



INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

HIGHFIELD PREPARATORY SCHOOL LIMITED

INTEGRATED INSPECTION

INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS INSPECTORATE

Highfield Preparatory School Limited

Full Name of School	Highfield Preparatory School Limited
DfE Number	868/6009
Registered Charity Number	309103
Address	Highfield Preparatory School Limited 2 West Road Maidenhead Berkshire SL6 1PD
Telephone Number	01628 624918
Fax Number	01628 635747
Email Address	head@highfieldprep.org
Headmistress	Ms Annie Lee
Chair of Governors	Mr Wayne Bradley
Age Range	3 to 11
Total Number of Pupils	145
Gender of Pupils	Girls (3 to 11; Boys 3 to 4)
Numbers by Age	3-5 (EYFS): 34 5-11 111
Head of EYFS Setting	Mrs Kim Shard
EYFS Gender	Mixed
Inspection dates	12 Feb 2013 to 15 Feb 2013

PREFACE

This inspection report follows the *ISI schedule*, which occupies a period of four continuous days in the school. The previous ISI inspection was in April 2008.

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

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

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

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

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

Inspectors may be aware of individual safeguarding concerns, allegations and complaints as part of the inspection process. Such matters will not usually be referred to in the published report but will have been considered by the team in reaching their judgements.

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

INSPECTION EVIDENCE

The inspectors observed lessons, conducted formal interviews with pupils and examined samples of pupils' work. They held discussions with senior members of staff and with governors, observed a sample of the extra-curricular activities that occurred during the inspection period, and attended registration sessions and assemblies. Inspectors visited 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

Professor Pat Preedy

Mrs Paula Burgess

Mrs Lynda Boden

Reporting Inspector

Team Inspector (Headmistress, IAPS school)

Co-ordinating Inspector for Early Years

CONTENTS

	Page
1 THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL	1
2 THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL	2
(a) Main findings	2
(b) Action points	3
(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements	3
(ii) Recommendations for further improvement	3
3 THE QUALITY OF ACADEMIC AND OTHER ACHIEVEMENTS	4
(a) The quality of the pupils' achievements and learning	4
(b) The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision (including community links of benefit to pupils)	5
(c) The contribution of teaching	6
4 THE QUALITY OF THE PUPILS' PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT	8
(a) The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils	8
(b) The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care	9
(c) The contribution of arrangements for welfare, health and safety	10
5 THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	11
(a) The quality of governance	11
(b) The quality of leadership and management, including links with parents, carers and guardians	11

1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

- 1.1 Highfield Preparatory School Limited is an independent school for girls aged between three and eleven and boys aged three to four. It was founded on its current site in 1918, and in 1966 it became a charitable trust administered by a board of governors, who also act as trustees. Entry is without academic selection. Children in the Nursery are admitted in the term they become three, including a small number of boys who have siblings in the school.
- 1.2 The school is located in the centre of Maidenhead. The original Victorian house has been extended and new buildings and facilities have been added, including a garden for pupils, a netball court and playgrounds. In 2010, the school's name was changed from Highfield School Trust Limited to Highfield Preparatory School Limited. A number of personnel and organisational changes have occurred since the school's previous inspection in 2008. The current headmistress was appointed in January 2010 and a new chair of governors was appointed in January 2013. The senior management team and governance committees have been restructured.
- 1.3 The school aims to encourage all pupils to maximise their potential, and to develop a love of learning and lively, enquiring minds, by providing an exciting and stimulating education with opportunities for independent thinking, self-expression, self-confidence and creativity. It strives to provide a firm foundation for the future, by preparing all pupils socially, emotionally and physically for the next stage in their education. It seeks to celebrate achievement, and to value honesty, fairness, compassion and empathy, thus enabling pupils to develop spiritual richness, and respect for religious faiths, themselves, others and the environment.
- 1.4 The school currently has 145 pupils on roll. Of these, 34 are in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), 34 are in Years 1 and 2, and 77 are in Years 3 to 6. Pupils are drawn from Maidenhead and the surrounding area. They come from a range of ethnicities, and are mainly from backgrounds where parents work in business or in professional occupations.
- 1.5 Seventeen pupils have English as an additional language (EAL). A small number of pupils with EAL in the Nursery learn English using immersion techniques. Older pupils do not require additional EAL support, as they have become fluent in English. Seventeen pupils have been identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). No pupil has a statement of special educational needs. Standardised test information indicates that the ability profile of the school is above the national average. Most pupils are of at least above average ability, with very few being of below average ability.
- 1.6 National Curriculum nomenclature is used throughout this report to refer to year groups in the school.

2. THE SUCCESS OF THE SCHOOL

2.(a) Main findings

- 2.1 The school fulfils its aims very well, successfully preparing all pupils academically and personally for the next stage in their education. Pupils' achievements, including those of children in the EYFS, are excellent, as are their attitudes to learning. Combined with teaching that is excellent overall, and with excellent curricular and extra-curricular provision and pastoral care, this represents improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. The broad, creative and well-balanced curriculum, together with an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, trips and visits, supports pupils' learning extremely well. Pupils are creative, enthusiastic, highly articulate, and able to reason and investigate independently. They use their literacy and numeracy skills very well in different subjects, and make strong progress largely as a result of teaching that is excellent overall. However, data analysis, tracking and target setting are in the early stages of development and the quality of marking is variable. Pupils with SEND or EAL and those of high ability make significant progress in most lessons. However, the provision of extension work and the use of detailed individual education plans (IEPs) are not consistent throughout the school.
- 2.2 The personal development, and spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness of all pupils are excellent. Pupils are well supported pastorally and their behaviour is exemplary. Appropriate health and safety checks are carried out and the safeguarding of pupils is secure.
- 2.3 Strong senior leadership enables highly committed staff to provide a positive approach to learning in a supportive, friendly community that responds highly effectively to the needs of all pupils. This leadership has ensured that substantial progress has been made since last inspection. Subject leaders have developed effective policies and schemes of work. They have yet to develop a fully consistent approach to monitoring. School policies are regularly reviewed and are implemented appropriately by staff. Good governance is underpinned by effective strategic and school improvement planning. Governors take their responsibilities seriously and have a detailed insight into the working of the school. They are effective in exercising their monitoring role, and in providing support, challenge and stimulus for growth and improvement. Links with parents are excellent. During interviews and in their responses to pre-inspection questionnaires, the vast majority of parents strongly supported the school and are happy with the education, extra-curricular activities and care provided. Inspection evidence supports these views.

2.(b) Action points

(i) Compliance with regulatory requirements

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

(ii) Recommendations for further improvement

2.5 The school is advised to make the following improvements.

1. Ensure that the monitoring role of subject leaders is consistently implemented.
2. Implement fully the systems recently put in place to support pupils with specific needs.
3. Develop a co-ordinated approach to assessment and tracking, and ensure consistency in the marking of pupils' work across the whole school.

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 Pupils are very well educated in accordance with the school's ambitious aims. Pupils respond well to the support and encouragement they are given to maximise their potential and to develop a love of learning. Children in the EYFS are active, independent learners, able to problem solve and be creative. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education. Older pupils are successful in entry to selective senior, mostly day, independent schools, and each year a considerable number are awarded academic, music and sporting scholarships.
- 3.3 From the EYFS onwards, pupils achieve high levels of knowledge, understanding and skills in curriculum subjects and extra-curricular activities. They have an extremely wide range of knowledge for their age; they are highly articulate, read confidently and are able to reason logically. Younger pupils achieve excellent standards of literacy and older pupils write very well, both imaginatively and factually. For example, Nursery children enjoy writing words on to whiteboards, Reception children can link and blend sounds to form simple sentences and, in a Year 6 poetry lesson, pupils wrote sophisticated and imaginative poems based upon a recent visit to Warwick Castle.
- 3.4 Pupils' numeracy skills are well developed. They work independently and think critically. Pupils use information and communication technology (ICT) competently across a range of subjects, both for research and to present their work. The pupils are very creative, as seen in the excellent artwork and other displays around the school.
- 3.5 Both the group and individual achievements of pupils outside the classroom are excellent. The wide range of extra-curricular activities enables pupils to extend their interests and, where appropriate, compete successfully at county and national level. Teams achieve high levels of success both locally and nationally in a wide range of sports, including swimming, hockey, netball and tennis. Success in art, music and drama is considerable. Pupils greatly appreciate the opportunities provided to try out new activities. They respond very well to the arrangements for specialist teaching beyond the school, which are made to accommodate the needs of those with specific gifts and talents, for example in sport and music.
- 3.6 The following analysis relates to results for 2009 to 2011. These are the most recent three years for which comparative data is currently available. Results in national tests at the age of 11 have been well above the national average. This level of attainment, together with the analysis of standardised measures of progress and other inspection evidence, shows that pupils make good progress relative to the average for pupils of similar ability. In the EYFS, excellent progress is made towards the Early Learning Goals, with most children achieving them by the age of five and many children exceeding them.
- 3.7 Pupils with SEND and those for whom English is an additional language make good progress in relation to their starting points, because they often receive highly effective individual and group support from teaching assistants. This enables them to apply and develop their literacy and numeracy skills. In a mathematics lesson investigating the properties of polygons, pupils were given work carefully matched to

their abilities, and support from an assistant enabled them to apply their knowledge to solve problems. In an English lesson, younger pupils worked effectively in pairs to revise and improve their writing. More able pupils make excellent academic progress in lessons where there are high levels of challenge and opportunities to explore, collaborate and research. For example, in a mathematics lesson, younger pupils were able to understand the term 'inverse' and to solve complex problems using a wide range of strategies.

- 3.8 All pupils have a positive and enthusiastic approach to learning. They are extremely polite and caring, and exceptionally well behaved. Both as individuals and collaboratively, pupils throughout the school have an infectious enthusiasm, energetically taking part in the many opportunities that are provided by the dedicated and hard-working staff. This was particularly observed during Medieval Week where staff and pupils took part in a range of activities including a banquet, fancy dress parade, concert and EYFS dragon hunt.

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

- 3.9 The contribution of curricular and extra-curricular provision is excellent overall.
- 3.10 Pupils follow an extremely broad and balanced curriculum, which is enhanced by an excellent range of extra-curricular activities, visits and links with the community. The curriculum is suitable for all ages and abilities, and consistent with the school's aims.
- 3.11 The quality and provision of the curriculum for the EYFS are excellent, covering all the areas of learning. The educational programmes for language and communication, and for personal, social and emotional development, give children many opportunities to express themselves clearly, confidently and with enjoyment. Planning is of high quality, with an effective balance of adult-led and child-initiated activities. Children are provided with a wide range of challenging, first-hand indoor and outdoor experiences that develop learning through exploration, investigation, independence and co-operation.
- 3.12 For older pupils, the curriculum is based upon the National Curriculum and Common Entrance requirements. Since the previous inspection, the school has developed the curriculum further by integrating a cross-curricular and creative approach into current policies and schemes of work. This enables the retention of fundamental subject knowledge underpinned by key skills such as communication and problem solving.
- 3.13 In the EYFS and Years 1 to 3, the curriculum is enhanced by the use of specialist staff to teach subjects such as music, physical education and French. From Year 4 onwards, the curriculum is mainly taught by specialist staff. The provision for sports and games gives all pupils in the school the opportunity to participate. Information and communication technology lessons provide pupils with skills to support their work in other subjects. A personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) programme is extremely effective in encouraging all pupils to gain an understanding about themselves, of other people and of the wider world.
- 3.14 There has been a recent and extensive review of provision for pupils with SEND. This provision is well planned, and now includes more specific individual education plans with targets. The school is aware that teachers do not yet make full and consistent use of IEPs in their teaching. A register is kept of those of high ability, with the intention that these pupils' learning is fully extended. Although a number of

examples of excellent extension work were observed, particularly in younger classes, this provision is not yet consistent across all subjects and all year groups.

- 3.15 The academic curriculum is well supported by an excellent programme of extra-curricular activities. These activities are extremely broad ranging, including sports such as netball, and creative subjects such as art and sewing. Science, ICT, gardening, orchestra, Sudoku and French clubs further enrich the pupils' experience, giving them many opportunities to develop their interests.
- 3.16 The school fosters strong links with the local community, including a church and a home for the elderly. Such opportunities greatly enhance the all-round education of the pupils.

3.(c) The contribution of teaching

- 3.17 The contribution of teaching is excellent overall.
- 3.18 Throughout, the expertise, care and enthusiasm of staff underpin the school's aim of developing in pupils a love of learning by providing an exciting and stimulating education and encouraging all pupils to maximise their potential.
- 3.19 Staff continually strive to create a personal and supportive framework that fosters excellent behaviour and learning, and positive relationships, both inside the classroom and outdoors. Pupils are confident about asking for help and many express their appreciation for the way staff support their learning. Praise and encouragement are used to good effect and add to pupils' enjoyment of the subjects being studied, as well as promoting their effort.
- 3.20 In the EYFS, the efficient use of information gathered from continuous assessments, and high quality individual attention, ensure that all children are supported effectively and make rapid progress. Staff develop children's thinking and encourage their curiosity through challenging questioning. Their work and interests are valued in high quality, colourful displays.
- 3.21 Subject planning at all levels is thorough and shared effectively across the school. In the best practice, teaching is well planned, imaginative and creative. Outcomes for learning are clear and teachers incorporate a variety of teaching techniques tailored to the individual learning needs of pupils, providing for both individual and collaborative learning. For example, in a music lesson, excellent subject knowledge and organisation raised pupils' achievement at all levels. Pupils sang together as a choir, appraised a piece of gamelan music, and practised and performed their own pieces. Where teaching is less successful, it does not take differing abilities into account, lacks pace and is too closely directed.
- 3.22 The resources available are of good quality and used effectively to promote learning. Interactive whiteboards are widely available and used effectively by teachers to provide stimulating and interesting lessons that increase pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- 3.23 The school is reviewing its assessment policy and procedures. A recently developed tracking system allows staff to identify attainment levels and scores for each pupil and to track pupils' progress over time. Progress meetings are held to allow staff to discuss appropriate interventions to boost progress and close gaps. The effective use of data to inform planning, target setting and reporting to parents is still at an early stage of development.

- 3.24 Feedback to pupils about the quality of their work is good overall. The best marking in books includes encouraging comments and suggestions for improvement, and appropriately sets targets for pupils to achieve, but this is not done consistently. During interviews, pupils said that they receive positive oral feedback and that they value the support provided by their teachers.

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' personal development is excellent. Pupils of all ages thrive, are confident and are at ease with their fellow pupils, staff and other adults. The pupils develop considerable independence of thought. High quality relationships exist between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils themselves, thus contributing to the positive ethos of the school. In the EYFS, children share resources, take turns and organise themselves effectively. They trust and respect their teachers and relate well to each other. The whole school community works together to uphold the school's ethos to develop skills for life and a desire to live life to the full.
- 4.3 The quality of pupils' spiritual development is excellent. Throughout their time in the school, pupils develop self-esteem and confidence, recognising their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils are mature and articulate, which allows them to express themselves and to communicate effectively. Pupils' understanding of the beliefs and cultures of others is well developed as they learn about major world religions, both in lessons and assemblies. During interviews, pupils demonstrated a mature understanding of respect and tolerance, stating that 'everyone is equal'. Pupils from the EYFS onwards demonstrate an awareness of non-material aspects of life. They are supported in developing their spiritual awareness through a broad and exciting curriculum that celebrates creativity in music, nature and art. High quality displays around the school celebrate personal and team achievements.
- 4.4 The pupils' moral awareness is excellent. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong, and know that high standards of behaviour are expected of them. They support the Highfield Golden Rules that are prominently displayed around the school. Pupils collect awards for academic and personal successes and are well aware that their actions have consequences and may affect others.
- 4.5 During lessons, pupils are highly supportive of each other and have much respect for their environment and the feelings of others. The pupils greatly value the school's PSHCE curriculum, which has firm foundations in social and emotional literacy, and which includes topics such as social justice, rights and responsibilities, and how to be a good friend. Pupils stated during interviews that activities such as 'circle time' help them to learn to socialise with others. They display a notable sense of duty and a desire to contribute to society. Pupils are extremely caring and are made aware of the needs of those who are less privileged through initiatives such as raising funds for a children's home in Honduras.
- 4.6 Pupils' social development is excellent. They are confident and demonstrate extremely well-developed self-awareness, when both speaking amongst themselves and with adults. Pupils listen attentively and show respect for the views of others. Older pupils speak with great maturity about the value of their relationships with their peers and with adults within the school. Pupils' leadership skills are very well developed. Year 6 pupils hold positions of responsibility and become school monitors, which helps to support the code of conduct within the school.
- 4.7 The quality of the pupils' cultural development is excellent, and it is considerably enhanced by their enthusiastic engagement with art, music and literature. Through the use of display, pupils are reminded of British traditions such as Shrove Tuesday.

Pupils appreciate the valuable contribution made by others from different cultures and religions. Pupils recently celebrated Chinese New Year and Diwali, and 'Famous Friday' assemblies have inspired the school community through learning about the lives of people such as Nelson Mandela and St Hildegard of Bingen.

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

- 4.8 The contribution of arrangements for pastoral care is excellent.
- 4.9 Adults working in the EYFS are well deployed, relationships are extremely positive and children's behaviour is well managed. Children have excellent support from 'key people', who liaise well with parents, giving priority to the children's happiness, health and safety. Teachers of older pupils know them very well. They work very hard to give them the highest standards of support and guidance, both pastoral and academic, thus fulfilling the school's aims. Children in the EYFS and older pupils benefit greatly from the happy and supportive environment, which fosters a love of learning. The stimulating curriculum and environment provide rich opportunities for developing pupils' self-expression, self-confidence and creativity.
- 4.10 Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent. Staff have a thorough understanding of each pupil's needs, which they continually strive to meet. Both the responses to the pupils' questionnaires and interviews with pupils during the inspection indicate strongly that they feel they make good progress in their work, are encouraged to take responsibility and enjoy being at school. A small minority of pupils said that they do not have a member of staff they could turn to if they had a personal difficulty, or that teachers are not fair in the way that they give sanctions. Inspectors spoke to a wide range of pupils throughout the inspection and found that pupils were confident that they could identify adults to whom they could turn if they had a personal concern. Senior leadership monitoring of rewards and sanctions indicates that a small number of staff apply the system inconsistently. Senior leaders intend to continue to monitor the distribution of rewards and sanctions, and to liaise with staff in order to ensure that the policy is applied fairly and consistently throughout the school.
- 4.11 Pupils speak extremely highly about the friendships they make and this can be seen in the school and playground throughout the day. Younger pupils feel supported by older pupils, who take their responsibility as 'shadows' very seriously.
- 4.12 Pupils are encouraged to engage in a healthy lifestyle, such as exercising regularly and eating healthily. This lifestyle is encouraged within the curriculum and through a range of sports activities and clubs. Science lessons teach about the importance of eating a balanced diet and choosing food wisely, and this message is positively reinforced in the dining room through posters, display and the healthy choice of food provided.
- 4.13 The school is extremely effective in promoting excellent behaviour through praise, encouragement and rewards. Extreme care is taken to ensure that the school deals swiftly with unacceptable behaviour. Pupils have a very clear understanding of the procedures they should follow if bullying was to occur and have every confidence in the school's ability to resolve conflicts. The school actively seeks the views of pupils through the school council. Pupils proudly explained that it was through this body they were able to acquire a play area with specialist equipment. A suggestion box for good ideas allows pupils to forward their suggestions and comments, for example which charity they would like to raise money for and how they would like to do it.

- 4.14 The school has a suitable plan to improve educational access for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

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

- 4.15 The contribution of the arrangements for welfare, health and safety is good overall.
- 4.16 Since the previous inspection, the school has continued to place a high priority on all aspects of health and safety. The safeguarding policy, central register of appointments and admissions policy were amended during the inspection in order to meet in full all statutory requirements. Attendance registers are completed and stored correctly, and pupils' attendance is monitored carefully.
- 4.17 All staff, including those in the EYFS, receive child protection training, which is updated at the required frequency. Personnel involved in the appointment of staff have received appropriate training in the correct procedures. Health and safety procedures are thorough, with records and documentation being passed through an appropriate committee that meets termly.
- 4.18 Risk assessments are detailed for activities across the whole school, ensuring that the safety of pupils is well considered. There is an effective system for assessing risk for off-site visits. All the necessary measures to reduce the risk from fire and other hazards have been taken and regular fire practices are held.
- 4.19 Pupils who become ill during the day are well cared for in appropriate accommodation by qualified first aiders, and any accidents are reported promptly and carefully. Appropriate numbers of staff are trained in first aid, including paediatric first-aid training for EYFS staff. Staff are well informed about pupils' individual medical needs and conditions, and high quality medical records are well maintained.

5. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

5.(a) The quality of governance

- 5.1 The quality of governance is good overall.
- 5.2 Governors are well qualified and provide a valuable blend of experience and expertise. Governors are selected because of their connections with or interest in the school and several are former parents. Since the previous inspection, they have overseen a period of change and challenge, including the appointment of a new headmistress and chair of governors. Governors have used this change positively to define their roles and responsibilities, to restructure the committees, and to reflect upon, revise and implement the school's aims. Governors' vision for the school is now clear, and they take seriously their commitment to provide a firm foundation for the future. The revised governance structure and policies provide coherence and appropriate mechanisms to support the development of the school. They are in the early stages of development and are not yet fully embedded.
- 5.3 Governors exercise prudent financial control, ensuring that the school has the necessary levels of staffing and resources. They have supported and contributed to a new comprehensive school development plan, and provided a range of improvements including refurbishment of the library, playgrounds and ICT suite.
- 5.4 Governors have a good insight into the workings of the school, regularly attending a variety of school functions and events. There is good communication between governors and senior managers. Regular reports from the headmistress and presentations from staff further inform governors with regard to all aspects of the school.
- 5.5 There is an induction process for all governors and they also attend training for their roles, including in safer recruitment and safeguarding. With regard to safeguarding and child protection, they maintain regular contact with the school's designated person and review policies and procedures annually. Health and safety policies and the associated risk assessments are also carefully monitored. The governors' involvement in the EYFS is effective and developing well.

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

- 5.6 The quality of leadership and management is good overall.
- 5.7 Since the previous inspection, the leadership has made substantial progress in many areas. The leadership of the school has been restructured and the school's policies, systems and procedures fully reviewed. These are at an early stage of development and are in the process of being embedded throughout the school. The recently formed senior management team, including leadership of the EYFS, plays a significant part in raising pupils' achievements and in extending their personal development. The monitoring role of subject leaders is not yet fully developed throughout the school, and so the system for visits to classes, work scrutiny, tracking of pupils' outcomes and target setting is not yet fully consistent.
- 5.8 A clear sense of direction prevails, fostering a purposeful ethos across the school community. Senior leaders are highly effective in self-evaluation and setting

priorities. The school development plan, which includes the EYFS, reflects the school's clear vision for the future. The school has appropriate procedures and staff training for pupils' safeguarding, welfare, health and safety, in the EYFS and elsewhere. Safe recruitment procedures are followed with regard to all new staff appointments, and the centralised register for the appointment of staff, governors and volunteers is accurately maintained. Teaching and non-teaching staff are deployed very effectively, and make a highly significant contribution to pupils' excellent level of achievement. Regular staff meetings, together with the ease of informal communication, ensure that staff are kept well informed and feel highly involved in sustaining the caring ethos of the school. A formal system of performance review fosters the development of teaching and non-teaching staff. In addition, staff are given regular opportunities to attend courses to further their professional development.

- 5.9 The EYFS has demonstrated significant progress since the previous inspection. The co-ordinator and Nursery leader carefully monitor the setting and the progress of each child. Regular self-evaluation takes account of the views of parents, staff and children, and ensures that the setting has the capacity for continuous improvement. The effective use and good management of resources, including those outdoors, lead to highly successful outcomes for all children.
- 5.10 Links between the school and parents are excellent, strongly supporting the academic and personal development aims of the school. The school maintains many open and varied channels of communication. From the EYFS onwards, parents are actively encouraged to liaise closely with teaching staff and to play a part in their children's education. The Highfield Parents Association is a key part of the life of the school, organising a wide range of events throughout the year for parents, staff and pupils. These include discos for pupils, Christmas fairs, summer parties and quiz evenings. The funds raised are used for additional school resources and for special treats for the pupils, such as a pantomime staged at the school by visiting performers.
- 5.11 Responses to the pre-inspection questionnaires indicate that parents are overwhelmingly positive and supportive of the school, and are very happy with the education their children receive. They agreed that the school provides a welcoming and safe environment, and commented favourably on the accessibility and high quality of the staff, the use of email for communication, the high standards expected of pupils and the support given to pupils to achieve these. A small number of parents expressed dissatisfaction with the information provided with regard to their children's progress and the way the school handles concerns. Parents receive two written reports each year. The reports in the sample examined were found to be detailed, presenting a clear picture of pupils' attainment and achievements as well as indicating the next steps to improve learning. The complaints procedure was found to be clear and appropriate. A sample of concerns and complaints was scrutinised and all had been handled in accordance with school policy.
- 5.12 Parents of current and prospective pupils are given access to all required information about the school. Communication is effective and is sensitive to the needs of working parents. It includes the use of email, providing details of any emergencies, calendar changes and absence enquiries. The weekly newsletter highlights events that have taken place as well as successes. The headmistress and teaching staff are available on site at the beginning and end of every day so that parents can approach them to raise concerns or queries; as a result, the vast majority can be dealt with swiftly and informally.

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