are in place to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards. Regular emergency evacuation drills are carried out and appropriate records are kept.
- 4.18 For those pupils who are ill or unwell, or who have SEND, the school has clear and effective procedures, and suitable accommodation. The school medical staff ensure that the needs of the pupils are well met. Medicines are stored securely, any accidents or injuries are recorded and parents are informed. Staff are appropriately trained and there are a number of staff who have first aid qualifications, including suitable paediatric first aid for children in the EYFS.
- 4.19 The attendance and admission records are correctly maintained and stored for the previous three years, with systems in place to follow up pupils' absence and lateness.

4.(d) The quality of boarding

- 4.20 The overall quality of boarding is good.
- 4.21 The school meets its statement of aims. Boarding makes a significant contribution to the strength of the school, which meets all National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools.
- 4.22 The outcomes for boarders are excellent. A good sense of community exists amongst the pupils, despite the fact that the number of boarders varies from approximately 20 to just over 100 on different days of the week. Boarders are integrated into the school and a very large majority stated in response to the pre-inspection questionnaires and in interviews that they enjoy boarding. Relationships

across the community are strong, and new boarders settle quickly and are made welcome. There is a range of appropriate adults to turn to over personal issues, from residential house staff to the school doctor. There are opportunities for boarders to voice their views through the school council and the dining room committee, though neither of these represents boarding exclusively. Older boarders are confident in talking to adults and generally boarders are self-reliant, mix well, and are loyal to one another and to the school. Bullying is rare but is efficiently dealt with; sanctions are infrequently needed but in discussion pupils report them to be fair.

- 4.23 The quality of boarding provision and care is good. The induction process for new boarders is effective, though this lacks comprehensive written guidance. The promotion of boarders' health is effective and arrangements for medical care are satisfactory, despite unexpected changes in staffing. In the pre-inspection questionnaire, a very large majority of boarders stated that they are well looked after if they feel unwell or are injured. Full boarders are registered with a local GP practice and surgeries are held in school every week; boarders can also be escorted to medical appointments or therapeutic sessions off-site as appropriate. Pupils who need EAL tuition or who have learning difficulties are supported and monitored sympathetically.
- 4.24 Accommodation is adequate and has been improved since the previous inspection, though the common room areas are sometimes limited due to recent increases in boarding numbers on certain nights. Washing facilities are also adequate. Sleeping accommodation and bedding are suitable, though some dormitories for younger boarders are crowded on busy nights. Furnishings are appropriate and pupils are encouraged to personalise their areas. Access to boarding areas is restricted so that boarders feel safe in their surroundings.
- 4.25 Although a majority of boarders expressed dissatisfaction with the food and a small minority suggested, in the pre-inspection questionnaire, that they are not happy with the availability of snacks, this was not upheld in interviews. Most boarders stated that the quality of meals on offer is acceptable, though older boarders would prefer larger portions and more imaginative menus. Inspectors found that portion sizes were adequate for younger pupils but not always sufficient for older ones. Boarders are provided with refreshments at breaks, after school, and before going to bed, and drinking water is readily available throughout the school. Boarders' laundry is managed centrally and the matrons ensure the premises are kept to a high standard of hygiene. In response to questionnaires a small minority of boarders commented that they do not think all their belongings are safe. In discussion, boarders did not think that the safety of their possessions was a significant problem, although some stated that they would appreciate lockable units, as well as more hanging space for their clothes. Inspectors found that space was at a premium, but that possessions were usually safe. Valuables such as passports may be secured in the housemaster's office.
- 4.26 Information for parents is disseminated by electronic mail and via the school intranet and boarders report that contact with parents is quite easily made through mobile telephones, electronic mail and computer systems. Stationery is provided via the form tutor, and emergency toiletries are available from the matrons. There is a suitable complaints procedure and health and safety requirements are met. In the pre-inspection questionnaire responses, a small minority of boarders stated that they were not happy with the balance of free time and activities; the general opinion in discussion groups was that the activities programme was good and that there was

enough free time. Inspectors agreed with this. Most parents feel that their children enjoy boarding at Elstree.

- 4.27 The arrangements for welfare and safeguarding are good, with procedures and practices ensuring that boarders are safe. The school now complies with all regulations and guidance in respect to safeguarding and recruitment checks. Evacuation drills in case of fire are practised at least once a term in boarding time. The school has an effective anti-bullying policy, with the result that behaviour is very good. Boarding house staff and adults associated with boarding, such as matrons and catering staff, have undertaken safeguarding training and know the signs to look for, the procedures to follow, and who to contact should an incident occur or a disclosure be made. The whereabouts of boarders are regularly monitored and the missing person policy is known by all staff. Boarders are at all times under the responsibility of suitably trained members of staff and there are always at least two adults on call throughout each night. Visitors are signed in to school and access to the boarders' rooms is restricted. The families of members of staff living on site have been through the required checks and have signed agreements with the school. The school does not appoint guardians nor arrange lodgings. In response to the questionnaires almost all boarders and all parents stated that they feel the school is a safe place.
- 4.28 The effectiveness of the leadership and management of the boarding provision is good. Boarding documentation and policies are up to date and these and the National Minimum Standards for boarding schools are well known to staff. A statement of the school's boarding principles and practice is available. Residential boarding staff have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities, though the school has yet to implement a performance review system for staff who work in boarding. There are weekly meetings of boarding staff, chaired by the recently appointed head of boarding, who is a member of the school's senior management team. There is no strategic action plan for boarding overall, based on an audit of needs, though the head of boarding has conducted a preliminary analysis of strengths and weaknesses.
- 4.29 The recommendations for further improvement from the ISI boarding welfare intermediate inspection in March 2012 have been satisfactorily addressed. These referred to awareness of how to make contact with the school doctor or a helpline regarding any concerns boarders may have, and with regard to amending the timings of roll calls, have been satisfactorily addressed.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good.
- 5.2 The governing body has a good oversight of the school's work, including the EYFS, and ensures that it provides a high quality education for pupils of all ages. Governors have a clear overview of the school's finances and spend money wisely, for example on purpose-built teaching rooms. As a result, the school is well resourced and recruits a high calibre of staff. Future planning for refurbishment and redevelopment of the school's academic accommodation is accurately targeted at priority areas, such as the provision for art.
- 5.3 Governors are well informed by senior staff about the life of the school and its successes. Although some are new, and all have busy working lives, they are increasingly spending more time at school and becoming well known to staff and parents. They have a considerable range of relevant experience and expertise across a wide number of areas, including education, finance and the law, which is of great value to the school. Representatives of the governing body are involved in the school's strategic development planning process, and governors support the school in its planning for the future.
- 5.4 The governing body fulfils its statutory obligations appropriately, ensuring that the school now meets all legal requirements. A designated governor takes responsibility for monitoring safeguarding and child protection, and ensures that the whole governing body undertakes the required annual review of these arrangements throughout the school.

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 good.
- 5.6 The leadership and management ensure that the school's aim for pupils to thrive and flourish through respect, courtesy, honesty, loyalty and fairness is met. In line with its aims, committed leadership celebrates the excellent personal achievements and development of the pupils in sport, music, art and drama.
- 5.7 The school's leadership and management have clearly defined roles and are effective in carrying out their duties, particularly the implementation of policies and the safeguarding of pupils. All staff have been given designated areas of responsibility, which contributes to the success of the school. The most able pupils have a scholarship programme, whilst the Elstree Award enhances the pupils' personal development, making them aware of and contributing to the local community. There are strong communication links amongst the leadership team and with the rest of the staff. Daily briefings ensure that all members of the school are aware of school arrangements, with the pupils the primary focus. More formal extended meetings take place to ensure that pupils' welfare is always discussed. Whole school termly meetings identify areas for improvement and to enhance the dissemination of information.

- 5.8 An academic review has been initiated to improve conformity amongst departments with regard to planning and assessment. The leadership of the school has identified the need to monitor the teaching and learning through more rigorous work scrutiny and lesson observation. A focus on marking and feedback has been started to strengthen pupils' academic development. In the EYFS, those with management responsibilities provide excellent oversight of the educational programmes. However, time for managers and other staff to monitor the curriculum is very limited.
- 5.9 The results of standardised tests are being used to inform planning within departments to track pupil progress, including those who are able, gifted and talented and those with SEND and EAL. This was a recommendation from the previous inspection that has been addressed. In response to the recommendation from the previous inspection for the EYFS, staff and governors are continually looking for ways to develop further the provision for all EYFS children, and the setting has made good progress since then.
- 5.10 Consultation with a cross-section of the school community has informed a new school development plan. Areas for improvement have been identified but stricter criteria for success are required. Strategic targets have been drafted, but do not include sufficiently focused detail in relation to teaching and learning, which diminishes the school's ability to monitor this area. In the EYFS, realistic targets for improvement result from a vision shared by all staff and accurate self-evaluation. The leadership fully understands the setting's strengths and areas to improve.
- 5.11 The school aims to recruit and secure high quality staff. A clear emphasis is made on whole school professional development of the staff, but there are limited individual opportunities for off-site specialist training. Throughout the school, including in EYFS, appropriate training ensures the safeguarding of pupils and their welfare, health and safety; recruitment checks are conducted thoroughly. A comprehensive teaching staff appraisal system has been initiated and is being developed to include senior leaders. Appraisals for some support staff are well developed, but this is not consistent. A peer observation programme for lessons has been started and has provided opportunities to share good practice. In the EYFS, performance management and staff supervision meetings support the staff and identify training needs effectively. This has a positive impact on the learning and development of the children. For example, as a result of implementing what they had learned on a woodland activities training course, staff noticed that children who were very quiet in class were better able to communicate in the woodland, and took part in more challenging tasks.
- 5.12 Good administrative arrangements support the leadership and management of the school. Welfare, health and safety procedures, including those for safeguarding, are securely in place and records are well kept. In pre-inspection questionnaires, parents felt strongly that the school was well led and managed.
- 5.13 The school's links with parents are excellent. There is an effective, close and co-operative relationship with parents which helps to create a strong sense of school community. From the time they join the school, excellent links are established with the parents, who feel fully involved in the life of the school. This is in accordance with the aim of the school to work in close partnership with all parents in academic and pastoral matters.
- 5.14 Parents who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, and those met on inspection, were very positive in their praise of the education and support which the

school provides for their children. Parents were especially pleased that the school encourages them to be involved in events and other aspects of school life, and were happy with the range of subjects offered to their children. They also felt that the school keeps their children safe. A very small minority of parents felt that the school had not handled their concerns well. The inspectors found that the school handles the concerns of all parents with care and that these are dealt with swiftly and informally. The school has an appropriate complaints procedure, which it follows when needed and which is available to parents.

- 5.15 Parents of children in the EYFS were particularly appreciative of the strong transition procedures and the willingness of staff to talk about any concerns or achievements. They felt that information about the school is readily available, and that their children feel happy and safe. Strong partnerships between the EYFS and the local authority, contact with other outside agencies, and excellent partnerships with parents result in the comprehensive sharing of information. This ensures that children with additional needs receive the appropriate support.
- 5.16 Parents across the school have many opportunities to share in special events such as concerts and plays and regularly support sports fixtures. The active parents' associations at Elstree School and Home Farm organise numerous social events, both during the day and in the evening, ensuring all parents are included. Social events include bonfire night celebrations and the summer fete. They also raise funds for local, national and international charities both. Parent representatives for each year group provide a strong link with the associations, are fully involved in organising the various events and welcome new parents when their child starts at the school.
- 5.17 The comprehensive website, a helpful prospectus and well-organised open days provide prospective parents with much useful information, including all that is required. Parents of current pupils receive regular information about the school such as termly calendars and newsletters which highlight events that are taking place as well as pupils' successes. Boarding parents feel that the communication with the school is excellent and that they are able to be in touch with the school whenever they need. Prior to the inspection the school did not always make it clear to parents what information is available to them. However, by the end of the inspection this had been addressed.
- 5.18 Current parents are kept very well informed about their child's progress. They receive valuable information about their child's progress and achievement through parents' evenings, which are held regularly. At these meetings, parents have the opportunity to meet with the teachers of the examined subjects. Whilst some meetings are arranged for other subjects, there is not always sufficient opportunity to do so on a formal basis. Reports detailing pupils' progress, effort and achievements are supportive and encouraging but do not always include detailed information and do not always give advice for improvement. Parents receive their child's reports either termly or twice yearly, and sometimes more often, depending on the year group. Staff are always available for more informal discussions with parents during the week, enabling strong channels of communication between school and home.

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